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**THE RESURRECTION GOSPEL**

**By JESSE R. KELLEMS, B.D., D.D.**

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# The Resurrection Gospel

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

JESSE R. KELLEMS, B.D., D.D.

Author of

"The Deity of Jesus" and "New Testament Evangelism"

SECOND EDITION

**"Preach the word; be urgent in season,  
out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort  
with all long suffering and teaching."**

—2 Tim. 4: 2.

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## DEDICATION

**To one of the grandest Christian women this world has ever known, or ever will know, my mother, this book is lovingly dedicated**



# CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>I.</b>	
<b>THE RESURRECTION GOSPEL</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>II.</b>	
<b>HELL</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>III.</b>	
<b>WARMING AT THE DEVIL'S FIRE</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>IV.</b>	
<b>SAVING FAITH</b> .....	<b>105</b>
<b>V.</b>	
<b>THE PHILOSOPHY OF REPENTANCE</b> .....	<b>122</b>
<b>VI.</b>	
<b>THE GOOD CONFESSION</b> .....	<b>140</b>
<b>VII.</b>	
<b>THE BAPTISM OF JESUS</b> .....	<b>157</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	
<b>THREE ANSWERS TO THE SAME QUESTION</b> .....	<b>175</b>

# *Contents*

## IX.

<b>A MODEL CASE OF CONVERSION .....</b>	<b>203</b>
---	------------

## X.

<b>THE NON-CONVERSION OF FELIX .....</b>	<b>231</b>
--	------------

## XI.

<b>THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCHES .....</b>	<b>242</b>
---	------------

## XII.

<b>THE SOLDIER OF THE CROSS .....</b>	<b>292</b>
---------------------------------------	------------

## XIII.

<b>WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY .....</b>	<b>318</b>
--	------------

## XIV.

<b>THE FOUR BIGGEST FOOLS .....</b>	<b>330</b>
-------------------------------------	------------

## XV.

<b>THE DIVINE NAME .....</b>	<b>344</b>
------------------------------	------------

# I.

## THE RESURRECTION GOSPEL

TEXTS.—“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain; your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.”—1 Cor. 15: 13-19.

“And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.”—Luke 24: 3.

THE above statement of the apostle Paul—“ye are yet in your sins”—is not a mere petulant remark. It is sober truth. Everything that the word “Christian” means; everything that the experience of being a Christian implies—has its foundation in the fact of the resurrection. “If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain; your faith also is vain.” The Greek word for vain, here, is *kenon*, which means “nothing in it,” or “without content.” But the preaching of Paul was not without content, a message with nothing in it. It was a message of mighty power. It shook men to the very foundations of their souls, and transformed the world. A nature so passionate and intense as that of the great apostle never could have been stirred with a message which had nothing

in it. There was something tremendous in that message. To change a man like Paul, the message must have its foundation in sober fact. "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." The word here translated "vain" is *mataia*, which has a slightly different meaning from the word used just before. It means "futile" or "to no purpose," "insipid." What the apostle here means is that, if Christ has not been raised from the dead, all that ye have believed is of no avail. There can not be even the shadow of doubt that, in these words, Paul makes the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the very keystone of the mighty arch of Christian faith. It was the heart and soul of his own preaching unto death. It was the basis of all that the apostles and early preachers had to say of the Lord Jesus. How glowingly has Professor Denny expressed it: "The primary testimony of the disciples to Jesus was their testimony to His resurrection; except as risen and exalted, they never preached Jesus at all. It was His resurrection and exaltation which made Him Lord and Christ, and gave Him His place in their faith and life; and unless their testimony to this fundamental fact can be accepted, it is not worth while to carry the investigation further. Nothing that Jesus was or did, apart from the resurrection, can justify or sustain the religious life which we see in the New Testament."<sup>1</sup>

When we think of the resurrection in apostolic preaching, it should always be borne in mind that they never did preach it merely as a fact. They could have done this, for, to them, it was a fact, so

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<sup>1</sup> "Jesus and the Gospel," Denny, p. 97.

well attested that they were willing to give their lives in the preaching of it. What the early Christians did preach was the gospel of the resurrection. They did not preach it to psychologists or metaphysicians as a thing in itself or as a fact simply to be known as a fact. It was preached to sinful men with all its divine significance to their salvation. It was the good news, or gospel of the resurrection, because it implied all that reconciliation to God meant. All that immortality could signify to yearning hearts was rooted and grounded in the glorious fact that Christ had come forth triumphant from the grave. To miss this aspect of the apostolic and early Christian witness is to miss all. The gospel of the resurrection is a moral power. Looking at it from the broad standpoint, every form of Christian experience derives its meaning from it. No matter what form that experience may take—study any aspect of it you may choose—the inevitable conclusion is that if the resurrection is denied, the gospel of our Lord loses its reality and force in life.

There were three facts accomplished by the death of Jesus, and the events which followed it, which are admitted by both the friends and the enemies of Christianity.

1. That Jesus actually died upon a Roman cross, and that His body was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa; that a great stone was rolled before the door of the tomb and the seal of the Roman governor affixed; that a guard was stationed about it to see that no one molested it.

2. That sometime before the third morning after this the body disappeared.

3. That the disciples, after the first fear and consternation occasioned by the events of the crucifixion, came to believe with unshakeable confidence that their beloved Master had been raised from the dead.

Up to this place there is absolute accord. No dissenting voice is heard. It is at this point that the battle begins. What became of the body? What happened at the tomb to give birth to the mightiest message the world, in its sinfulness and hopelessness, has ever heard? This is the point at which the conflict is joined. It has well been styled "the battle over an empty grave."

Dismissing the swoon theory which maintains that Jesus never really died at all, but that He swooned upon the cross and revived in the cool, damp air of the grave, we will proceed to the consideration of two propositions only (1) What became of the body? and (2) how can we explain the universally acknowledged faith of the disciples, a faith so wonderful that it created the New Testament, the Lord's Day, and the Christian church?

### I. WHAT BECAME OF THE BODY OF JESUS?

In the very nature of things, there were but three things which could have happened to it.

1. It could have been taken away from the grave by the enemies of Jesus.

2. It could have been stolen by the disciples to make it appear that He had risen from the dead.

3. It could have been raised from the dead by the power of God.

Let us consider these three possibilities in detail.

1. *Did the enemies of the Lord steal the body?*

(1) They could have had no motive for stealing it. The body was already in their possession. The disciples were weak and unarmed and without inclination to make any attempt to secure the body by force. The seal of the Roman governor was upon the great stone and a guard of Roman soldiers was stationed near, with all the authority of Rome at their backs. Nothing more could have been done to make the position of the body more secure. Even the placing of the seal was such that the slightest disturbance would have been immediately detected. The large stone, the "Golel," was rolled against the door of the tomb. Against this was leaned the small one, the "Dopheq." Where the two stones touched, the seal was affixed. It was to the interest of those responsible for the placing of this guard to see to it that the body remained right where they had placed it, and every precaution was taken; for only in its safety could they triumph over the disciples. They were anticipating a disappearance of the body of Jesus, and took the consequent precautions against it. The fact that the disciples had no such expectation can be easily explained. The priests and the disciples would have radically different reactions to the oft-repeated predictions of Jesus that He would die and rise again. To the disciples this was a dark parable, a deep saying, which they could never contemplate with composure; a word to bring consternation and fear to their hearts. And it is significant that this was the attitude they took whenever Jesus spoke of dying and rising again. To the priests, however, the prediction of His death was easily understood, for they, too,

expected it, since they had deliberately planned it. They knew they were going to kill Him. It was natural for them to think that the disciples had understood His remarks about His resurrection as they had understood them, and, fearing that there had been a conspiracy between Jesus and His disciples to obtain and hide His body, and then preach a gospel of resurrection, these priests employed every means within their power to thwart such an effort. That which actually came to pass was what they most dreaded and was wholly unanticipated by the disciples.

(2) That the enemies of Jesus had not stolen the body, and that they were in no way responsible for its disappearance, is conclusively proven by their attitude on the day of Pentecost.

Six weeks after the happening at the tomb, Peter, on the day of Pentecost, boldly proclaimed the resurrection gospel in the same city where Jesus had preached, lived, suffered and died. For the first time the good news of the resurrected and exalted Lord is preached in power to sinners. Surely this was the opportunity of the enemies. If they had taken the body, here was their chance to have produced it and routed the disciples in confusion. Everything Peter preached that day with such dramatic effect could have been undone if those who were the Lord's enemies had but come forward with the body. This they did not do, for they could not do it. The body was not in their possession, nor had it been since that wonderful Easter morning. The remarkable thing about this is that not only did they do nothing at all to destroy the testimony of Peter, but, after his sermon, three thousand of those who had but a little

time before been a frenzied mob, howling like a pack of maddened wolves for the blood of Jesus, confessed their faith in the Lord whom they had crucified and who had arisen from the grave, were baptized into His name, and were constituted the first church of Christ in the world. No, the enemies of Christ did not steal His body. Its disappearance from the tomb filled them with amazement and consternation.

There is a wonderful evidential value in the time and place of this first Pentecost in the history of the church.<sup>1</sup> The Pentecost of a false religion would have been a thousand miles removed in space, and a hundred or more years in time, from its original events. Is it not highly significant that the Pentecost of this genuinely historical religion occurred in the same place where those original events had transpired and but fifty days from the time of their occurrence? The miracles of superstition are published long years after their reputed happening and far distant from their assumed setting. But Jesus had suffered in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem He had been beaten and execrated and spit upon. In Jerusalem He had been scourged. It was in Jerusalem that the cruel crown of thorns had been pressed upon His noble brow. In Jerusalem He had been lifted up on the cross, and between the darkening heavens and the quaking earth had been tortured until death had mercifully brought an end to His suffering. Was it not eminently fitting, then, that in Jerusalem He should be vindicated, that in Jerusalem He should be glorified and exalted? Is it not unanswerable that in the place where He suffered most He should first be preached as Prince and Savior and

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<sup>1</sup> "The Resurrection of Our Lord," Milligan, pp. 52-55.

that from such preaching the first church of Christ should be born? The whole attitude of the enemies—their cunning in guarding the body, and then their glad acceptance of Him as Redeemer and Lord after the disappearance of the body—is a tremendous witness in favor of the genuineness and certainty of the apostolic testimony.

*2. Did the disciples of the Lord steal the body to make it appear that He had risen from the dead?*

(1) The testimony of the Roman guard that this is what had happened is so manifestly false and so utterly absurd that it calls for but brief attention.

*a.* How did they know that the disciples had stolen the body if they were asleep at the time of its disappearance? Such testimony as this would be laughed out of any court in the world. They could have testified that when they awoke the seal of the governor was broken, the stone rolled away and the body gone, but as to the manner of its going they could not have testified because they did not know.

*b.* The further absurdity of this bald-faced fabrication is manifest in the fact that, if what they said had been true, they never would have told their officers. According to the Roman military law, it was a capital offense for a soldier to be found asleep while on his post of duty. Knowing this well, the soldiers would never have told this to their superiors, for, had it been true, it would have meant that they were deliberately inviting death upon themselves. There was no need for any of the men to sleep, or even to become sleepy, while on guard. There were from fifteen to sixty men in the quarternion, and the guard was changed every six hours. Not all of the men, there-

fore, would have been asleep at the same time, or so soundly asleep that none would have been disturbed by the moving of the stone, which was "very great." For these reasons the officers placed no credence in the story at all, as is evidenced by the fact that none of the men were ever brought to trial or even accused. Had the officers believed the story, they would have immediately punished the men for this gross infringement of the Roman military law. The whole story is so manifestly a deliberate fabrication that it is almost unworthy of consideration.

(2) The disciples could have had no motive for stealing the body, or in any way disturbing it. We freely admit that if they had had a motive, it would have been that they might proclaim a gospel of resurrection. No other of any kind can be imagined. They could not of their own power make Jesus alive. Their hopes of the kingdom of God were blasted forever. They expected to see Jesus again only when the glad morning of the final resurrection should dawn over the eastern hills. Like the enemies, they were satisfied with the disposition of the body of their beloved teacher. He was in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, who was himself a secret disciple of the Lord. Would not the disciples know of his discipleship? Of an event so important would they be ignorant? Then, also, none realized more clearly than they the hopelessness of their position nor how utterly powerless they were. Even though the thought may have once come to them to steal the body and boldly preach a resurrection gospel, they knew well that they could not do it. But a close study of the beliefs of the disciples concerning the resurrection in general and the

predictions of Jesus in particular discloses the fact that they did not expect Him to rise until the final resurrection day. In common with all the Jews, they had considered the question of a future resurrection. The Pharisees believed in a literal resurrection of the very body which had died and been buried. The very flesh would be raised. Some even taught that the dead would be raised in the very clothes in which they had died. Others went so far as to claim that if a man had been a cripple in this life, he would be a cripple in the resurrection. If he had been blind here, he would be blind in the next life. In essence their belief was in reanimation or the reawakening of the body. The Sadducees, on the other hand, did not believe in the resurrection at all. They believed that when death came all was ended. All the ancient authorities agree that this was their gloomy position.

The teaching of Jesus Himself concerning the resurrection was given in His answer to the Sadducees, who had, as they thought, set a trap for Him in their question regarding the woman who had married the seven brothers. Their trap was not only for Jesus, but they wished also to ensnare and humiliate the Pharisees, with whom they were constantly at war. The question, "In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her," was an assumption which was the Pharisaical position itself that the relations of time obtain in eternity. The answer of Jesus brought amazement and silence to the Sadducees. The Master first appeals to the power of God: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as

the angels in heaven'' (Matt. 22:29, 30). In the resurrection God will not work simply a reanimation, a reawakening, but a transformation. This was the key of the teaching of the Master concerning the resurrection, and it was just this thing that the disciples could not understand. This was the glorious element in the resurrection of the Lord Himself, that He came forth in a glorified body. It was not the same body which had been placed in the tomb. Jesus here, however, was not speaking of His own resurrection, but of the resurrection in general. The disciples would not, therefore, think of it in any other way, since Jesus was not speaking in specific, but in general, terms.

It is significant that from this time on the disciples always thought of Jesus' teaching as meaning the final resurrection at the end of the world whenever He spoke of resurrection at all. This formed the basis of their faith until after the disappearance of the body from the tomb. They were amazed and sorry whenever He predicted His own death. But it was all dark unto them. They could not understand Him, for they could not associate death with Him.

There are other considerations which prove conclusively that the disciples did not expect Jesus to rise. The fact that they were all scattered and not in one place indicates this. Had they been expectant of a resurrection, what would have been more natural than that they should have met together in some place where they could have been in prayer waiting, as later they waited on Pentecost, for the coming of the Holy Spirit? But they had gone back to their own work. Peter went fishing. Their hopes were blasted and all they had dreamed had evaporated into thin air. The

action of Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus in preparing the body of their Lord against corruption shows that a resurrection had never entered their thoughts. According to the well-known custom of the Jews in the burial preparations, the friends of Jesus took the body and tenderly wrapped it in linen cloths with a mixture of myrrh and aloes. They thought their Lord dead, and in their love were preparing the body against corruption. The attitude of the women at the tomb on the third day is another instance which shows the complete absence of expectancy on the part of the followers of the Lord that He would come forth from the grave. Mary the mother, Mary Magdalene and Salome, on the morning of the third day, came with spices to the tomb that they might perform one more service of love for the poor, broken body of Him in whom they had hoped, and on whose words of cheer they had so often hung as their hearts beat high with the visions of the future glory of those who are the children of God. The Sabbath was past and they had come to embalm Him. Their conversation about the rolling away of the stone, their consternation and terror when they found it rolled away, show that they did not expect Him to rise. The astonishment also of Mary Magdalene, when she came very early in the morning and found the body missing, indicates the state of mind. She ran to Peter and John, saying: "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:9). Her whole attitude is one of wonderment and confusion, and not that of one to whom the disappearance of the body would have brought joy and supreme happiness because of a previous expectancy of such a happening.

The attitude of the disciples when Mary came to them with her amazing story is a further confirmation of the basic fact in the understanding of the apostolic testimony as to the resurrection, that they did not expect Him to break the bonds of death. She found them weeping and mourning. They were shocked, and all their hopes were in ruins because of the rapid culmination of events which had brought about the crucifixion of their Lord. When she told the story they did not believe her (Luke 24:12; Mark 16:10, 11). The conversation of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus further indicates the same state of mind. "We thought he was the one who should redeem Israel." Their whole bearing is that of men who had given up. For them the death of the Master had ended all. And surely the attitude of Thomas completes the story of the absolute amazement of the disciples that a story of a resurrection should be told. When informed that the Lord had risen, Thomas laughed and said that he would not believe until he could place his fingers in the prints of the nails and his hand into the riven side (John 20:24, 25).

It is the strongest proof of the honesty of the disciples in their subsequent testimony that they never, for a moment, had an idea that Jesus would come back again. And let us not forget that this attitude on the subject of His resurrection would not affect their belief in His Messiahship. Not once, before the death and resurrection, did they ever understand the meaning of the Kingdom which Jesus had come to establish. Their belief in Him was the belief in a Jewish Messiah, the glorious deliverer so long expected and desired whose advent would bring freedom to dis-

traught and ravaged Israel from the iron bonds of imperial Rome. He would be a deliverer after the similitude of David or Solomon. They could therefore believe in Him as such a Messiah without His death in any way affecting their belief. The glorious conception of Him as the son of God in a sense in which no man has ever been the son of God, and in a sense in which it will forever be impossible for any man ever to be the son of God, was not born until after the resurrection, and when it did come it was the most wonderful and amazing conception that had ever come to any set of men. And this new conception was connected in the relation of cause and effect with what took place at the new grave in the garden.

There is but one conclusion in regard to their expectancy of a resurrection of their Lord. They believed Him dead and did not for a moment expect Him to arise. In His going their brilliant hopes of a glorious temporal kingdom of Israel were irreparably blasted. The disappearance of the body from the grave caused as much surprise and consternation to the friends of Jesus as to the enemies. In the noble words of Edersheim: "Behind Him had closed the gates of Hades, but upon them rather than Him had fallen the shadow of death." When thus we have taken away the possibility of any desire on the part of the disciples to steal the body that they might make it appear that He had risen from the dead, we have removed the only possible motive for such an action, and all the weight of probability is thrown against their taking it away at all.

(3) But granting, for the sake of argument, that any motive strong enough could have been present,

would it have been physically possible for the disciples to steal the body? There are many circumstances which indicate the utter impossibility of the disciples being able to perform any such daring feat. Remember that the Roman guard was there from fifteen to sixty strong, watchful and alert, knowing that if anything happened to that body they would be answerable to the authorities with their very lives. The hostile Jews by the thousands were there to attend the great annual feast of the Passover. Ancient Jerusalem was supposed to have covered about three hundred acres, or about twice the size of the modern city. Josephus says that in the times of the great feasts its population was about three millions, while in normal times it was from two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand. The city being inadequate for the accommodation of the immense feast-time crowds, those unable to get inside were housed in tents or booths all round the walls. The place of burial was thus surrounded by thousands of those who were hostile to the Master and His people. Remember, also, that the stone was very great and that it would be difficult to remove it without waking the sleeping guard, if we grant that they were all asleep and at the same time. It was springtime and the moon was full. Could a little band of distracted, unarmed disciples have gone into the garden and removed the body after rolling away the stone without waking the sleeping soldiers, and then escaped from the tents and booths set so close together, without being detected. Such a feat as this was physically impossible. The man who can believe this thing should never say a word about the credulity of Christians; for not only can he believe

without evidence or reason, but he can believe against all evidence and reason. The thing could never have been done, even granting a motive for it, and this we have already found was not present in the hearts of the disciples. No, the enemies did not steal the body, and the friends did not want to do it and could not have done it if they had so desired. There is but one consideration remaining, and that involves examination of the testimony of the disciples as to what actually happened at the tomb.

## II. HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN THE TESTIMONY OF THE DISCIPLES THAT JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD BY THE POWER OF GOD?

This position has already been established by the elimination process. If the enemies did not steal it, and if the friends had nothing to do with its removal, but one thing could have happened to it, that which is given in the universal apostolic testimony, that He had been raised from the dead. A consideration of this testimony in regard to its meaning, its honesty and its value will here be attempted.

*1. Notice how clear and to the point is the primary testimony.*

If one were to have asked any of the early disciples, six weeks after the body had disappeared from the tomb, "What happened to the body of Jesus?" their unhesitating answer would have been, "It was raised in glory from the dead." And if he further had asked, "How know you this?" the joyful reply would have been: "We know because we saw Him after His resurrection from the dead. We lived with Him, we handled Him, we ate with Him, we heard from

Him words concerning the future of His glorious Kingdom of souls. We to whom there had come not even a thought of an immediate resurrection saw Him in His risen and exalted state." This was the universal testimony of the whole body of those who had been devoted followers of the Master. Contrast this frank, straightforward testimony with the obvious fabrication of the frightened guard: "The disciples came by night and stole him away while we were sleeping." The very frankness of it speaks for it respectful consideration.

And let us once more remember that, as far as the early disciples were concerned, the resurrection was not attested to a crowd of metaphysicians or psychologists as a thing in itself. It was the gospel of the resurrection which these men preached. As merely a fact in itself, they were not interested in it at all. They were concerned about it because of its tremendous significance in the whole divine scheme of things; in its relation to a man's reconciliation to God; in its relation to the life, and consequently to the whole spiritual world transcending this vale of tears. Thus it is that one must consider the whole body of things here, if he is to understand the apostolic witness to the resurrection as a fact. If he is not able to appreciate it as a moral fact, then the testimony of these early God-intoxicated men will forever be to him inconclusive. The disciples were never anxious about establishing as fact that a man Jesus had been raised from the dead. If a group of men had tried to establish the fact that a man like Pilate had risen from the dead, all the environing conditions would have been against them. But these men were witnessing of a

man of whom it would be least difficult to believe that He had been raised from the dead because all His life, words and deeds were in moral accord with such an event. And it is thus the risen Jesus who hath been raised and remains in the risen state as Lord of life and glory to whose resurrection the apostles and early Christians give exuberant and unshakeable testimony. Only such a man as Jesus, only one so pure and good and who held such lofty ideas of God and the spiritual world, could have risen. And this is the meaning of the significant statement of Peter in his first gospel sermon as recorded in the second chapter of Acts: "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). It was as Savior now that Peter could preach the Lord, because "he hath been raised from the dead." Therefore he can command the stricken multitude, as their hoarse cry of horror rises in an awful diapason, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?": "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). In order to be ordained as an apostle, with the dignity and honor that was attached to that office, one must have been a witness of the resurrection. At the time of choosing one to take the place left vacant by the death of Judas, Peter speaks of this fact when he says: "Of the men therefore that have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21, 22). From this time on everything preached and

believed must find its beginning in the fact that Jesus had been raised. It was to be the fundamental of the faith. It was thus for its moral significance, its meaning as a gospel, that it was preached to sinful men as a message of life and hope, and not simply that it might demonstrate the resurrection to a crowd of curious men just for the sake of a demonstration.

*2. The honesty of the apostolic testimony is apparent.*

As to the matter of the honesty of the apostolic testimony we can say but a word. In reality, it is no longer seriously questioned. For many years, among infidel and skeptical writers in general, the deception theory was tenaciously held. In brief it maintained that the whole story of the risen Lord was a deliberate falsehood. The disciples banded themselves together to palm off an imposition upon the world. Thus they were baldfaced impostors of the worst type, and the whole gospel story from beginning to end was a miserable delusion born in a lie. Celsus advocated this theory seventeen hundred years ago, and the Jews held to it even before that time. If a man's philosophy finds no room for those things which are decidedly and peculiarly Christian, he may embrace this theory with avidity; but to the man to whom those things are real and vital the whole thing is so preposterous and incompatible with all that we know of these devout men that he can not give it even a moment of serious consideration. There are two unanswerable objections to this theory which in any form would cast aspersion upon the honesty of the testimony of these men to the resurrection of the Lord.

(1) There was no inducement to dishonesty. Not a thing would be gained by telling this story. If it could be shown that they would have profited much in a financial way by the proclamation of such an unexpected and totally unwelcome doctrine as this one would be to men trained in the Jewish ways of thinking, we might give some credence to the position. But there would be no gain financially. Instead of gain, it would be, as far as things of this world were concerned, all loss. The doctrine that a crucified Jew, one who had died like a common thief, was the long-desired and long-expected Messiah, the generator of all the hopes of Jewish patriots for years, the one at the mention of whose name every Jewish cheek would burn red with longing and every Jewish eye flash with joy—such a doctrine would evoke from all only the profoundest sensations of amazement and anger. Such a thing would have been regarded by them as an insult, an effrontery unbearable, an outrage on patriotism. If they had been desirous of finding the most unwelcome doctrine possible, they could not have been more successful than to preach this one which would sound the death-knell of all the patriotic hopes of a nation enslaved and ravaged and smarting under the dominion of the proud, cruel foreigner. What a terrible thing to preach! And is it reasonable to think that twelve men, knowing this, yea, even believing as did the rest of their people in the coming of a temporal king who should restore the kingdom to Israel in the glory and power of Solomon, would deliberately plan to tell a story which would make them cordially hated by all their own, and which would bring them nothing in emolument save stripes, isolation, prison and

death? The price was too big to pay for the mere fun of telling a lie. They could never be induced to give such testimony as this unless with all their hearts they believed it to be true, for it was in direct antagonism to all they themselves had thought, talked or believed about the coming kingdom of God. There had to be a mighty upheaval in their own souls, a wondrous revolution in their own thinking, before they could so boldly stand before a crowd of enemies of the Lord, those who had nailed Him to the cross, and but six weeks later proclaim, not only with confidence, but with unction, that He had been raised from the dead through the glory and power of God. And here is the wonder of that first Pentecost. It was an amazing thing that those disciples who had been so confused and frightened, scattered in terror like chaff before the wind, could stand before the multitude and speak in foreign languages. But the far greater wonder is that they spoke at all; that these men, who, like Peter when he denied his Lord in the presence of a few menials, in terror were dumb, spoke forth with words of consuming fire, giving such powerful and convincing testimony to the exalted state of their gloriously risen Lord that from among His very enemies who had crucified Him the church of Christ was born.

(2) A second objection to any form of the deception theory is found in the incompatibility of such a deception with the lives these men lived. Such a thing as this could not have been done by the type of men such as these disciples. They gave to the world a new conception of morals, and so pure and fine were they in the consistent living of the principles which they preached that we can only conclude that if these

men were not honest, then honest men have never lived. They clung to their testimony through stripes and privation, through hatred and persecution, until death brought them glad release from it all, and never one of them recanted. With calm courage they faced death in the bitterest form which could be devised by the fiendish cruelty of their persecutors, and always with the same story on their lips: "We know that he hath been raised, because we have seen him after his resurrection." Would good men die for a lie? Would any man do this? The whole theory is so ridiculous that it is now given up even in Germany. Strauss, in his "*Leben Jesu*," sums up the whole matter when he says: "The theory is wholly incompatible with the after life, heroism and martyrdom of the apostles."

(3) It should further be noted, in considering the testimony of the disciples to the resurrection, that frequently the whole matter is studied from the wrong angle.

The mightiest witness to the resurrection of Jesus is not, and never has been, the Gospel narratives. Yet the majority have started with these and have become immersed in their details with all the problems which they raise, many of them intricate and some of them forever insoluble. These acknowledged difficulties in the stories of the resurrection as narrated by the Evangelists often become in their minds difficulties concerning the fact of the resurrection itself, while the truth of the matter is that they in no way at all affect the resurrection as a fact. This is the noble argument of the late Professor Denny in the somewhat extensive quotation which I can not refrain from giving here: "It ought to be apparent that, so

far as the fact of the resurrection of Jesus is concerned, the narratives of the Evangelists are quite the least important part of the evidence with which we have to deal. It is no exaggeration to say that if we do not accept the resurrection on grounds which lie outside this area, we shall not accept it on grounds presented here. The real historical evidence for the resurrection is the fact that it was believed, preached, propagated, and produced its fruit and effect in the new phenomenon of the Christian church, long before any of our Gospels was written. This is not said to disparage the Gospels, or to depreciate what they tell, but only to put the question on its true basis. Faith in the resurrection was not only prevalent, but immensely powerful, before any of our New Testament books was written. Not one of them would ever have been written but for that faith. It is not this or that in the New Testament—it is not the story of the empty tomb, or of the appearing of Jesus in Jerusalem or in Galilee—which is the primary evidence for the resurrection; it is the New Testament itself. The life that throbs in it from the beginning to end, the life that always fills us again with wonder as it beats upon us from its pages, is the life which the risen Savior has quickened in Christian souls. The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is the existence of the church in that extraordinary spiritual vitality which confronts us in the New Testament. This is its own explanation of its being. 'He,' says Peter, 'hath poured forth this which ye both see and hear' (Acts 2:33); and apart from all minuter investigations it is here the strength of the case for the resurrection rests. The existence of the Christian church, the existence of the

New Testament: these incomparable phenomena in human history are left without adequate or convincing explanation if the resurrection of Jesus be denied.”<sup>1</sup>

Well has Dr. Denny stated the fact when he says that to realize the priority of the faith in the resurrection of the records of it in the Gospels is “to put the question on its proper basis.” There is no possible way to understand the real meaning of the testimony if we persist in going at it from the wrong end.

It must be frankly acknowledged at the start that no one has ever been able to construct a harmony which will explain without any inconsistencies all that is said about the resurrection in the Gospels, in Acts and in 1 Corinthians. There are difficulties, and it is extremely doubtful if any one will ever explain all of them. It should ever be remembered that it was a time of intense excitement; a time when emotions ran riot; a time when the disciples were filled with fear and amazement and then transported to the heights of delirious joy. The Gospel narratives reflect with great fidelity all these emotions. Since, however, they were not written until after the death of Paul, there was no chance to harmonize all the statements, even though that had been possible. Too much time had elapsed since the glorious event and the time of its recording by the Evangelists. Any one, however, who knows the meaning of evidence in its fundamental principles realizes that the acknowledged discrepancies in account do not vitiate the testimony to the central fact in any manner whatsoever. Had they all agreed in every minute detail, we must have concluded that

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<sup>1</sup> “Jesus and the Gospel,” Denny, pp. 100, 101.

all the testimony originated from one person or that it was a deliberately arranged testimony. And to the great fundamental fact that Jesus did arise, and that it was a bodily resurrection, though in a glorified body, the whole New Testament church bears witness without one dissenting voice. Had there been some who, after an investigation of the facts, had denied the resurrection of the Lord altogether, and were still members of the New Testament church, we might have had to do then with discrepancies in testimony which would have had weight. But those who testify are of one mind as to what happened at the grave in the garden on that gladsome Easter morning, for they are the church and were made a church by that very event which had come to pass. When, therefore, an examination of the testimony of the Evangelists is to be made, let it constantly be borne in mind that it was a testimony which had been in existence, acting as a mighty moral power in the world, producing a company of believers from among the very ones who had been guilty of nailing the Lord to the tree, and indissolubly linked with the most vital things in the spiritual life of man, before the record of that testimony was reduced to writing in the form in which it appears to us in the Gospels. Thus it is the primary, universal testimony, and not only the record of it, which we are to consider and explain.

*3. The problem which must be solved if we deny the truth of the apostolic testimony.*

(1) Considering the previous state of mind which we have already discovered with not even the trace of any expectancy of the wonderful event, and the absence of any motive whatsoever for stealing the

body from the tomb or even desiring its removal, how can we account for the amazing change of mind on the part of the disciples which transformed them from broken-hearted, dispirited men to veritable lions of boldness, causing them to speak with such convincing power of the certainty of the resurrection and exaltation of their Lord that their very testimony brought into being the church of Christ, with all that it has meant to the world, and created the New Testament itself?

(2) Or how can we account for the fact that Saul of Tarsus, the most unrelenting and inveterate enemy of the church and its most feared and determined persecutor, suddenly turns round, and with equal earnestness, even unto death, preaches the very faith he had before so rigorously persecuted? How can we account other than by accepting the testimony as true for the change in this man to whom the preaching of a crucified Messiah was the most absurd and abhorrent message which could possibly be delivered; a change so revolutionary that it caused him to declare this same doctrine with such power that churches based upon the gospel of the resurrection were established all over the eastern world? Here are facts; they must be explained away or the testimony from which they sprang must be accepted as true and the faith which lives because of that testimony will stand forever vindicated.

*4. Let us then consider carefully some of the visionary theories and their inadequacy to explain away the appearances of Jesus to His disciples.*

(1) We have already attended to the attempts to explain away the significance of the empty grave. In

considering the visional theory, we are studying the only attempted explanation of the apostolic testimony which has an extensive currency to-day. The delusion theory has been discarded by all thinking men. The deception theory, as we have found, is so inadequate that it has met a like fate. Various forms of visional theories, therefore, are the only explanations which provoke any real interest in the minds of our day. In a word, all the visional theories explain the appearances of Jesus to the disciples as visions or subjective hallucinations which were the results of a morbid state of the nervous system. They were the outcomes of vivid imaginations. The disciples loved Jesus so much that they were constantly thinking of Him after His crucifixion. He was a hero, and heroes can never really die. They could not associate death with Him at all; hence, as they constantly thought of Him and of the absurdity of His life being in any way associated with death, they so worked on their imaginations that visions were the inevitable result. There was indeed no bodily resurrection, but Jesus did rise in the hearts of His disciples. Visions to-day are considered real and almost tangible phenomena; they are readily accepted as scientific facts, and it is argued by those who embrace the visional hypothesis that, were it to be proven that there was no resurrection of the body of the Lord, the resurrection as a fact would not be destroyed because we would still have it as a psychic fact. This position would remove the necessity for a discussion of the empty grave, and would even, in the opinion of some, exalt the Lord Himself. Only a good and true man as was Jesus could thus come back again in glory in the hearts of

His disciples. It is this that Professor Harnack means when he talks about the Easter faith being in no way dependent for its perpetuity upon the Easter message. We can cling to the Easter faith that something happened at the grave in the garden which made us forever believe in the reality of the victory of life over death and the certainty of the existence of the spiritual world. But the Easter message need not necessarily be retained. Or perhaps better should we state it that the Easter faith can go on even though we are never able to know for a certainty the nature of the Easter message. When we consider the fact, however, that both Easter faith and Easter message are generally rejected together, we wonder if there is any force in the position of the great German professor. If this has been true in the past, what reason have we for supposing that they are independent now? Professor Denny states the problem regarding the appearances to the disciples as it presents itself to those minds whose view of reality in general constrains them to reduce all evidence, which in anyway seems to imply the miraculous, to a minimum. "There can be no doubt that appearances did appear to certain persons; the problem is, How are we to give such appearances their proper place and interpretation in the whole scheme of things? Is it not much more probable that they are to be explained from within, from the moods of thought and feeling in the souls which experienced them, than from anything so inconceivable, and so incommensurable with experience, as the intrusion of another world into this? Is it not more probable, in short, that they were what philosophers call 'subjective' states of the soul itself, and not

‘objective’ realities independent of the soul?’<sup>1</sup> Here the whole issue is stated. What did the disciples see? That they saw something all are now ready to admit. But what was it? Did they really see Him in objective form as He was buried in the new tomb of Joseph, or did He so rise in their hearts that they only thought they saw Him? We are then ready to consider:

(2) The obvious inadequacy of any visional hypothesis to explain the testimony of the disciples that they had seen the risen Lord.

a. The visional theory fails to explain the empty tomb. Five or six years after the death of the Lord, Paul was converted to Christianity, and at that time the fundamental facts of the Christian tradition, as it had been taught him and as he then transmitted to others, are found in his first letter to the Corinthians. In this letter he defines what he knows as the gospel, and what was at that time the common tradition as believed by the universal church. “‘Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received; that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures’” (1 Cor. 15:1-5). From this we learn that so close to the alleged events as the time of this letter there were five fundamentals taught and believed: that Christ died for sins, that He was buried,

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<sup>1</sup> “Jesus and the Gospel,” Denny, p. 108.

that He had been raised the third day, that He remains in the exalted state, and that He appeared to certain persons. Not only were these facts taught, but they were the facts on which the church stood and by which its members were saved. Now, it is significant that the burial is mentioned here so prominently as to be one of the fundamental facts, for it defines what is meant by the rising from the dead. It is evident that there could have been no meaning in an Easter faith to Paul and to the Christian circle apart from the Easter message, for it would have been meaningless for them to have talked about the rising of the Christ in their hearts. When they thought of the risen Savior, it was always in relation to His burial—they thought always of the grave in the garden. If we can not speak of a bodily resurrection, “we can not speak of a resurrection at all.” To fail to realize this universal testimony of the church regarding the burial, and that they always thought of the resurrection as related to the grave of Jesus, is to misunderstand what the whole early church believed and taught. For it is universally acknowledged by friends and enemies alike that on the third day the body was missing from the tomb. Professor Orr, speaking of this universal belief, says: “Here, then, are two facts in the history of the resurrection—the stone rolled away, and the empty tomb—attested about as well as facts can be, with the belief of the whole primitive church behind them. There is not a hint anywhere that the fact of the empty tomb was ever questioned by either friend or foe. It would have been easy to question or disprove it when the apostles were boldly proclaiming the resurrection in Jerusalem

a few weeks later. But no one appears to have done so.”<sup>1</sup> Now, manifestly an explanation of the appearances which reduce them to merely a subjective state of the soul, a pathological experience, is unthinkable in connection with the empty tomb. Nor did the apostles consider it merely an inference from the fact of the resurrection, but they ever thought of it as a vital part of their belief in the resurrection, as in fact underlying their faith in the great event.

b. A second objection to the visional theory is that it is incompatible with all that we know of the characters of the early witnesses. If they had visions of the Christ, they ought not to have had them. It will ever be a great pity that they did have them. For such visions must be treated as pathological phenomena as founded in disease and disorder of the spirit and not belonging to men of sound mind, as were these who knew Jesus so well. If their brains had not been overheated, they never would have had such visions. But these men were not at all of the type that have such experiences. They were not neurotics, but men of solid souls, men of the ordinary walks of life, non-mystically minded men. They were not nervous, hysterical persons, “but men of stolid, practical judgment; fishermen; a tax-gatherer like St. Matthew; a matter-of-fact, unideal man like St. Philip; a skeptic like St. Thomas. In no case is there the slightest trace of preparatory excitement.” The usual calmness of these men and their sobriety impel us to the rejection of any theory which makes them the easy victims of phantasmal delusions.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Resurrection of Jesus,” Orr, pp. 126, 127.

c. A third objection is of a psychological nature. In order that visions should come to all the disciples at once, and so soon after the death of the Lord, it would be necessary that there be a previous expectancy of the event, and this we have found was not present. It was the very last thing they would expect. Since they did not expect Jesus to rise, it is absurd to think that five hundred brethren at once could have had a subjective vision of Him. One man might have had a vision, but such a large group would not likely be thus affected.

d. Another objection to the visional theory is that it fails to explain the testimony of Paul. Paul wrote several years after the event, and he wrote of it with absolute confidence born of the most searching examinations into all the phenomena surrounding it, as an indisputable historical fact. The time for visions had long passed when he made his examination, and many of the brethren who had seen Jesus had died. Surely a man with the intellectual acumen of Paul could have easily detected the false in the testimony if there had been such. But after a most diligent examination he came to believe with the utmost certitude that the resurrection of the Lord in all His glorified corporeality was a fact abundantly attested by sober, honest men and women.

e. The visional theory further fails to account for the manner in which the disciples thought of Jesus after His resurrection. There can be no doubt but that people do have visions of dead loved ones. Have we not all had this experience? I have again and again seen my father or the younger brother who gave his life in the service of his country. They live in our

memories, and if we have forgotten them until something happens once more to bring them to memory, we say that they live again in our memories; but when the visions return to us, they are of them as we knew them in this life. There is no change. The face of the old, familiar friend comes back to us. There is no hint of a revelation of a higher being or of a glorified state of the one departed. But this is not the way the Lord returned to the disciples. He did not come to them as the lowly Galilean peasant; the humble, good man; the kindly teacher. He appeared unto them in the power and glory of His kingly state as Lord of hosts, as King of heaven and earth, exalted to the right hand of God with dominion and majesty. There is no doubt that when the loving followers of the Lord thought of Him they brooded upon His moral excellencies, they rejoiced in His compassion and love. Doubtless their appreciation of His resurrection was morally conditioned by this attitude, but to say that it evoked within them a vision of Jesus in His final power and glory, is absurd in the extreme. It would have prepared them for the new and wonderful revelation, for such was the appearance of the Lord to them, a revelation of the final truth about Him, but it could not have produced it. In the splendid conclusion of Professor Denny: "It was no coming to life again in memory of the dear, familiar friend whom even death could not dislodge from the heart; it was something transcendently and unimaginably new, and it needs a cause proportioned to it to explain its presence."

*f.* One other unanswerable objection to the vision theory is that Jesus was seen on too many different occasions, by too many different persons, and by some

of these persons too many different times, for them to have been mistaken. The disciples could not have been mistaken on these occasions, for they had every opportunity to identify Him as the one whom they had known. They ate with Him, handled Him, heard Him speak, and many times in long interviews. He showed them His wounds and allowed them to touch Him. He taught them many things which they had before misunderstood. He imparted to them His great commission upon which the whole future of the church rested. The vision theory falls down under such conditions as the walk to Emmaus, the conversation with Thomas, and the meal with the fishermen on the shore of Galilee. These were real occurrences without any of the well-recognized characteristics of vision.

If Jesus had been seen by twelve men, and they were honest men, and their witness harmonized with all the other facts in the case, such as the empty tomb, the rolling away of the stone, the blessed fruits of the witness, we would be forced to accept their testimony. But Jesus was seen by twelve men for a space of forty days. He was seen by five hundred brethren at one time. He was seen by Paul. The list which Paul gives in 1 Corinthians may be chronological, but it is not necessarily complete. There are enough witnesses, however, to prove anything. The vision theory fails to take into consideration all of the facts in the case. This has always been the peculiarity of those theories which would reduce to a minimum, or explain away altogether, the miraculous element in the New Testament. It fails to explain the number of the appearances and the far greater number of witnesses to whom they were vouchsafed.

*g.* One more objection to a form of the visional theory which has some vogue to-day and is known as the telegram theory. Jesus actually died and was buried, and His body remained in the tomb, but He afterward really appeared to His wondering disciples in the form of an apparition. In a word, He sends them a telegram from heaven saying that all is well. But the disciples claim that they saw and conversed with the risen Lord, not merely an apparition or ghost of Him. Then, too, the argument advanced with such telling force by the late Professor Bruce against this whole position which was advocated by Keim is that the disciples received exactly the opposite message from that which Jesus had sent them in telegram form from heaven. If He had sent them such a message, they would have said that while His body remained in the tomb they yet believed that all was well with Him in heaven; that in spirit He was with them to the end of the world. But exactly the opposite message is received, believed and preached with such power that it became the foundation of the church of Christ itself; the message that His body had been raised from the dead. Like all other visional theories, the facts in the case are ignored or twisted to suit the philosophy under the constraint of which the advocate labors.

*h.* The sudden cessation of the visions is another telling objection which may be advanced against the visional hypothesis. For a period of six weeks there is a series of appearances of the glorified Lord to the wondering and joy-filled disciples. A period of great excitement follows each appearance, for they were to the disciples totally unexpected. Then suddenly they cease altogether. This surely would in no way

accord with the theory of visions resulting from excited imaginations. Had they been visions, they would not have come to such a sudden and dramatic close succeeded by a calm period of meditation and an unshaken assurance that what they had seen was a real manifestation of the Lord in His glorified state. There would have been visions intermittently for many weeks, and probably years. Once again the theory fails in that it does not take into account all the facts in the case. And any theory to be credited must do this very thing.

i. The vision theory is once more objectionable because it fails to account for the glorious results which followed the alleged resurrection. There must have been a cause adequate to the production of the undenied effects. Here are men who a little while before were so timid and frightened that they had fled in confusion and terror. They were broken-hearted at the awful death of their Master. Their high hopes had been rudely dashed upon the rocks, and their golden visions of a kingdom restored to Israel, rivaling the wondrous age of Solomon, had forever faded away. Amazed and dumb, knowing naught but sorrow for their beloved Lord whose body lay cold in the lonely tomb in the garden, plunged one day into the depths of despair, they are found the next transported to the very mountain-peaks of joy, and, with a boldness which confounded the people, proclaiming the marvelous fact that this One who had died had been raised from the dead. No vision theory can account for this sudden and astounding transformation. Visions of a morbid soul would

have led to a corresponding depression rather than such exaltation.

j. A final objection to an explanation of the testimony of the disciples on the ground that they saw but a vision of the Christ, whether it be objective or a mere subjective rising in the heart, is to be found in the fact that so fundamental a belief as the resurrection could not have had its basis upon vision or hallucination.

We have already noted that the gospel was from the time of the alleged rising preached as the gospel of the resurrection. Everything in the preaching of the disciples depended upon it. Reconciliation to God, forgiveness of sins, the reality of the spiritual world, the hope of life everlasting, all are based, in the preaching of the early Christians, upon the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead after He had actually died and had been buried. This is the keystone of the mighty arch of faith, so much so, indeed, that Paul says that if Christ hath not been raised, then is the faith of the Christian insipid.

We have studied this testimony of a risen Lord as a moral power in the world. That it has been such, no thinking man to-day will deny. Wherever the story of the cross is told and the Easter message preached, men have been raised to higher planes of living and thinking, light has succeeded darkness. Could all this have been based upon a mere subjective state of a few deluded disciples of the long ago? Keim has it right when, in his "*Geschichte von Jesu Nazara*," he says "this would have been incompatible with the calm clearness and conviction and the strong purpose of action which were its outcome." Professor

Orr ably sums up the objections to the vision theory: "Psychologically no good cause has ever been shown why the disciples should have this marvelous outburst of visionary experience; should have it so early as the third day; should have it simultaneously; should have it within a strictly limited period, after which the visions as suddenly ceased; should never afterwards waver or doubt about it; should be inspired by it for the noblest work ever done on earth. If anything is certain historically, it is that the death of their Master plunged the disciples into deepest despondency; that their hearts, always 'slow to believe,' were sad, and their hopes broken, and that, so far from expecting a resurrection, they could hardly be persuaded of the fact even after it occurred. Even the words which Jesus had spoken on the subject had not been apprehended in a sense which helped them to believe. The women who had visited the tomb had assuredly no expectation of finding the Lord risen. Even if their faith had been stronger than it was, that would not have caused the appearances."<sup>1</sup>

#### CONCLUSION.

And now we have come to the end of our argument. If the enemies of the Lord did not steal the body from the tomb; if the disciples were satisfied that it remained there, and none of them were guilty of taking it; if Jesus did actually appear to them after the third day—there is but one conclusion: that their witness is true, and that Jesus, by the power of the Father, was raised in glory and exaltation, never more to see death, but to reign as King of kings and

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<sup>1</sup> "The Resurrection of Jesus." Orr, p. 225.

Lord of lords. Such has ever been the steadfast faith of the church which He founded according to His own plan upon this very gospel of the resurrection. Almost two thousand years have passed since the gladsome day when the sun rose in the gray dawn of that Easter morning to discover the stone rolled away from the door. Truly that was a morning which shook the world to its very foundations. And with each passing year, as Easter succeeds Easter, higher and higher in the hearts of a weary and sinful world rises the flame of hope inspired by the glorious event which took place in that little garden. Never before have men turned so universally to the church as they turn to-day when the Easter bells ring out their joyous message. For it is hope which they most desire, it is inspiration which they want. And all that hope means, leaving nothing out of it, is to be found in the return to life of Him who was dead, but liveth forever more. Only in the light of the resurrection gospel can we understand those words which have lifted weeping eyes toward heaven's brightness, which have filled the saddened heart with comfort and hope: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11:25). Ah! it is life which we want, life which we need. We do not want to die; to feel that this little time, so initial in everything, so elemental, is all there is to be.

**" 'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that we want.' "**

And in Him whom death could not hold is life. To know Him aright is life eternal. It is the affirmation of countless millions who through this gospel of a risen Lord have found peace in reconciliation to God and to man. In one mighty diapason of praise rises from the hearts of the redeemed the song:

“Shout aloud, then, my soul.

Let the glad tidings roll

Even unto the isles of the sea.

Christ has conquered the grave;

He is risen to save,

And the whole world through Him is made free.”

## II.

### HELL

TEXT.—Law is a rule of action. In the fourth or vindicatory part of law consists the main strength or force. Where there is no law there can be no wrong or violation; where there is no penalty the law is null and void. The principles of right and justice are fixed and law is merely an expression and definition of these rules and the naming of the penalty for their violation. —*Blackstone.*

**T**HE age in which we live is characterized by an effort on the part of many to ignore the great eschatological teachings of the Word. With some, this spirit has become so marked that they deny even the very existence of heaven and hell. Those who by nature look upon the beautiful things of life, those whose lives are environed by luxuries or by the protecting care of loved ones, will, as a rule, consider the subject of hell with a certain degree of abhorrence. But if such a place or condition exists, whatever the term used in designating it may be, it certainly behooves us as intelligent men and women to face the facts just as they are and give them in our preaching and in our thinking that emphasis which is by right their due.

Now, if hell does exist, let us console ourselves here in the beginning of this sermon with the knowledge that there is no necessity for any man or woman, to whom has been granted even the most ordinary

degree of intelligence, going to that place. God in His unfathomable love and mercy has prepared the way of escape. In His Son Jesus Christ and because He has so loved the world, He has granted full and free pardon for all who will receive it, and that pardon is the only sure hope of man avoiding hell. Every sinner who goes to hell walks over the body of Jesus Christ, tramples "the blood of the covenant" under his feet and passes unconcerned by the cross which, as a flaming beacon, stands squarely in the way of every perdition-bent individual. If you go to hell, my sinner friend, don't blame God or His Son. Everything that divine love and human suffering could do for you has been done, and if you are lost you can blame yourself, and yourself alone. Not only has God fortified hell against you by placing the cross of Christ in your way, but He has made the conditions upon which you may obtain His pardon so plain and so easy that there is left to you no excuse for refusing to accept them. Thus not only would a man's going to hell be against all love and mercy, but it would be against all reason, for the way of salvation is so plain and easy that "the wayfarer, even though a simpleton, cannot err therein."

#### ARGUMENT.

#### I. THE EXISTENCE OF HELL.

Man has universally been conscious of sin. The black monster has coiled his foul length around every heart. The three thousand of Pentecost cried out in agony of soul: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The Philippian jailor, trembling with fear, prostrated

himself before Paul and Silas and asked: "What must I do to be saved?" Paul, in the throes of the world-old battle against the, by human strength alone, unconquerable adversary, exclaims, as its horrible stench fills his nostrils: "Oh, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Sin is here, around us, among us, and in us. Some there are who would make effeminate the meaning of sin by calling it merely a disease, thus doing away with any responsibility of man to God for his transgressions. With such, no longer is the one who purloins your property a thief, but a kleptomaniac, who, by a surgical operation, may be healed. No more is the one who becomes a besotted beast through the long use of intoxicants, a drunkard and one "who shall not inherit the kingdom of God"; but with them he is now an invalid who may be cured by cutting out his desire for drink. But the Word knows not sin in this new dress. Sin is sin and "the soul that sinneth it shall die." Neither has the universal human consciousness accepted this weak view, but it has decreed, after centuries of experience, that sin is transgression of law, and as such is hateful to God, and soul-damning to man.

There is no use for any one to try to deny the existence of sin. It is here in all its myriad polluting forms. The marble shaft of the cemetery as it points toward the sky is a mute witness to the existence of sin. The pages of history, written with the blood of a thousand nations no longer existent in the memory of man, testify that sin is here. The roar of the cannon, the whiz of the bullet, the horrible crash of shell, the shrieks of the wounded and dying, are only the expressions of sin in man. Why, if we intro-

spect our own hearts, we will find the blights and scars of the monster there! The greatest and most easily recognizable fact of our life, here and now, is the fact of sin. Labor and capital, army and navy, tenderloin districts, slums, child labor, penitentiaries, electric chairs, saloons, jails and mad-houses, what are these, and a hundred other kindred terms, but the names of problems, conditions and institutions made possible only by sin?

But the consciousness of sin presupposes something antecedent to sin; namely, law. "Where there is no law there can be no wrong or violation." The statement of Blackstone in our text might be conversely stated and still be equally true. "Where there is no wrong or violation there can be no law," for the very existence of sin presupposes the existence of law. John defines sin as the transgression, or the stepping over, of the law; thus if there is no law to step over, there is no sin. For instance, if there be in the universe of God no law against murder, lying, stealing or committing adultery, it is no sin to murder, lie, steal or to commit adultery. The existence of sin always means that there is a law which has been sinned against. Therefore, co-existent with the fact of sin, the fact of law must be recognized.

For the purposes of this discussion, let us divide law roughly into two divisions: (1) Civil law, or that of the nation, State or municipality, and (2) moral law, or that which, even though it may be embodied in the civil law, is nevertheless differentiated from it by its subject-matter. To these divisions, for purposes of illustration, might be added a third, the limits of which are not always easily defined; namely, natural

law or that by which God governs and controls the universe. The spheres of these divisions encroach upon one another to such an extent that they may appear to be somewhat arbitrary, but for the purposes for which they are here employed they will be found adequate.

Thus far we have taken two steps in our argument: (1) The existence of sin was established and (2) coexistent with sin the fact of law was acknowledged. Inseparably connected with these two ideas is a third, and one which must ever be thought of when either of the others comes to mind. This next idea or step is the fact of penalty. Our text reminds us "that where there is no penalty the law is null and void." For illustration, if there is no penalty attached to the law forbidding murder, then that law, by virtue of the very fact that no man is ever punished for breaking it, becomes "null and void," or worthless. If the State has a law against stealing, yet when a man steals, it says to him, "Go thy way in peace; we will do nothing to thee," that law becomes "null and void," or, in short, ceases to exist. A law without penalty attached for its violation is inconceivable, for the absence of penalty will kill the law, or cause it simply to become non-existent.

Now, if we examine some of the so-called "laws of nature," we find our statement on the inseparability of law and penalty strikingly confirmed. God's natural laws always have penalty attached for their violation, they always reward the obedient, and sternly and unsparingly punish the transgressor. For illustration, let us suppose that a man jumps from the roof of a ten-story building. He will not fly off into

the air, as do the birds, but will be dashed to death upon the pavement below, a victim of the penalty attached to the law of gravitation. If it were not for this penalty, the law of gravity would be non-existent. It is the very fact that a man is killed when he disobeys it that makes it a law to him. It makes no difference what a man may think about it, whether he may like it or not, the law is absolutely impartial in its working. Man may obey or transgress, just as he desires. If he obeys, he will be rewarded; if he transgresses, he will incur the inevitable punishment.

The law of native element also illustrates the harsh but indisputable fact of penalty. Suppose a man, tiring of the humdrum life of this workaday world, decides to become an amphibian. But let him try as he may, he can not become a fish. Water is not his native element, and he discovers, if he attempts a life therein, that he will meet a fool's death, for death is the penalty attached for the violation of the law of native element.

In our partition of law into its three large divisions, we mentioned one as moral law, which, even though it might be included within the body of the civil law, was nevertheless differentiated from it by the subjects with which it deals and the circumstances of its origin. This law began with God. Some legislative body may have said, "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not steal," but that did not make it wrong to kill or steal. These things were wrong long before legislatures or parliaments, courts or systems of government were in existence. Man has always felt that the doing of these things is sin. Consciousness of these great moral laws as not emanating from himself,

but as God-wrought and God-given, has ever been one of the most precious heritages of the race. Precious indeed, for only in their uncompromising light can man correctly regulate his conduct toward his fellows; yea, he would not even know how to deport himself at all were it not for their projection into his consciousness, and that by some external power. We might even go further than the affirmation of the existence of this consciousness and say that all of our conceptions of the finer things in life—of honesty, virtue, marriage, fraternity—are founded firmly upon our conception of these very moral laws of God. Upon our attitude toward these finer things is based our civil law, regulating marriage, protecting virtue and defining man's duties toward man. Thus in reality our civil law itself centers around, or is based upon, the clearness with which we comprehend the great moral law. Long before the law had been forged into commands amid the mutterings of Sinai, even in that time when the first family inhabited the vales of Eden, this consciousness of right and wrong was present. When Cain, in that hellish fit of jealousy, with foul hands had slain his trusting brother, in horror at his deed, as the realization that it was sin in God's sight came over him, he brazenly inquires: "Am I my brother's keeper?" To deny the presence of these laws in the world would be to destroy the foundations of our institutions; it would be to divorce man from those splendid qualities which so clearly lift him above and beyond the realm of the brute.

In our discussion thus far, we have noted that disobedience to civil law always brings its reward in

the form of penalty, but if there be no penalty attached the law is always null and void. Also in the case of God's natural law, we found that law apart from penalty was an idea, inconceivable. Now, if it be true in every case that can be found, that "where there is no penalty the law is null and void," then these great moral and spiritual laws, formulated and commanded by the Father, must, if they retain their character as laws, have penalties attached for their violation, or they are null and void. If they have no penalty, then it is no sin to murder; neither is it morally wrong to lie, steal, or commit adultery. It is not a sin to cheat or maltreat one's neighbor, for if there be no penalty, then there is no law; it has become null and void. If there is no law, then there can be no wrong, for "where there is no law there can be no wrong or violation." That penalty attached to the moral and spiritual laws of God; that retribution which comes as the inevitable reward of sin; that pay-day, to which every transgressor must come—that is hell.

Therefore, as a conclusion of the point concerning the existence of hell, three powerful and utterly indisputable facts must be readily recognized by even the most indolent intellect: (1) If there is no hell or penalty, then there is no law, for "law without penalty is null and void." (2) If there is no law, then there is no sin, for "where there is no law, there can be no wrong, or violation." (3) If there is no sin, then there is no moral or spiritual responsibility; there is no need for moral or spiritual reformation, and our manifold institutions which exist for the avowed end of making men better—our churches, our schools, our Y. M. and Y.

W. C. A.'s, our asylums, our missions, our W. C. T. U.'s—these, and a hundred others, kindred in character and purpose, have become utterly foolish and worse than useless.

In a sentence, then, to deny the existence of hell is to deny both the existence of sin and of law.

“But,” says one, “even though I accept the facts as you have produced them, I can not see how God can be just and condemn a man to hell.” The trouble with many people is that they do not comprehend the meaning of the term “justice.” An illustration will make it clear. Suppose a law in this State against horse-stealing, with a maximum penalty of two years in State’s prison for the first offense. A man thoroughly acquainted with the law, and knowing well the penalty, having carefully planned the theft, deliberately steals a dozen horses. He is captured, brought to trial and convicted of the crime. Now, justice demands that he be imprisoned for two years in the penitentiary. He knew the law; he knew of the certainty of the punishment if he were captured. To suffer the penalty attached to the law prohibiting horse-stealing, which he has deliberately violated, would be plain, simple justice. Is it in any way unjust that he should suffer the two years in prison? Who is responsible for the punishment which is inflicted upon him, the law or the lawbreaker? You answer, “The lawbreaker.” Then, if he is responsible, he is also accountable, and simple justice demands that he suffer the penalty. To receive justice is simply for a man to get what is rightfully coming to him.

But, now let us suppose that the Governor of the State comes to the man and says to him: “Because of

the helpless condition of your good, old Christian mother, and because you, as a son, owe her your support, I am going to give you a pardon. Take it, and you are free." The pardon in this case would not represent the justice of the State, but the mercy. Let us suppose, however, that the man under penalty, or justice, calmly folds his arms, and after looking at the Governor for a moment says: "I don't want your pardon, and I won't have it." Such an astonishing and uncalled-for action as this would simply mean that he has spurned the mercy of the State as vested in, and offered by, its chief executive. Its mercy having been rejected, what could the State do? There would positively be nothing that it could do, for it could not be merciful to the one who refused to be a recipient of its mercy. There would be nothing left to the lawbreaker save to suffer the penalty of his crime. The State did all it could for him in offering him mercy when he deserved justice.

In the word of God, and by our own consciences, we are taught that we are sinners before God; that for our innumerable transgressions we have fallen under the penalty of God's laws. There is universal recognition of this terrible fact, for all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. But, and oh, how glorious is the thought, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." The Father found us lost, condemned and in ruins. We were without light, without hope. Penalty hovered loweringly over us. Had we suffered that penalty it would have been just, for it would have been well deserved. But the Father,

because He so loved us, granted unto us His mercy, His pardon, in His Son Jesus Christ. The sweat and blood of Calvary represent the penalty being suffered for us that we might receive the pardon. It was not because it was just that Jesus died, but because of love, that we might have mercy. Now, suppose a sinner, one under penalty, calmly rejects the pardon of the Father, saying: "I will have nothing to do with the Christ." He thereby spurns the mercy of God. Then, how can the Father be merciful to the one who will not accept His mercy? If a man will not take the pardon, there is nothing left but for him to suffer justice. God can not be merciful, but can only be just, to the one who refuses His mercy. The writer of the Hebrew letter recognizes this when he says: "A man that hath set at naught Moses' law dieth without compassion [mercy] on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28, 29.) The old law represented strict justice; the new law, justice tempered with mercy. Heaven has done all for man that could be done, even to the offering of a pardon when man in his guilty state was deserving of nothing but justice. To reject that pardon is nothing more nor less than spiritual suicide.

## II. THE PROOF THAT HELL IS FUTURE.

We are not only interested in the question as to whether or not hell exists, but after demonstrating

this to our satisfaction we want to know when it will be, or the time of its existence. Is hell to be here or hereafter? this is the question. Now, if we can dispose of all theories, which in any way claim that hell is here and now, we shall have established our point that it is future by eliminating all other possibilities. Thus a careful survey and searching analysis of three theories are indispensable before any direct arguments can be adduced for the futurity of hell.

1. The first theory maintains that the pangs of a guilty conscience constitute all the hell there is. Says one: "When I do right my conscience is clear, and in that I possess such a conscience I am rewarded for my goodness. When I do wrong my conscience hurts me, and I am punished with remorse and sorrow because of my wrong-doing. Thus my conscience becomes a hell to me when I sin."

It is a well-known fact that the more often one does a thing the easier it becomes to do that thing. The first efforts are always accompanied with more or less difficulty. The first movements of the pupil trying to learn to play the piano are usually awkward and labored. Consciousness interposes itself every time a finger touches a key and says, "Do this" or "Do that." As time goes on, however, through constant and faithful practice, useless movements are inhibited, consciousness ceases to direct as to details, and the keys seem almost to play themselves. Analogous to this familiar illustration is the play of conscience in the moral life of the individual. When a sin is first committed difficulty invariably attends. Conscience intrudes and whispers, "Don't do this or that," but as the sin is frequently and regularly committed

these whisperings grow fainter and fainter, until conscience is inhibited and the sin, attended at first with such difficulty of soul, finally becomes habitual. To state it briefly, the more a man sins the less conscience he has about sin. This being true, then the worse a man is the less hell he gets, if one accepts the theory that conscience is all the hell there is.

Now, there are some people whose consciences, through constant training, have become so acute that even a trivial sin will cause them to experience the most severe anguish of soul. To the first man the blackest sin in the whole category will not bring one pang because his conscience has become seared as with a hot iron; while in the case of the second the slightest wrongdoing will cause multifold miseries. Therefore, according to the conscience-hell theory, the more spiritual, moral and righteous a man becomes, the more hell he gets, and the more debased and depraved he becomes, the less hell he gets.

It should also be noted that if conscience is a man's hell it must also be his heaven, for heaven and hell both stand on the same authority in the Bible and in the light of reason. As a rule, however, those who believe in this theory do not make it apply to heaven. The theory is thus one-sided.

2. A second theory claims that we get all our hell here upon this earth. Every time we sin we will be punished for it here. As far as the Scriptures are concerned, if this idea be correct, then we will get our heaven here also. But one thing is, as a rule, noticeable, and it is the fact that those who believe that all the hell the sinner gets he gets here, usually firmly believe that heaven is hereafter. As we have

before remarked, heaven and hell stand upon the same authority, both in the Scriptures and in the light of reason; so if we get one here we will get the other here, also.

As we study the multiform conditions of life we are constantly struck by the fact that absolute justice here is unknown; also that in this life it is practically impossible. The innocent are so many times punished while the guilty go free; the wicked and dissolute enjoy the good things of life while the righteous are persecuted and receive the hard end of all things. Nero on the throne; the Christian a prey to the half-starved beasts of the arena; labor crushed by capital; courts bribed by tainted money—these are but grains of sand on the seashore of illustrations of the absence of absolute justice. But if there be a counterfeit justice, there must somewhere be the true justice, for there can not be the shadow without there be that from which the shadow takes its form; there can not be the counterfeit without the genuine, after the pattern of which it is counterfeited. If there be no absolute justice here, then it must be after here or hereafter. Thus hell must be hereafter also, for only where absolute justice is dispensed can there be just rewards and punishments.

Another thing noticeable about our existence is that our lives interact upon one another. Paul expressed the idea when he said that no man lives or dies unto himself. If a man dies in our vicinity, we are influenced to some extent by the death, the intensity of the influence depending, of course, upon the nearness or remoteness of the influencing action. If it happens a thousand miles from us, we read the

account in the newspaper, and an involuntary shudder passes over us; if it happens in the home across the street, our interest is more intense, but if it takes place in our own home, it breaks our hearts. The actions of the guilty punish the innocent; yea, the very existence of the sinner and his sin must of necessity be a punishment to the righteous. Murders, thefts, etc., occur, yet it is the man innocent of crime who by the sweat of his face must build the penitentiaries, erect the gallows, establish and maintain the madhouse and the home for the feeble-minded, or the habitation for the aged and infirm. Sin punishes the innocent as well as the guilty.

An illustration: A good Christian mother possesses a son who, in his young manhood, because of morally unhealthy associates, becomes corrupt in his personal life; his habits become bad and he seems to care not at all for things of a religious nature. The mother, who has slaved that he might have a chance in the world, and who now, in her old age, is deserving of all the heaven that life has in store, is punished by every sinful action of her ungrateful son. Shame and sorrow are heaped upon her by the one who should be her support and stay. Whether his actions be intended to hurt or not, the punishment which they inflict is none the less terrible to bear. Ah, if the story of lives could be written, how many times over would this illustration be repeated? According, then, to the idea that we get our hell here on earth, the good Christian mother who, because of her pure life, deserves heaven, is the recipient of hell because of the thoughtless follies of her wicked son.

The theory is manifestly an impossible one because our lives are too closely interwoven for one to be suffering the horrors of hell while his brother, with whom he dwells, is enjoying the delights of heaven, without there being an interaction of one life upon the other. Or, in a word, heaven, to be heaven, and hell, to be hell, must be separated, and separated so far that there can be no influence of one upon the other. Or, to state it again, heaven to be reward, and hell to be justice, must not be in the same place; for the punishment of the guilty would likewise become a punishment to the innocent. Even the very existence of the guilty in the same place with the righteous would be a punishment to the latter.

Concluding, then, if hell is not the pangs of a guilty conscience; if it can not, in order to retain its very character as hell, be here—then it must be after here, or hereafter, sometime in the future.

But we can determine the time of its existence even more accurately than to say that it is in the future. Hell can not be until this life is over and time shall be no more, and until there shall be a great and final judgment. It would be impossible to judge a man fairly at his death. True, the immediate acts of his life might be judged; but what about his influence? A man does not die at death. His body may lie moldering in the tomb, but his influence goes marching on. Is Ingersoll dead? No, his influence still blights and ruins. Does Jonathan Edwards still live? Yes, his splendid influence goes triumphantly on, blessing and uplifting. The after-death influence of these men accomplishes more for good or ill than the immediate result of their few years upon the

earth. Truly an impossible task is it to judge adequately the lives of these men and of all others until influence itself shall cease, and that can only be when time shall have been ended by the Father's hand. Thus the final judgment must be at the end of time.

Hell can not, in the nature of things, be awarded to those meriting it until after judgment, and if judgment be after time has ceased, then hell must also be after time has become no more. Therefore hell is in the future, after all time and after the last great judgment.

### III. THE CHARACTER OF HELL.

The next question which naturally arises in the progress of the discussion is one as to the nature or character of hell. What kind of a place is it going to be? Not many decades ago the common idea of the character of hell was the one very clearly expressed in the old phrase much used by spellbinding evangelists, as in the fervor of religious excitement they would describe the unrepentant as "hair-hung and breeze-shaken over the flaming pit." Visions of an immense sea of fire and brimstone from which day and night ascended the smoke of the eternally tormented were painted in words of terribly descriptive power, while terrified audiences sat trembling, with open eyes and mouths.

But, if one will think for a moment, this conception taxes the credulity of even the most credulous. Fire and brimstone can have terror but for the material body alone. Paul tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50), but that the body will be a new body and spiritual.

Fire and brimstone can have no terrors for the spiritual form of man when he enters the beyond.

But how can the numerous Scriptural descriptions of hell be explained, for assuredly they abound in references to fire and brimstone? True, but one law which can invariably be found to explain these Biblical descriptions is that wherever Jesus, His apostles, or any of the inspired writers describe hell, the terms employed are always figurative. This law may be illustrated by an explanation of the sense in which the words Gehenna (Greek) or Hinnom (Hebrew) were used.

The valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna, bounds Jerusalem on the south below Mount Zion, and is the place which is so often mentioned as the setting of the awful idolatrous rites practiced by the apostate kings before the great idol Moloch. When King Josiah at last succeeded in overthrowing this idolatry, he defiled the valley by casting into it the bones of the dead, the greatest of all pollutions among the Jews. From this time on all the refuse of Jerusalem was cast into it and the combustible parts of it destroyed by fire which was kept forever burning. In the time of Christ, the festering bodies of criminals, dispatched according to the barbarous fashions of execution then prevalent, were cast into this terrible valley, and the smoke of the ever-burning fires carried their horrid stench, mingled with that arising from the rotting bodies of dead swine, which were to the Jew the most detested of all animals, to all the valley's immediate environs. It is not to be wondered at, then, that to the Jew this place was the most horrible upon the earth. The very mention of the

name "Gehenna" would provoke within him the most profound sensations of horror and disgust. Thus it is that Jesus, in the attempt to make clear to those unlettered fishermen, who had so often demonstrated their inability to receive a spiritual lesson, the abhorrent character of hell, uses the familiar and detested term "Gehenna" as descriptive of that place "which eternal justice hath prepared for those rebellious." Hell was not to be the valley of Gehenna, but in that it was to be a place of horror and gloom—it was to be like Gehenna. Hence the terms employed are figurative, simply attempts to portray to mortal man the terrors of spiritual punishment.

The very terms used in the descriptions of hell show that they are figurative, but attempts to explain the real character of that awful condition. Unless they are figurative, they are mutually exclusive. Hell is called "outer darkness" and at the same time a "lake of fire." It is a "bottomless pit" and a "flaming furnace." These terms are only attempts to make the disciples understand the awful meaning of separation from God. It could not be all of these at the same time.

But if hell is not a burning pit, a lake of fire and brimstone, what kind of a place is it anyway? Is it a beautiful place, or the abode of perpetual gloom?

When one thinks of heaven, whether that one believes in hell or not, he tries to imagine a place beautiful beyond the power of human genius, inexperienced in its celestial delights, to paint in feeble words. The word "heaven" is to man the symbol of the highest conception which has ever been his of truth, beauty and eternal soul-delight. By the law of opposites,

which tells us "that if there exists the good, there must also be the bad; if there be white, there must be its opposite, black," man has always been made to believe that hell, the exact opposite in character of heaven, and as far removed as "from the center thrice to utmost pole," must then be by nature the most doleful and horrible place in the universe of God. And such we are convinced, both by reason and Scripture, it must be.

Because hell does not consist of a lake of fire and brimstone, let no one deceive himself considering it a place of pleasure or a sort of summer resort. The terrors of hell are not at all minimized by the destruction of the ancient and utterly false conception by which, on pain of excruciating physical suffering, men were frightened into repentance, but rather do they become a thousand times more terrible when the true character of hell is revealed.

In proving the futurity of hell, the fact was established that hell to be hell, and reward to be reward, the two conditions must be separated so far that there could be no influence of one upon the other, for a reciprocal influence would destroy the character of both. Now, all acknowledge it to be Scriptural teaching that heaven is the abiding-place of God; all the beauties and glories of that wonderful home are emanations from His loving presence. If, then, heaven and hell are so far separated that inter-influence is impossible, then hell will be in character whatever it must mean to be separated from God. A very slight idea of what this would be is given to us as we behold the lives of those about us here and now who are separated from Him. The drunkard,

with his bleared eyes, his seamed and furrowed face, his look of hopeless despair, as he realizes how utter is his servitude to rum—is he not an awful picture of the barrenness and bleakness of a life separated from God? Or look into the cold, hard eyes of the prostitute; see the artificial red on lip and cheek; behold the complete absence of that which lends to womanhood its most gracious charm, a gentle, womanly reserve—and then exclaim in pitying words, “How terrible is the life of that soul that knows not God!”

And if separation be terrible here, what must it be hereafter, when to those terrors incident to the life of sin and without God must be added the consciousness that through an eternity no hope of change can come? Lost opportunities, golden moments wasted in sin, oh, how clearly will they be remembered then, when no more opportunities or golden moments come! To be separated for an interminable eternity from the presence of God, from hope, from light, into outer darkness, “where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.” “Such place eternal justice hath prepared for those rebellious.”

And think you that this hell will not be a place of horror? All happiness and every true delight of this present world is made possible by the existence of God or His people. The home with all its joys, political freedom, fraternity; our hospitals, our schools—are not all these, and more, resultants of our knowledge of the Father? To be separated from Him and from His people, truly this would be a hell terrible enough for even the most hardened unregenerate!

Another conclusion concerning the awful character of hell, which from the nature of the argument

forces itself upon us, is that one which is derived from the character of hell's occupants. If hell is to be the abode of liars, thieves, murderers, cut-throats, adulterers, whoremongers, gossipers, slanderers, the devil and his angels, it will indeed be a terrible place. The wrangling, the back-biting, the wailings of despair, the groanings and gnashings of teeth, and that through an endless eternity, such a hell as this should be enough to make the sinner's blood run cold. In such a hell all the wicked of all the ages will be gathered together and there will be no forgiveness nor any hope of reformation; but brooding over all there will be an eternal darkness caused by the absence of God. Such will be the terrible penalty reserved for those who refuse God's mercy.

When we think of all this, do we not wonder if God could allow a conscious hell through all the unending ages of eternity? Would not the "outer darkness" mean total destruction of the refuse heap of the world? Could God allow such a place to continue forever? Much there is in the Word to incline one to this view of it, that hell, after all, means that the wicked will be absolutely destroyed. Whatever it is, we know that it is separation from the Father of love.

#### IV. THE DURATION OF HELL.

During our argument on future punishment, we have been tacitly assuming that hell was to be of eternal duration. Is this assumption a reasonable one? How long will hell last? is therefore the next question which logically confronts us.

There are those who believe that hell will be a place where some soul, less guilty than others, will be

boiled, fried or tormented in half a dozen fiendish ways for a few thousand years; then, when he has been purged of all his meanness, he will be permitted to enter the realms of glory. Hell is not a reform school; hell is penalty attached to law. Hell is not a place to get ready for heaven. In this life man is to prepare for the life beyond. The only pardon that the Bible teaches is Christ. If we reject Him as God's pardon, there is no other opportunity for change. Punishment will last just as long as man is guilty, under law. If there is no pardon after death—and if there is, man, as yet, has never received the revelation of it—and if man, at death, is guilty under law, then punishment must last as long as guilt lasts. If there is no pardon after death, then guilt would be eternal. If guilt is eternal, then punishment or penalty must be eternal, everlasting, never-ending. Punishment never makes a man any better when in that punishment he is separated from all means of reformation. In our last division we found that hell was banishment from the presence of God into outer darkness, away from light, from joy, from all contact with righteousness.

“A dungeon horrible on all sides round,  
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames no light,  
but rather darkness visible,  
Served only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades where peace and rest can  
never dwell, hope never comes.”

If this is hell, then what chance has man for reformation? He is far removed from all opportunity of change. No missionary can come to him with the life-giving message. No prayers of a God-fear-

ing mother can allure him upward. His day of opportunity is over. The company in which he finds himself is not the kind which will work for his betterment. In the life which we live to-day, even that one who desires fervently to live the life of purity will find it impossible to do so if he be continually environed by sin. In hell, where there is no environment save that which is low and vile, how can one even hope for change for the better? Hell in duration is eternal, a place of doom and despair.

### CONCLUSION.

Sad and horrible though the fact of hell may be—its existence, its futurity, its terrible and eternal character—yet how human hearts should thrill with joy because a loving Father has mercifully prepared a way of escape. When man falls, and by his fall condemns himself to eternal penalty, the Father, because He so loved the world, was willing to bankrupt heaven itself that the pardon might be given. Reject not, then, this day, that pardon so mercifully offered to us who are worthy only of justice. Mercy is yours, freedom, light and hope. Oh, accept it while you may!

### III.

## WARMING AT THE DEVIL'S FIRE

TEXT.—“Now Peter was sitting without in the court: and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilæan. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. And after a little while they that stood by came and said unto Peter, Of a truth thou art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known. Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”—Matt. 26: 69-75.

**J**ESUS lived more in the last week of His life than in all the rest of it put together. In that wonderful week of His passion there were great moments and high days, but one of the most memorable is the event which we wish to consider in this address. So like to our own experiences is this of Peter's denial that the brief record of it reads like a story of our modern Christian life. There is in the scene which we wish to paint that which should search our hearts with a deep searching.

After the first wild fear which had scattered the disciples in shameful flight, Peter, rallying his courage somewhat, had followed at a distance until he had

come at last to the court of the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. John, with his accustomed courage, had gone up boldly into the palace that he might be as near as possible to his Master. Sudden fear seems never to have been the weakness of John, and on this occasion he elicits our admiration by his fine, brave bearing. Peter, however, his thoughts still confused and his brain awl with the sudden and unexpected turn affairs had taken, advanced uncertainly into the middle of the court, where, because of the chill of the spring night, a charcoal fire had been lighted. "The glow of the charcoal, around which occasionally a blue flame played, threw a peculiar sheen on the bearded faces of the men as they crowded around it and talked of the events of the night, describing with Eastern volubility, to those who had not been there, the things that had happened in the garden, and exchanging, as is the manner of such serving-men and officials, opinions and exaggerated denunciation concerning Him who had been captured with such unexpected ease and was now their master's safe prisoner. As the red light glowed and flickered, it threw the long shadows of these men across the inner court, up the walls toward the gallery that ran around; up there, where the lamps and lights within, as they moved along the apartments and corridor, revealed other faces; there, where, in an inner audience-chamber, the prisoner was confronted by his accuser, enemy and judge." The night was cold, and Peter now approaches the group around the fire that he might better hear what they have to say, for away from the cheerful blaze he is more than ever alone and without. The events of the night have caused him to feel forsaken,

and even though these are the enemies of the Lord, it is better to be with them than to be alone. He therefore joins the group around the fire, and extends his hands over the welcome blaze. Now he sits down, then he rises again. It is "this restlessness of attempted indifference which first attracts the attention of the serving-maid who had admitted him to the court. Peering for a moment intently into his face, she boldly accuses him of being one of the companions of Jesus. Why should he incriminate himself before these menials who had no right to question him? Who were they? They had no authority. Then Peter was for the moment afraid; the chill of the night had struck deep into his very soul. Hence he answered at once, and with emphasis, denying all knowledge of the events of the night, yea, even of the very meaning of the words which the woman spake. But, as is always the case, he had denied too much, he had been too emphatic, not to bring immediately upon himself another, and this time a more vehement, accusation."

How striking is the description of the struggle in the soul of Peter as given by Farrar: "What had he to do there? Or why should he incriminate himself, or perhaps Christ, by a needless confession to those who had neither the moral nor the legal right to exact it? That was all that he now remembered or thought: nothing about any denial of Christ. And so, as they were still chatting together, perhaps bandying words, Peter withdrew. We can not judge how long time had passed, but this we gather, that the words of the woman had either not made any impression on those around the fire, or that the bold denial of Peter had satisfied them. Presently we find Peter walking away

down the porch which ran around and opened into the outer court. He was not thinking of anything else now than how chilly it was and how right he had been in not being trapped by that woman. And so he heeded it not, as his footfall sounded upon the marble-paved porch, that at that moment the cock crew. But there was no sleep that night in the high priest's palace. As he walked down the porch toward the outer court, first one maid met him, and as he returned from the outer court he once more met his old accuser, the door portress; and as he crossed the inner court, to mingle with the group around the fire, where he had formerly found safety, he was first accosted by one man and then all around the fire turned upon him, and each and all had the same thing to say, the same charge to make: that he was also one of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. But Peter's resolve was taken: he was quite sure he was right, and to each separately, and then to all together, he gave the same denial, more brief now, for he was collected and determined, but more emphatic even with an oath. And once more he silenced suspicion for a time."

About an hour had passed since Peter's second denial had so effectively silenced his determined accusers. In this time he had opportunity to think upon his action, and the thinking had made him nervously garrulous. And it was just this which at last betrayed him to those who were covertly watching him. "Of a truth thou art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known." Thus spoke one of the bystanders. "Thy words, that barbarous dialect of Galilee—why, we could not mistake it; thou art one of them, and there is no use for thee to deny it." This time, with

oaths and curses and imprecations upon himself, Peter, in a veritable frenzy of rage, repeated his denial. "I do not know the man." No sooner had the words been uttered than high and shrill came to the startled ears of the disciple the crowing of the cock. The persistency of its sound pierced even into the soul of Peter—and he remembered. He remembered his boastful words when with swagger he had said to Jesus: "I will go with thee to prison and to death, dear Lord. I will draw my sword and will strike for thy Kingdom." And now, in the first battle against a crowd of menials, he has surrendered and denied his very faith in the Lord Jesus. And Peter remembered! Oh, the blessing of memory, even though its awakening may sear the very soul with pain and bring to our eyes a torrent of bitter tears. Note again the words of Farrar: "He remembered the words of warning prediction which the Lord had spoken. He looked up, and, as he looked, he saw up there how that just at that moment the Lord turned round and looked upon him—yes, in all that assembly, upon Peter. His eyes spake His words: nay, much more, they searched down to the innermost depths of Peter's heart and broke them open. They pierced through all the self-delusion, false shame and fear. They reached the man, the disciple, the lover of Jesus. Forth they burst, the waters of conviction, of true shame, of heart sorrow, of the agonies of self-condemnation, and, bitterly weeping, he rushed from under those suns that had melted the ice of death and burnt into his heart—out from that cursed place of betrayal by Israel, by the high priest, and even by the representative disciple." Just as a berg of ice melts in a warm sum-

mer sea, so all the anger and uncertainty melted out of the heart of Peter, and out into the darkness he rushed that there in the bitterness of repentance, in the company of memory, in his self-inflicted solitude, he might begin the new life and lay hold upon the courage and power to become the preacher of Pentecost.

How human is this whole narrative and of what a truly human experience it tells us. Every time I read it I am reminded of a similar experience—yea, of many such—in my own Christian life. How often, in unguarded moment and sometimes—God pity us—even with calculated carelessness, have we been guilty of denying our Lord. It is a strange time in which we live. Even in the pulpits of the land, too many times there are those who wear the cloth of a servant of the Lord whose chief passion seems to be that of recanting. It is not recanting that we need to-day, either in the pew by lives of unfaithfulness or in the pulpit by negative and gloomy words of doubt. Rather, it is the good confession, and with the confidence born of experience in the wonderful grace of God, for which the world to-day is standing in terrible need. A solemn and searching examination of our hearts will help us to judge ourselves. Let us, then, consider how we deny Christ. We can perhaps better understand our denial if we inquire into the manner of confessing Him.

## I. HOW DO WE CONFESS CHRIST?

### 1. *We confess Him with our mouths.*

You will remember the words of Paul: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the

dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9, 10). What a blessed experience in the life of the Christian is this confession. Do you not remember the time, perhaps long ago, when you walked down the aisle in a little, old church and before your friends and neighbors, before father and mother and brothers and sisters, you confessed that with all your heart you believed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, and your Savior and Redeemer? Never will you forget that precious hour. It is truly the start to Christ—this wonderful act when before men we accept Him as our Prophet, Priest and King.

### *2. We confess Jesus also in our baptism.*

Did you ever think of baptism as an act of confession? Well, it is just that. Here, in an act, in a manner which may be seen by men, we confess before the world that we believe Jesus died for our sins, that He was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa, and that on the morning of the third day He came forth from the tomb, the firstfruits of them that slept. This is a confession to the eye. When we think of what it is that we confess in this act we can never have any doubt at all about how the act itself is to be performed. When we keep constantly before us the truth that we are confessing our faith in the fact that God hath raised Jesus from the dead we will in picture want to be raised with Him. What a solemn and beautiful confession is this act.

### *3. We confess Jesus in the Lord's Supper.*

When on the Lord's Day we who are His people gather around His table in the house which through

tears and heartaches and sacrifice has been dedicated to His service, we are confessing to the world two great and solemn truths. We are confessing, first, that we still believe with all our hearts that His blood shed in such agony on Calvary's cross was offered for the remission of our sins. It is a confession of our faith in the atonement of the Christ of God. In the second place, it is a confession of our faith in His second coming, as stated in the language of Paul: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim [or publish] the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). In this verse the apostle tells the whole story of the confessional value of the Lord's Supper when he says: "Ye do show forth [or confess] that you believe in the death of Jesus until he comes again."

Did you ever notice the fact that when those who believe in fads and pseudo-religions which blaspheme the very name of the Lord by calling themselves Christian come to the place in their thinking that they no longer believe Jesus to be the only begotten Son of the living God and the Savior of the world, they no longer practice baptism or the Lord's Supper? And why not? Because of the fact that baptism and the Lord's Supper testify to the deity of Jesus. When we do these things we show to the world that we believe in Him as Savior and that we have accepted Him as the Lord of our lives.

#### *4. We confess Jesus in the songs we sing.*

I have ever been a lover of gospel music. It has always seemed to me that there are deep meanings in the gospel story which can be brought to the hungry heart only through the swelling cadences of a great

gospel song. Perhaps the meaning was always there even in the preached Word, but the emotional emphasis comes only through the warm and tender strains of gospel music. And how many and how powerful are our confessions of faith in Christ through the great songs.

“All hail the power of Jesus’ name,  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all.”

Who can truly sing this but the man who knows Jesus as Lord and King, and to whom the most glorious event to be imagined is the coronation of the One to whose authority he has so gladly surrendered? The reason why a great service in song is always the best preparation for the proclamation of a dynamic message in word is found perhaps just here. A song service is a confessional. To confess one’s faith is only to confirm one in that faith. To be confirmed is to make one more ready and eager to do all within his power to win other men to the Lord and King. And then the effect on the sinner himself is almost as marked. He hears a great crowd of people with shining faces singing so confidently of their Redeemer that their faith become a part of his soul, and he is ready to receive with kindness the truth as it is preached in word.

5. *We confess Christ in the lives we live day by day.*

After all, this is the most powerful confession. It is powerful in its persuasive influence. The one unanswerable argument for the religion of the Lord Jesus is a life which is hid with Christ in God. Here is an open Bible which the world may read—a Bible

whose story is so sweet and winsome that the hardest sinner can not withstand its wooing.

I remember an experience in my own ministry. In a little eastern Oregon town, in one of our meetings, a young barber came forward one morning and made the good confession. Four years before one of the most notoriously wicked men in the community had become a Christian. His conversion had been genuine, for from the day of his coming to Christ he had turned from his old sins and for four years had lived the life of a true child of the King. When Bobby Zeverly, the young barber, made his decision, the old gentleman (Colonel Draper), who had long been Bobby's friend, was almost overcome with joy. As he took Bob by the hand after the service he said: "Old boy, I can not tell you how glad I am. I have not the words to do that, but, Bob, this is my prayer for you, that you may make good." Bobby answered him: "Colonel, for four years I have been watching you. When you became a Christian I was stirred as I had never been stirred before. I said then: 'If Colonel Draper makes good, if it really means something to his life, I, too, will become a Christian.' Colonel, you have made good. I have heard Brother Kellems but twice, but that which has brought me to my Lord today is your life, which every day is the kind of life the Christ Himself would have you live." I remember when Colonel Draper told me the story the tears rolled down his face as he said: "Brother Kellems, I never dreamed that any one was watching me, and here the Lord has used my poor, humble life to bring one of my dearest friends to himself." Ah! what a power to persuade men is a transformed life. Let us

confess Him day by day by the lives we live before the world, remembering that we are the world's Bible, the only one it will read and the only one it cares anything about.

## II. HOW DO WE DENY CHRIST?

1. *We deny Him by neglecting the services of the Lord's house.*

On the Lord's Day we have an appointment with the King. He has promised to meet us in an especially intimate communion at His Supper. When we allow some trivial thing to keep us from that appointment, we have said to the world, "We do not care; we have lost our interest in the things divine." When on a Lord's Day night our <sup>MINISTER</sup>~~pastor~~ comes before the congregation to bring the message of light and hope to those assembled in the house of God, and we are at the picture-show or somewhere else, on pleasure bent, we have denied our Lord. When the members of the body of Christ come together to pray for the souls of lost men and women, and we are too tired or busy to be interested, we are denying the Lord.

2. *We deny Jesus when we live unfaithful lives before the world.*

I am not afraid of infidelity. Infidelity has tried its best, but it can not overthrow the mighty rock foundation of the blessed church of Christ. I am not afraid of destructive higher criticism. Fads will for a time thrive and have their day. The church is built upon the big things of the universe of God, and all the powers of earth and hell can not overthrow it. But there is an enemy of which I am afraid. That enemy is worldliness in the church. Worldliness can sap the

very vitals of the church, destroy her consciousness of her mission, and make her lukewarm about the divine command of the Lord who loved her so much that He gave His own precious blood that she might be redeemed from sin. Unfaithfulness is dangerous because it gives the wrong view of Jesus to the world. He is the truth and the life, and when men see Him in His beauty they are glad to own Him, but the life of the unfaithful Christian gives to the world a distorted view of the blessed Savior.

*3. We deny Christ when we neglect the Lord's Supper.*

We have an appointment with Jesus at His table, and that appointment comes every Lord's Day morning. If we were invited to meet the President of the United States at the White House, we would consider the appointment one of such consummate dignity that we would on no account miss it, and yet how often are we guilty of forgetting the meeting with our Lord there at His table, where in solemn reverence we may remember how great for us was His sacrifice. And to thus absent ourselves is a denial of our Lord. When we consider the fact that the Supper is by its very nature a great confession, the neglect or refusal to make that confession is tantamount to a denial itself. We say to the world by this action that the Supper and its meaning are to us a thing inconsequential and without significance. I am more and more impressed with the sad fact that our own people, who have avowedly aligned themselves with the movement for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, need to-day a revival of conscience as to the Lord's Supper. I have never known a truly great Christian who was

remiss in his duty toward this great institution. The constant reminder of the cost of our redemption is a prime necessity to the growth of a strong Christian character. Let us forsake not, as we value our very faith, the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is.

4. *We deny Jesus our Lord by neglecting opportunities to save men from their sins.*

Sometimes it is easy for us to become greatly exercised over some heathen or pagan across the world from us who is in darkness, and yet we allow our own friends to go down to Christless graves and without so much as lifting a finger to save them. I wonder why we are thus so careless. We trample upon the precious souls of men as though they were but common clay. Of what value is that faith which does not become hot with zeal in the presence of one who knows not Christ as Savior? I shall never forget an experience in an Eastern city. The mayor of the town was asked by the men's Bible class to deliver an address. In the speech which he gave he said: "There is a man in this class to-day who has lived next door to me for more than twenty years. We belong to the same political party. We are interested in the same business ventures; we are friends, and yet in all these years, while he has been a member of the church, never once has he invited me to be a Christian." It seems to me that had I been the man thus referred to that morning I would have gone through the floor with chagrin and mortification. At the judgment-bar of our God there will be hundreds who will point their fingers at us and despairingly say, "You had the chance, but you did not tell me of your Lord." And when thus we refuse to

exercise our divine rights, we are telling the world by our neglect that we do not really care for our Lord nor the souls of men who in their sins are separated from the glorious presence of our Father. God forgive us for our criminal neglect of those who around us ever are dying.

*5. Many times we deny our Lord when we move into a new community and neglect to place our membership with the local church.*

This condition obtains to an alarming extent here in our beloved Westland. Thousands there are who back East were faithful Christians, but who, moving here, have left their religion on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Somehow they feel when they come to the West that they are on a vacation, even as regards the matters of faith. Too often their attitude is expressed in the prayer of the little girl who on the eve of her departure for the West said, "Good-bye, God; we are going to California."

I do not know of a quicker way to deny our Lord and to lose our faith altogether than to neglect to affiliate with the local church in the new home. If we neglect to eat and to rest or to exercise, we will not for long live in the physical world. And does not this same rule apply with tremendous force to our spiritual existence? If one does not exercise and eat of the spiritual food, the spiritual man will soon cease to be. I remember an illustration of such a denial which took place right here in your own beloved Golden State. The minister and your evangelist visited in the home of a woman who told us with pride that she was a member of the great Independence Boulevard Christian Church in Kansas City, Missouri. I con-

gratulated her upon the fact, for it is indeed an honor to be a member of that great church. Then the question was asked, "And, Madam, how long have you been in California?" The answer was one which, unfortunately, is too often given, "I have been here about twelve years." "And you are still a member in Kansas City? Impossible, Madame, for you are living here; all your interests in life are here. How can it be, then, that you are a member of the church in Kansas City? Tell me your story, for I want to know why it is that you have been here for twelve years and still consider yourself a member of the church in Kansas City." "When I came to California, Brother Kellems, I went to the church the very first Sunday morning, for back East I was always faithful and never even thought of missing the service unless prevented by sickness. The building was new, the people were strange, and to me they were cold. I have found since that this is a characteristic of all the Western people, or, at least, Eastern folks often think them that way. I sat in the back part of the church, and as soon as the sermon was over I went out, and at home that afternoon I cried because of sheer loneliness. The next week I went again, but it was the same thing. Gradually I began to stay at home on Sunday, a thing I can not remember doing at all when back home in the East. One day I became acquainted with a neighbor, and the family invited us to go with them on a Sunday picnic. We went, and this one was just the beginning of many others which followed it. Gradually we came to the place that we never went to the church at all. It has been years since I was in a service." "Do your children attend the Bible

school?" was the next question. "No, they do not attend. It is eight blocks to the church and they must cross two car lines to get there; so I have not sent them." "In a word, then, they are as much little heathens or pagans as the boys and girls of China or Japan. Jesus said that we know not the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. If He were to come to-day, would you be ready to meet Him?" There were tears in her eyes as she answered: "No, Brother Kellems, I am not ready to meet the Lord, for I have been unfaithful. I expect that by my neglect I have denied my Savior." Ah! she was right; she had denied that Jesus was any longer her Savior. As for her membership being with the church in Kansas City, this was absolute nonsense, for when she left the East in reality she took her membership with her. Our membership is where we ourselves are. We talk about our letters, when the fact of the matter is that the real letter is our own personalities, our own selves. Paul says that we are living letters, known and read of all men. You are the letter the church wants. The quickest way to deny Christ is to neglect to line up with the activities of the local congregation.

### III. WHY DO WE DENY CHRIST?

1. *Sometimes we deny Him because, like Peter, we follow afar off.*

John did not deny the Savior, because he was close to Him all the way. He went with his Lord boldly into the judgment-hall and stood by Christ during the farce called a trial. Peter, however, fled with the rest of the terrified and disappointed disciples when Christ was apprehended. After awhile he came to himself

and then followed at a distance. It is ever this man who gets into trouble. The soldier who in the thick of the battle is fighting with all his might does not know half as much fear as does the one who at a distance is waiting for the fight to begin. The man who keeps close to the great, loving heart of the King, who communes with Him and walks and talks with Him, is not in any great danger of denying the faith. Keep close to the great, throbbing heart of love, in prayer and obedience and service, and doubts and fears will fade away into the glorious certainty of one who has experienced the power of complete salvation.

*2. Sometimes Christians deny Christ because they get into the wrong crowd.*

Judas, instead of taking the way that led to the cross, instead of going to Calvary and there prostrating himself in agony at his Savior's feet, went back to the priests who with him had plotted the death of Jesus. He was in the wrong company, and he fell. Peter joined the group around the devil's fire and there warmed his hands. It was in this atmosphere, among those who cared nothing for Jesus, that he was tempted to deny Christ. The man who is constantly in Christian company will find that there are but few temptations of this nature to be overcome, for the strength and the courage of numbers is his and he will find it easy to serve God. It is when one must stand alone for his King among those who are the enemies of the Lord that the real test of character comes. Knowing what we know to-day about the modifying influence of environment on all forms of life, need we be told that to surround ourselves with an unhealthy spiritual environment means spiritual decay and ruin? One is

known by the company he keeps, and if those who are his friends are not friends of the Lord Jesus, how can he long be true and faithful to his Master? There will be but one end, and that denial of Jesus.

*3. Sometimes there are those who deny Christ because of a godless home influence.*

I always have a deep sympathy for one who is forced to live the Christian life in a home where there is no help of a spiritual nature. It is hard for a husband to be a true Christian when his wife cares nothing at all for the things of the Kingdom. And it is difficult indeed for a woman to be the Christian she should be when her husband has no interest at all. There are many, perhaps even in this audience, who could give sad testimony to the fact that what we say here is true. And there are many who can not stand it, and after a vain struggle they give up and deny their faith in Christ. It is evident that these will never have any influence in leading their loved ones to the dear Lord. God never uses unfaithful servants. There is, after all, but one way for us to win those who are near and dear to our hearts: by placing ourselves in that position where God can use us. If you wait for your loved ones, well and good. But be careful where you wait. You will never bring them to decision for Christ if you wait outside the church. There is but one place to wait if you would have your efforts—or, shall we say it, your waiting?—crowned with success, and that is *in* the church. Live before them such a life of faithfulness that they will think there is something in your religion, and will want to come. Yes, you will not be able to keep them out if you follow the teaching of the Lord when He said:

“Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Do you not think that this applies to the home as well? Will not our loved ones see our light even more quickly than those who are further from us? How vividly the truth of this was illustrated to me in a meeting in the eastern part of my own State! I noticed that the little, black-eyed woman who played our piano and attended every service of the meeting had her six children always with her. No matter how cold it was (and the weather was bitter cold in that campaign), she was always present with a bright smile and a quiet confidence in the work of the Lord. I noted, however, the absence of her husband, and wondered why he did not come. One day I asked my brother-in-law, who was the minister of the church, to tell me about her. “She is the most faithful woman in this church,” said he. “She never misses a service; she gives and she works. Her husband is one of my good friends, a fine man, but he is not a Christian. His people back in Iowa are devoted members of the church, but so far we have been unable to interest Glen in the work. I sometimes think that he is far more interested than he is willing to let on, but he has never made a public decision for the Kingdom.” I remember the day we dined at the home. The husband was very courteous to us, but when we mentioned religion he became reticent, and we quickly saw that it would be a mistake to press the matter at all. After he had gone to work we asked the wife about him. She said to me: “Brother Kellems, Glen is not a Christian, but I am hoping and praying every day that something will be done to bring him to

Christ. I have said very little to him, although he knows well how gloriously happy I would be if he would but come with the family and confess his faith in our Lord. While I have said but little, yet I have tried to live before him such a life as would make him desire to be a Christian. I feel that I am Christ's representative in his home, and that much depends upon me as to what he will think about the church. I feel that if I am faithful, God will some day answer my prayer and Glen will come to Christ." As we left the little home I said to the minister: "If ever there was one whose prayer should go up for a memorial before God, surely it is the prayer of this woman. May it be that the Father will graciously answer her before this meeting shall close." I shall never forget the last night of that great campaign. Little Vera, Glen's youngest child, just six years of age, came to me, her black eyes shining, and said: "Papa is coming to church to-night. We placed his good clothes where he can find them when he comes home from work, and he is coming to-night." If husbands and fathers who are not Christians could know how much happiness they could bring to their loved ones by sometimes merely coming to the service, I wonder if they would stay away as indifferently as they do. It was late in the song service when Glen came into the room with his friend Steve. They were separated, because the building was packed and men were standing all around the walls. The sermon was preached and the invitation song had begun, when I noticed Glen make a sign to Steve, who was across the room, and both of them—two big, strong men, each weighing more than two hundred pounds—came down the aisle to confess their

faith in Christ. <sup>\*</sup> *Instrument of music not according* (The little woman at the piano turned white, and a big tear stole softly down her cheek, but she went right on playing the song of invitation.) It was a happy hour in that church, I can tell you, when these two men, widely known and influential as they were, came to stand with their families for the truth. After the service was over, Glen said to me, as I was extending to him my heartiest congratulations because of the manly step he had taken: "Brother Kellems, I have heard you but twice in all this meeting. It has not been anything which you have said that has won me to the Savior. There is my preacher"—and he pointed proudly toward his wife, who was talking happily with some of her friends. There were tears on his honest face as he told me how many times he had felt like a whipped cur when his wife had taken the children and gone off to the church alone. "I could not stand it any longer, for I have been living with a saint in my home, and I just had to come and do my poor best to serve the same Lord whom she loves and whom she has by her beautiful life preached in my home." That man is an officer in the church to-day. He is there because his wife had the faith and love to live true and strong for her Master. Had she been unfaithful she never would have won her husband to the church. God uses faithful servants, let us repeat it again, for only such can preach the truth as Jesus would have it preached.

Are you denying the Lord who has done so much for you? Often we are guilty before we even think about it. If we find ourselves slipping, let us, like the man about whom we have studied to-day, in tears of sorrow repent and turn from our backsliding, and

thus prepare ourselves as did he for the mighty Pentecosts which are ahead of us. Pentecost was given, not to Peter the denier, but to Peter the Spirit-filled.

## IV.

### SAVING FAITH

**TEXT.**—“And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him.”—Heb. 11: 6.

**V**ERY few there are to-day who understand just how vast is the scope of faith. A young man said to me recently: “Brother Kellems, there is no room for faith in the lives we live now. We are living in a scientific time and men are concerned only about facts; they have no time to worry about faith.” Yet how widely that young man missed the mark. No room for faith? Why, the biggest and best things of our lives belong to us because we do have faith; they are possible to us because there is faith in the world. Because of faith in mother I learn the laws of nature—that fire burns, that water drowns, etc. Because of faith in some teacher I learn the finest things in philosophy and science. I believe that there was a battle of Bunker Hill because I credit the testimony concerning that battle, because I believe in the historical accuracy of the men who have written about it. I have never had the time nor the equipment to work out to my satisfaction some of the great scientific problems, but I am perfectly willing to accept the conclusions of those men who are specialists in their line and enjoy

the results which these conclusions bring to me. Because of faith the home relation is possible. Were it not for faith of husband in his wife or of wife in her husband, there could be no home at all. Ninety-five per cent. of the business of America to-day is done by cheque, showing that men trust each other, that they have faith in each other. No room for faith? The fact of the matter is that there could be no life, in the real sense, in our modern world at all were it not for faith. Faith is in reality the biggest thing in our lives.

In the New Testament, faith occupies a fundamental position. The words of the text are significant: "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God." We may be moral, we may be philanthropic, we may be good citizens, we may have the welfare of the community at heart, but we can not please God if we have not faith. The man to whom faith is an impossible thing can not know God. The commission of our Lord as given in Mark also emphasizes this foundational significance of faith: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). If one will be condemned because he hath not faith, surely it is of supreme importance that he know what faith is and how it comes.

### I. WHAT IS FAITH?

The definition of the writer of the Hebrew letter is one deserving of attention. In that most wonderful of New Testament chapters on faith he says: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 1:1). An assurance of things hoped for; the assurance or certainty in our

own hearts that those things for which we hope are steadfast, that they are realities. We hope for eternal life. There is no scientific apparatus yet discovered, no way yet known, by which we can prove that immortality is an actuality. Aside from the demonstration in the resurrection of Jesus, there is no proof. And yet, to the man who has faith there is the assurance that immortality is an actuality, that it truly does exist, and that after awhile we shall see and know our loved ones who have gone on before us. "The conviction of things not seen." The certainty in our hearts that the unseen is not unreal, but only unseen. What a glorious definition!

But there is another definition of faith. Primarily it is the belief of testimony, the credence of facts. I credit the facts concerning our Civil War, and I believe in the actuality of that war. If I credit the testimony concerning the resurrection of my Lord from the grave, I believe in the resurrection. The accuracy of this definition is attested in the words of John when he tells the reason for the writing of his Gospel; "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." Here in the New Testament we have a record of the life of Jesus, an incomplete record, brief and fragmentary; a record of facts, by reading of which we may accept the testimony concerning His person and His mission in the world. When we accept these records as facts, then we have faith in that One of whom they are an attestation; we have faith in Him as the Son of the living God.

Man by nature loves truth in the concrete rather than in the abstract. There are a few courageous souls in the world who are lovers of truth for truth's sake, and who will follow with relish the abstract manifestations of it, but the majority of men must know it in tangible, realizable form. For them it is necessary that they handle it and see it with their eyes. Thus it is that when God would speak to the sons of men in an intelligible language He uses a form which will meet the desires of this great majority; He manifests Himself in the person of His own Son. This has ever been God's method of revealing Himself to mankind. Truth in personality; truth that man may see in the shining eyes of a great-hearted, red-blooded man; truth which is contagious because men can see it working in a life—this is God's method used throughout all the ages. Jesus said: "I am the truth." Men are not to be saved by a dogma or a doctrine. They are to be saved by Him, by knowing Him. And this is the New Testament teaching, that our faith is to be in Him. He is the foundation of the church which He has builded. Without Him there would be no church. A beautiful passage from Professor Denny comes to my mind just here. "When we open the New Testament we find ourselves in the presence of a glowing religious life. There is nothing in the world which offers any real parallel either to this life or to the collection of books which attests it. The soul, which in contemporary literature is bound in shallows and miseries, is here raised as on a great tidal wave of spiritual blessing. Nothing that belongs to a complete religious life is wanting; neither convictions nor motives, neither penitence nor ideals,

neither vocation nor the assurance of victory. And from beginning to end, in all its parts and aspects and elements, this religious life is determined by Christ. It owes its character at every point to Him. Its convictions are convictions about Him. Its hopes are hopes which He has inspired and which it is for Him to fulfill. Its ideals are born of His teaching and His life. Its strength is the strength of His spirit. If we sum it up in the one word 'faith,' it is faith in God through Him—a faith which owes to Him all that is characteristic in it, all that distinguishes it from what is elsewhere among men known by that name." Without a doubt the Doctor has sensed the situation as the New Testament presents it. Jesus is all in all, and that faith which is to redeem the soul rests upon Him. Surely it is the significance of that mighty verse in which the whole gospel is concentrated: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). When Peter made the great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus answered: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16-18). And Paul, speaking of this great rock foundation, says: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Jesus is the foundation upon which our assurance of things hoped for rests. We hope for immortality, and are assured that we shall live because we

believe in Him for whom death had no terrors and the grave no power to hold. He is the tangible evidence of things not seen, for He was from the Father. Our faith rests upon Him. "It is that attitude of the soul to Jesus which is confident that the saving power of God is present in Him, and that there is no limit to what it can do."

## II. HOW IS THIS FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD PRODUCED?

There have been many erroneous ideas concerning the production of faith. One of the older ones was that faith is a gift of God. God sends it into the heart as an electric flash is sent over the wire. It comes to us, but we know not how. It is for us to wait in passive attitude until it comes. There are others who feel that faith comes through some great and incomprehensible experience. They have been taught all their lives that suddenly they will see the light and know the truth of the Lord, and in this way they will "get" religion. These and many other such errors have been productive of much unbelief. Many there are who are out of the kingdom of God to-day who might have been members of that Kingdom had the New Testament message been preached unto them in power. For the New Testament is clear on the method of the production of faith in the heart. Some of the plain pronouncements of the Word are such as that of Peter at the so-called council of Jerusalem: "Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7-9). They were to believe on the Lord Jesus by hearing the word of the gospel, the good news concerning Him. The same

idea is encouched in the words concerning the Corinthians: "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). They heard the gospel, and then, after hearing or because of their hearing, they believed it. Our Lord states the same great truth when He says in His so-called intercessory prayer: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20). Nothing could be clearer than this statement. Paul forever settles the matter when he writes to the Romans: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

The truth concerning the Lord has been deposited in the word of God. While there is a multitude of influences which enter into the production of faith in a heart, such as the influence of a godly friend, the prayer of a Christian mother, the life of a devoted loved one, yet the inspiration of all these influences is directly from the New Testament, for they testify of Christ. It is as men come in touch with the Word, either by reading or through preaching, that the evidence for the work of Jesus in the world, for His person, is presented in the strongest way to the mind, and faith comes. The primary definition holds throughout, that faith is the credence of testimony, the testimony which has been preserved in the pages of the sacred writings.

There is a message in this truth for the preacher of the gospel, and for that one whose earnest desire has ever been to win souls to the Master. Never has the world needed real gospel preaching as it needs it now.

Not discussions of theology, but preaching—real preaching of the New Testament Christ. How often is the power of the Word attested in the very language used to describe it. Paul calls it the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The Greek word which he employs means “dynamite.” It is like dynamite in its power to stir and revolutionize. The writer of the Hebrew letter speaks of the Word in moving terms when he says: “For the word of God is living, and active [energetic], and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Paul writes also to the Philippians, and urges them that they continue in “holding forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:16). James gives his tribute to the power of the Word to produce faith and a new life when he says: “Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). There never has been a place in the world, nor a time, since the Master walked on the earth, that men would not listen to the plain and beautiful Word if it be preached in power and enthusiasm. Thus alone can true living and saving faith be produced in the heart which is dead in its sins.

### III. WHAT IS THE TRUE DEFINITION OF SAVING FAITH?

#### 1. *Consider it negatively.*

(1) It is not “faith alone.” I remember one time listening to a woman preach on the subject which we are considering here. She was a very brilliant and consecrated lady, one who with all her heart believed

the word of Christ. As she held up the Bible she said: "Only believe! The very moment you believe this blessed volume that moment are your sins taken away, that moment are you saved." I am sure that woman was honest, but she was honestly mistaken. One might believe the Bible from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelation; he might believe with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the Savior of the world; he might believe that the tears and sweat and blood of Calvary's cross were for his redemption—he might believe it all, and be utterly and forever lost. We are told that the demons believed and trembled, but they were not saved from their sins. There is no heresy in the world so deceptive and dangerous as the heresy of "faith alone." I once heard a very enthusiastic Endeavor worker in the State of California tell a crowd of young Endeavorers that as soon as they knew John 3:16 by heart they were ready to go out and win the world to the Lord, for all they would have to tell those who heard their message was that faith alone would redeem the soul. How sad it is to teach people only a half-truth. The faith that saves the soul is not "faith alone."

(2) Saving faith is not a mere intellectual assent to the deity of Jesus. There are many who say: "Why, yes, we believe in Christ. We believe in Him just like we would believe in any of the wonderful historical characters of the past. We believe in Him just as we believe in Pericles, Heraclitus, Herodotus, Seneca, Paul or Alexander. We believe that He actually lived and that He was the Son of the living God, and we are interested in Him from purely the historical standpoint." They believe in Him, but they are not saved

by Him. Their lives are not transformed by the power of His spirit. To them His love means nothing. He is not Lord and Savior. Like radium, their faith gives off light, but no heat. It is but coldly intellectual.

(3) Living faith is not the faith which makes parties or divisions in the church of God. We are all sure that one can be a Christian and not subscribe to any of the peculiarities which differentiate one body from another. In a word, we believe that there is a central something, something fundamental to all the great orthodox religious communions, something in which the faith of all is rooted, which is itself the real saving thing. One can be saved and never believe in Methodism. And the Methodists believe this universally. One can be redeemed and never believe at all in Calvinism as such. On this the Calvinists are agreed to a man. We acknowledge that there are Christians in all the denominations. There is no saving virtue in that which divides us. The saving power is in that great and fundamental truth in which we are all united, and which will eventually bring us all to the foot of Calvary's cross a united and harmonious church—the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Savior of the sons and daughters of men. We are saved by our faith in Christ as God's Son. We are not redeemed by theories about Him or dogmas invented by men concerning His person, but by Jesus Himself, by our faith in Him as a living and reigning Lord.

## *2. Living or saving faith illustrated.*

In his wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer, in that greatest of all faith chapters in the New Testament, says of Noah: "By faith Noah, being warned of

God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became the heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb. 11:17). Here we have the whole story told. Here is a man who had a living, saving faith. Noah believed in God, and when God said that a flood was coming Noah knew that He meant just what He said and that the flood was really coming. He had utmost confidence in the word of the Lord. This is certainly what we need to-day. When God speaks, it should be ours to listen. Now, suppose Noah had said to the Lord: “Lord, I believe in you and I believe that the flood is coming. About this I have not a single doubt. But, Lord, I do not see any use of going to all the work to build the ark. You can save me from the flood without any of that effort. All I will need to do is to go to the top of a high mountain and let you save me there. I am a believer, Lord, in the doctrine of ‘faith alone.’ ” Do you think he would have been saved from the flood if he had taken this attitude? Not for a single moment. But suppose he had said to the Lord: “Now, Father, I believe the flood is coming, but I do not like the shape of the ark. It is not long enough and it is too high. Then, also, I do not like the kind of material which you have told me to use in its construction. Now, Lord, I want to change the whole thing and build it as I think it should be built.” Think you he would have been saved from the flood if he had taken this attitude? No, there is not one of us who will for a moment believe that Noah would have been redeemed from the flood if he had tried to quibble with the Lord. And yet some of us to-day follow

this very plan in dealing with the word of the Lord. Let us suppose, again, that Noah had taken still another attitude toward the word of the Lord, and had said: "Now, Lord, I do not see any use of building an ark to save all those animals. I think it will be sufficient if I construct a nice little canoe, and with that canoe I will save myself and those who belong to my family." What chance of salvation would he have had if he had spoken thus to the Lord?

To sum up the case, the faith of Noah was a living, saving faith because it was a faith plus obedience. It was faith plus an ark. Have I stated it correctly? Better, perhaps, faith big enough and broad enough and high enough to become an ark. Noah believed in God enough that when the Lord said a flood was coming, Noah never for a moment questioned the fact, but, in obedience to the command of the Lord, he went right out and began building on his ark. Not only did he build it, but he made it according to the plan that God had given. He used the exact kind of material that the Lord demanded; he made it the same length and the same height. The whole matter may be summed up in the simple words of the inspired writer: "By faith he obeyed." And it is ever the man who "by faith obeys" who is saved.

May I use my imagination just now? I want to imagine that Noah did not build that ark all by himself. I think he must have hired some fellows for two or three dollars per day to assist him in the assembling of the materials and the actual construction of the ark. Now, they did not believe that the flood was coming. They made fun of Noah and said: "Why, the poor old fool, there never has been such a flood, and there never

will be one like this of which he talks. But he is paying good wages and we are willing to accept that." They made fun of the poor old servant of the Lord, but Noah went right on building the ark. When at last the roar of the rushing waters was heard, and men and animals were running in terror for their lives, these fellows were not saved. And why not? Because they had an ark minus faith. No man is to be saved in his own little canoe of morality, but only in the great ark of safety, the church of the living God.

Time does not permit us to consider all the splendid illustrations of living faith as they are given in the New Testament. Read carefully the seventh chapter of Acts of Apostles or the eleventh chapter of the Hebrew letter and the illustrations of the mighty men and women of faith in the Old Testament days who will never be forgotten.

An old negro was one time asked by his master, "Rastus, can you define for me living faith?" "Yas, sah," replied Rastus. "Marse Henry, you see dat stone wall ovah there? Well, sah, now, suppose dat dat wall am eight feet thick and the Lawd says unto me, 'Rastus, jump through dat wall!' If Ah have livin' faith, hit's mah business to jump and de Lawd's business to make de hole." Ah! but he did define it. Could there be a clearer definition than this? If he had faith in the Lord, it was his business to do what the Lord commanded him to do and to trust the Lord to do the thing which he (Rastus) could not do. The trouble with too many of us now is that we want to live by sight and not by faith. We say if we knew we could hold out, we would surrender our lives to the Christ. If we were positive that we could live the

Christian life in the ideal manner, we would come. If we could see all the way, then would we try it. But this is not faith. When we start in serving Christ we do not know that we are going to make good. We may fail; if we trust in our own strength alone, we are sure to fail. But if we begin with faith that all will be well, and that the Master will lead us along the way, this faith will bring us at last unto victory.

One time, on a big lake in Scotland, there were two men in a small boat. One was an expert oarsman, the other knew nothing at all about rowing. Said the latter to the former: "Please teach me to row." "Certainly," was the reply; "pick up your oars." The pupil picked up the oars and started to pull with all his might on the left oar. The boat started, but it went round and round in a circle. "Ah!" said the learner, "I have made a mistake." He then began to pull with all his might on the right oar. Again the boat started, but, as before, it went round and round in a circle, in the opposite direction. Then said the teacher unto him: "Use both of your oars together." After practice, the boat was soon speeding across the lake. Then said the teacher: "Oar No. 1 was faith—using it alone, you make no progress; oar No. 2 represents works or obedience—using it alone, you make no progress; but when you use them together, then it is that you learn the lesson that they can not be divorced if you would make progress."

And so it is with living, saving faith. It is that faith deep enough, high enough, broad enough, to prompt a man to do whatever the Master requires of him, no matter where the path may lead him. It has ever been faith plus obedience which makes faith in

reality a living, saving power in the life. Whenever saving faith is mentioned in the New Testament, obedience is always linked with it. The case of Abraham is significant, "By faith Abraham, when he was called, *obeyed*" (Heb. 11:8). The same thing is affirmed of Noah, for the writer says of him: "By faith Noah prepared an ark." Faith always manifests itself in doing that which the Lord has commanded. In the case of the Samaritans it is said: "But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). Their faith came forth in obedience to the Lord Jesus. The same great truth is affirmed of the Corinthians: "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

There is one conversion in the Book of Acts which has caused many to be puzzled. It is the case of the jailor of Philippi. In his terror as he prostrates himself before Paul and Silas, he cries aloud: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He receives at once the answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:30, 31). Is this not sufficient to show us that nothing was required of the lost in New Testament times save that they believe on the Lord? Is this not enough to forever substantiate the theory of salvation by faith alone? But we must remember to note the context. What did this mean to the jailor? We can tell what faith meant to him by what it produced in his conduct. One needs only to read a little further in the text to have the whole matter unfolded in the usual clear and beauti-

ful manner so characteristic of all the New Testament writings. "And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately" (Acts 16:32, 33). How much we are told in these brief verses. What a marvelous transformation has been wrought here in the darkness of the night. From a sordid, selfish man of the world the jailor is translated into a kingdom of wonder and delight of which he had not even dreamed up to this time. He is told to believe, and then, in order that that faith may come into his heart, he hears the life-giving word of God. And what happens when he does believe? Why, he washes their stripes; he who has been their enemy now becomes their friend and ministers unto them in the new love which, with the faith in the glorious message, has come surging into his heart. And more: the same hour of the night, in the likeness of the burial of his now glorified Lord, he goes down into the waters of obedience, and with the glory of a new hope shining in his soul arises into a transformed life in Him. In a word, what we have found in every other case we find here also. Saving faith in the case of the jailor was that belief in Jesus as Lord so powerful and deep that it prompted him without hesitancy to do what the Lord had commanded him to do.

James has forever settled the matter of the relation of faith to works when he writes: "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:26). This is the conclusion of the whole chapter in which he has been discussing this

very relation. In a word, there can be no faith at all apart from works, for a dead faith has never saved a soul. The writer of the Hebrew letter speaks clearly in the same vein: "He became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9).

And this is the end of the whole matter. We may talk all we please about our faith in the Christ and our love for the church, His mystic body on the earth. We may tell how dear to us is that sacred record of His life among men, and how determined we are ever to defend it before the world. But, after all, there is only one way to manifest to God and men the faith in our hearts, and that is, that we shall do whatever He has required of us in love and gladness. This applies not alone to the one who is an alien from God, and who has never experienced the redeeming power which comes through knowing Him. It applies with equal force to that one who is already a professed follower of the Savior. Faith without works is dead indeed, and profession without works is surely as dead. Men will know that we are His disciples only as we show forth that life which He lived, only as we reflect in our words and deeds the love wherewith He hath loved us.

And thus may we plead with you this day that no longer your faith be quiescent, but that this very hour you shall come forth into the life of obedience which alone can make your faith a saving power to redeem you from all sin.

## V.

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF REPENTANCE

TEXT.—“Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”—Acts 3: 19.

**T**HERE is no doctrine which is so sadly needed to-day as the one which we have for our consideration in this message. If our Lord were here now, I believe that He would stress this teaching almost more than any other, for surely we need it in the morally lax age which is ours. In His own ministry Jesus, revolting in heart at the awful condition of His day, stung His hearers to their very souls with the words: “Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (Luke 13:3). These would be His words now if He were here among us in the awful wickedness of our time. We need a John the Baptist with lion heart to thunder against the iniquities of our world.

I. LET US FIRST OF ALL DIRECT OUR ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THERE ARE MANY ERRONEOUS IDEAS REGARDING THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

1. *Conviction is not repentance.*

A man may be convicted of the fact that before God he is an awful sinner, and yet never repent and turn to the Lord at all. I have seen hundreds of men whose white faces and quivering lips told of deep con-

viction in their hearts, and yet many of them never repented. There is not a bit of doubt in my own mind but that Agrippa was convicted by the terrific message of Paul. True, he may have tried to hide his real heart condition under the semi-ironical statement, "With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian," but deep down in the heart of him Agrippa knew that Paul was speaking the truth. He was convicted, but he did not repent. Conviction is the consciousness of the fact that we are sinners. To be convicted means that one has become a convict, that one has been tied to a certain position; and in this case it means that he has become a convict and has realization of the fact that he is a sinner. In itself alone it does not and can not constitute repentance.

## *2. Fear is not repentance.*

Many there are who, when the consciousness of sin in all its exceeding sinfulness dawns upon them, are filled with fear. And when one thinks of how terrible sin is in the sight of God, of the inwardness of its nature and the awful consequences which always follow it, well may he be filled with wholesome fear. Sin means but one thing, and that is death. I do not wonder, therefore, that when it is really made plain to a man what is the end of the path in which he is walking he is filled with terrible fear. I have seen men, even in this self-controlled age of ours, tremble with fear as they thought of their sins. But this fear alone does not constitute a repentance. The Philippian jailor, when he came prostrating himself before Paul and Silas in the prison in Philippi, was filled with fear. But that fear in itself was not a repentance. While it eventually did lead him to hear the gospel

and to comply with its conditions, yet alone it was not repentance at all. After the sledge-hammer sermon of Paul, Felix was terrified. Shaking with an uncontrollable fear, he sends Paul away, promising that at some other time he would hear the truth once more, but Felix never repented. He was filled with fear, but it was only fear; it did not lead him to a turning to God.

### *3. Sorrow for sin is not repentance.*

When real conviction comes to the soul, it often brings with it a great sorrow. But sorrow alone is not repentance. Judas is surely the classic illustration of this fact. He was filled with sorrow when it dawned upon him that he was responsible for the murder of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remorse cut into his heart with the awful realization that he was the murderer of his gracious Master. But he did not repent. A broken body at the foot of the cliff tells the rest of the story. One may be filled with sorrow for his sins, he may shed tears enough to float a superdreadnaught, but this does not for a moment indicate that he has repented. There is a vast difference between the godly sorrow which works repentance and the sorrow which Paul calls "the sorrow of the world." The sorrow of the world is the sorrow that comes to the sinner when he is caught in his sins. This type of sorrow never leads a man to repent.

## II. LET US CONSIDER A POSITIVE DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE.

1. *The meaning of the Greek term "metanoio" gives us the fundamental idea of repentance.*

Literally translated, this Greek word means "a change of mind" or "a change of will." Could a

better definition of repentance be given than this? The man who has repented is one who has had his mind changed in regard to sin; he is one who has a transformed will. To repent means "to get a new mind." Instead of the old mind of sin, we are to have a new mind; we are to "let the mind of Christ dwell in us." The mind is the source of all our actions. It is the storehouse of our motives. It is truly the fountain of the will. Prof. William James said that "the group of ideas to which a man devotes himself, and from which he works habitually, not spasmodically, is the most important fact about him." George Bernard Shaw says that "what a man believes may be ascertained, not from his creed, but from the assumptions on which he habitually acts." If a man is to be a new man in Christ Jesus, he must have a new mind; he must be indeed a turned-about man. In this connection I can not refrain from quoting from that excellent little work of President Davis, "Evangelistic Preaching." Quoting the little book, "Into His Likeness," by G. H. C. MacGregor, he says: "He describes the legal call to repentance in the familiar words, 'Amend your ways and your doings.' This is the command of the law. But there is a deeper call than this which is the call of the New Testament. It was uttered first in its fullness when our Lord, taking up the Baptist's work, proclaimed: 'The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.' It concerns itself with the inner thoughts and feelings. It strikes at the life ere it manifests itself in action. It keeps close to the etymology of the Greek word. It cries not, 'Change your actions,' but 'change your *minds*.' It does not say, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the

Lord thy God in vain;' it says, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' It does not say, 'Thou shalt not kill;' it says, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Its demand is not so much, 'Do new deeds,' as 'Act from new principles.' I call it evangelical, because it springs out of that doctrine which is the foundation of all evangelical religion: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' ''(p. 133).

2. *Let us attempt an illustration of the meaning of repentance.*

I have a bachelor friend of college days who lives at the present time in San Francisco. In those dear days of our association together he was always saying that when the happy time came that he should take unto himself a wife, he would have me come and say the words of the marriage ceremony, no matter where I might be. I made him the promise that I would come. Now, then, suppose that to-morrow morning I receive a telegram here in Long Beach that this friend of mine has found the right girl, and that the wedding will take place in San Francisco two days from this time. I ask Bro. George Taubman to preach for me for a couple of nights, and with great joy in my heart at the prospect of a very happy time and of a substantial fee (for my friend is wealthy and has always promised that the fee would be a fat one), I go down to the station to-morrow morning and buy a ticket for San Francisco and get on the first train going south. I purchase a morning paper and have just seated myself comfortably in the Pullman to enjoy it, when suddenly the door is opened and a friend of mine enters the car. He greets me pleasantly: "Good

morning, Brother Kellems, where are you going this bright morning?" I return the greeting with pleasure, answering: "Well, sir, I am going to San Francisco this morning. An old college friend is to be married up there, and he has asked me to come and tie the knot for him, and I am on the way to-day to perform that happy service for him." My friend in astonishment replies: "To San Francisco? Why, Brother Kellems, this train does not go to San Francisco at all. This train goes to San Diego, for it is going south." Now, I have traveled over the world quite a bit, and it does not make me feel comfortable for even a good friend to tell me, although it be in polite language, that I do not know enough to get on the right train, especially if there is a wedding at the other end of the line. And so with considerable dignity I answer him. "My friend, I have been to San Francisco a great many times, and I know just where I am going this trip. There is no doubt about the matter at all, I am on the right train." He leaves me then, reaffirming the statement just made that the train is going south and that I am going right in the opposite direction from San Francisco. Now, when I boarded that train there was no doubt in my mind at all. I was absolutely complacent, for I was sure that I was right. But the statement of the friend has made me a little bit uneasy; a doubt has entered my mind, a fear that, after all, I might be mistaken. After awhile the conductor comes through the car with the proverbial "Tickets, please," and I hand him my ticket. He looks at the ticket and then he looks at me and then at the ticket again, and then he lets out a roar of surprise: "Where do you think you are going?" "Well, I am

going to San Francisco; isn't that what my ticket says?" "Yes, that is what your ticket says," replies the now irate conductor, "and it seems to me, my friend, that you are going a very roundabout way to get to San Francisco, for this train is going south toward San Diego, and at sixty miles an hour. Unless you do some hurrying, you will soon be a thousand miles from that wedding and you will never in the world get there in time." Now, friends, there is no use in sassing a conductor. He knows where the train is going, for that is his business. The fact of the matter is that I am wrong, I am on the wrong train, and every whirl of the wheels is taking me farther and farther from the wedding, and that fat fee is taking wings to fly forever from my grasp. In a word, I am convicted. That fear which came into my heart at the statement of the friend who first told me that I was on the wrong train has now become a certainty, and with that certainty or conviction has come something else—*sorrow*. Would you not be filled with sorrow if you had made such an awful mistake? What would my friends say if they knew about it? And then to think that I have missed the wedding, that I have disappointed an old friend after faithfully promising to be with him at the happy time, and, worst of all, that I have missed the big fee. Why, a situation of this kind would certainly be enough to fill a man with deepest sorrow. I might feel so bad about it that I could even squeeze out a few tears, but remember that all the time the train is speeding on toward San Diego and I am constantly getting farther and farther away from my destination. Here I am filled with conviction and sorrow, but I have not as yet repented. I have

not repented until I pull the bell-cord and call to that conductor to stop the train and put me off. Perhaps I can catch a fast train to the north and still get there in time for the wedding. So I call the conductor and tell him to stop the train and let me get off. Now, the very moment that I change my mind regarding the whole matter, that moment I have repented. My fear and conviction and sorrow led me to repentance; the fact that I get off the train and get on another one going north is the result of repentance; the repentance itself was the change of motive or will regarding my destination.

Sam Jones was one of the greatest preachers that this world has ever known. He used to illustrate repentance in the following manner. He would walk across the platform, saying: "I am on my way to hell, I am on my way to hell." Then, suddenly turning, he would say as he walked in the opposite direction: "I am on my way to heaven, I am on my way to heaven. Now, the fact that I am on my way to heaven is a repentance." No, Sam Jones was mistaken, for the repentance occurred when he decided to turn around and go in the right direction.

The greatest illustration of the nature of repentance is found in the second chapter of Acts of Apostles. A great multitude had assembled in Jerusalem, and that multitude was listening to one of the Lord's greatest and most powerful messengers. At first, the people, as they came together attracted by the loud speaking in tongues on the part of the apostles, were inclined to scoff and sneer at the disciples of the Lord. They accused them of being filled with new wine. But gradually, as the sermon of Peter progressed in its

argument, there came a change in the audience. These people knew Jesus Christ. They had heard Him speak His wonderful words; they had watched Him as He healed the sick, as He gave sight to the blind, as He gave the power to walk unto the lame, as He healed the leper and as He raised the dead. These are the same people who had preceded Him into the city of Jerusalem, acclaiming Him as a king, throwing their garments in His path and singing in ecstatic praise: "Hosanna to the son of David." These are they who had turned against Him as the days went by, until they could stand at the foot of the cross, reviling Him and cursing Him and spitting upon Him. These are the same people who had turned sick with horror as the great darkness overspread the earth, and the roar and crash of the earthquake sent terror to their very souls and caused them to flee to the city, beating their breasts and praying for help from Jehovah. They knew Jesus Christ. And what did they believe about Him? They believed that He had died upon the cross, and that His body has been buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. They also believed the words told by the Roman guard that the disciples came by night and stole the body away while they were sleeping. Peter had one task in his sermon, and he met it as only an inspired man and one of his nature can meet it.

A study of the sermon shows that there is one great and outstanding point in it: that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God. And with what assurance did Peter preach it. There was no doubt in his mind. In the rush of words, in the tremendous conviction which inspired him, he swept on to a mighty

victory. The crowd at first greeted his words with jeers and ribald laughter. Mockingly they said one to another: "They are filled with new wine." But as the sermon progressed, there came gradually a subtle change in the attitude of the audience. One man turned to his neighbor with a puzzled look in which fear is mingled: "Do you hear what he says, that our Messiah is not to be a king of temporal power, but that He has already come and that we, not knowing Him, have nailed Him to a cross? Impossible! Our King crucified like a common criminal! Why, such a position as this is utterly absurd." But as Peter continued with his mighty sermon, sweeping everything before him, that fear which was so manifest in the blanched faces of hundreds became a certainty. They were convicted, it is true; they had killed their own Prince, toward whose coming they had been looking with such expectation through the long years. Murderers! and, worse still, murderers of the very Lord whom they so ardently desired to serve. Can we realize the awful horror, the fearful remorse, which such a realization as this would bring to them? Suddenly from the stricken audience there rises a great, terrible cry of bitterest agony, the cry of souls damned for an endless eternity: "Brethren, what shall we do?" And what is Peter's answer? They were filled with fear and remorse and a sorrow indescribable. Is this not enough? Need they do aught else? Had they not repented when thus in horror and agony they cried out to the apostles? Could they possibly have done anything more? Yes, for Peter replied even after all this: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and ye shall

receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” His answer was: “Change your minds, and turn to God in obedience to his Son whom ye have with wicked hands crucified.” Although they were filled with fear and conviction and sorrow, yet they had not repented until they had changed their minds in regard to sin and had turned to the Lord, who alone could cleanse them from their awful guilt.

*3. From the illustrations given and the meaning of the original terms as well as from the many statements of Scripture, the true meaning of repentance is clearly manifest.*

Repentance is an act of the mind or of the will by which the sinner decides to forsake his sins and turn to the Lord, to serve Him out of a pure heart throughout the rest of his days. Fear and conviction and sorrow lead one to repentance; they are the precursors of repentance; the changed life is the result of repentance; the act itself is a change of will. This is certainly the meaning of the statement of the text: “Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3: 19). The same meaning is emphasized in the words of Paul when describing his vision on the way to Damascus: “Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judæa, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent [change their minds] and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance” (Acts 26: 19, 20). A change of mind which brings about a turning to God was the meaning of the state-

ment of Paul to the Corinthians when he writes: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). How beautiful are the words of the old prophet when he exhorts the wandering one, and how expressive of the true meaning of repentance: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

### III. THERE ARE SOME TREMENDOUS REASONS WHY A MAN SHOULD REPENT.

#### 1. *Sorrow for sin should lead us to repentance.*

A great divine recently said that sin, to be really hated, must only be seen in its true nature. The hatred for sin that comes into the soul should certainly lead a man to turn to the Lord with contrite heart. If I knew one thing, I could turn the world upside down. If I knew how to make men feel a real sorrow for sin, I could lead them to the cross by the thousands. Paul speaks to the Corinthians of sorrow for sin: "For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that the epistle made you sorry, though but for a season), I now rejoice, not that I made you sorry, but that *ye were made sorry unto repentance*; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (1 Cor. 7:8-11). And this is the sorrow we need;

not the sorrow of the world, the sorrow which comes into the heart when we are found out in our sins, but the sorrow born of hatred for our unrighteousness, which causes us to yearn after a pure and godly life and to turn from that which is wrong. The very sinfulness of sin, the hideousness of being a rebel in the sight of God, the anguish at the realization that the sin is ours, that it belongs to us and that we are responsible for it, surely, surely, this should lead a man to repentance. While, as we have already discovered in this message, sorrow for sin is not in itself repentance, yet it will lead to a repentance. So terrible is sin that it caused all the agony of Gethsemane, all the tears and sweat and blood of Calvary. How clearly Jesus states it when, in the commission as recorded by Luke, He says: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46, 47). The contemplation of what our sins have caused in suffering and death should lead us through the valley of sorrow to the blessed plains of peace, the land of repentance.

*2. The impending judgment should lead us to repentance.*

We do not think of judgment much these days. It has been rather a popular thing to preach as little as possible on the great warnings of the gospel. With the decline in such preaching there has been a corresponding decline in the sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin among the people of our day. But the Bible is not silent on the great after-things. There is to be a judgment, and it is to be a terrible time for

the sinner. The language used in describing it is absolutely unmistakable. Paul, in that very climax of his oratorical and persuasive efforts, affirms that the judgment is coming, and exhorts men to repent in view of its advent. On the summit of Mars' Hill, with a sneering crowd of philosophers and near-philosophers before him, he says: "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31). His argument, in a word, is that God has appointed a day of judgment and that He has assured men that it is coming, and that Jesus Christ, who pleads with men as Lord and Savior, will be the judge. The badge of His authority as judge is the fact that God has raised Him from the dead. Therefore the conclusion is that all men should repent in view of the fact that some day they are to stand before the great judgment throne and answer for the deeds done in the body. When I think of the terrors of that day, my brother, I tremble for the sinner. It is going to be a hard thing for the righteous to be saved, and if it is a hard thing for the man who has surrendered himself to the Lord of hosts to enter into the city of God, "where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?" I tell you it is time you were preparing for the judgment-day, for as surely as we live there is to be a time when men will be placed in their proper relationships in the future life, and that time in the New Testament is called the judgment. Some there are who can

face the future calmly, but a calm of this kind is born of ignorance. Any man who knows what the future holds for the unrepentant can not be indifferent and calm. It is enough to fill one's soul with terror.

*3. The mighty works of Christ should cause us to repent.*

We are condemned every day by the works of the Lord. We can not be neutral about them. If they do not lead us to give ourselves to Him, they bring to us eternal condemnation. Jesus Himself, on one occasion bitterly disappointed at the indifference and negligence of those who heard Him and yet refused to obey, said: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you" (Luke 10:13, 14). In the next chapter of the same book our Lord again repeats His warning: "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:31, 32). The mighty works of Christ! The mighty works in the New Testament! Oh, how convincing they are! His life of love to the sons of men! His works of kindness and compassion! His death in sorrow on the cross of Calvary for the remission of the sins of the world! His burial in the

tomb and His glorious resurrection from the dead the third day! His ascension to the realms of the excellent glory—these, and the multitude of others in the sacred volume, will condemn you, my brother, at the judgment-day. They surely should lead you to fall at the foot of the cross and give your heart, your life, your all, to Him who has given so much for you. And are these all the mighty works of the King? Did His miracles cease with the end of the New Testament? Are there others which will on that last day stand before us like haunting spirits? Ah, yes! And how numerous they are! His mighty works in the world now, those which we can see around us every day; His work of regeneration, His work of making the world more like a real dwelling-place for one who is made in the image and likeness of the eternal God. And how sad is the situation of the man who can not see these mighty works, or who, worse than that, will not see them. I am fearful that the last statement is the real condition; they do not want to see these mighty works, knowing as they do that condemnation comes because they have not done His will.

*4. The call of Christ should lead us to repentance.*

Jesus came to call the man who is a sinner. I once talked with a man who said: "I would like to come to the Lord, but I am unworthy; I am too great a sinner." Luke records the words of Jesus when he said: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). The call of the King to a higher and nobler life, to a life of service and happiness, surely this call should lead a man to repentance. It is a heroic thing, this call of Christ. He wants men to live the life which will mean most to them in real

joy because it shall be a life dedicated to the service of others.

5. *The goodness of God should lead us to repentance.*

God has been good to men. He has been good to you, my brother, even though at times you may have felt that He has forsaken you. Paul describes it in words that are sweet indeed: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4). God wants us to be saved. There is nothing which can bring such sorrow to the heart of the great, loving Father as that one of those whom He loves should persist in sin and be lost. Peter tells us about it when he says: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

There are those who have had the wonderful privilege of being reared in a Christian home where the kind and holy influences of Christian parents have been cast about them. When they came to maturity, they had the joy of being married to Christian wives, and as the children came they, too, had surrendered to the Lord. And yet, these same men have often gone on refusing the love and mercy of the Lord of hosts. How good God has been to you! Can not the sentiment of gratitude in your hearts bring you to the place where you will make a surrender to Him who loved you and gave Himself up for you? When one goes on refusing the love of the Father; neglecting his duty to the Christ; allowing his loved ones to bear all the responsibility of doing the praying and teaching

and living for the King—is he not thereby despising the love of God which was so freely manifested for him? Why not this very hour forsake your sins and turn to the Lord, making your loved ones to rejoice, bringing happiness to all the expectant hosts of heaven by your surrender, and acknowledging the love and mercy of God by acting the part of one who has the courage to do the right, no matter what may prevail? Repent this day and turn to the King, doing works worthy of repentance.

## VI.

# THE GOOD CONFESSION

TEXT.—“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.”—1 Tim. 6: 12.

### INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE good confession is an act peculiar to the Christian Church of to-day. No other people lay such stress upon it. In every service where a gospel sermon is preached an invitation song is sung, and men and women are invited to make the good confession of Christ as Lord and King. In every evangelistic meeting great emphasis is placed upon this act as an evidence of the conversion of the sinner from the error of his ways and of his acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus in his life.

As a people we are builded upon the truth of the good confession as the great foundation, and it is well that we understand just what it means in the plan of salvation. That enough emphasis has not been given to it by the majority of the denominations is evident to any who have attended, not only their evangelistic efforts, but their regular services as well.

From the plain teaching of the New Testament it appears that this act is one of the definite steps in accepting Christ. Let us therefore consider it with care.

## ARGUMENT.

## I. THE WONDERFUL MEANING OF THE GOOD CONFESSION.

1. *It is a confession of our faith in the most stupendous truth in the universe of God.*

That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that God, the creator of all the wonderful universe, the maker of heaven and earth, actually came to earth and dwelt here in the person of Jesus, that He might in an intelligible language bring to men His message of divine salvation, is the most stupendous and amazing truth in all the great universe of our Father. No more tremendous truth than this can ever enter into the mind of man. No man can truly understand it in all its meaning and significance. No mind is great enough to fully comprehend it. We can only stand amazed, and with the apostle say: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). The truth of this confession is the gospel in epitome. It has well been called the keystone of the arch, for so it is.

2. *The good confession is a public acknowledgment that the sinner has accepted Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King.*

(1) The threefold acceptance is expressed in the words of the confession itself. "I believe with all my heart that Jesus is the *Christos* [the Christ], the anointed prophet or teacher of God." When I make such a confession as this, it is the same as to say that I have accepted Jesus as the teacher of my life, that

from now on His word shall be the guide of my path, that in all things I will try to pattern my life after His teachings. What a glorious confession it is, for in it I announce to the world my determination to take a new guide for my life. "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God." When I confess Him as the Son of the living God, I am acknowledging Him as the Lord of my life. Jesus is a King, and when I accept Him I must accept Him as King. By virtue of my accepting Him as Teacher and King, at the same time I have accepted Him as my Savior or "sin-bearer," for Savior really means "sin-bearer." In a word, then, I accept Him as my Priest, to make for me the sacrifice for my sins to God.

(2) It should be solemnly borne in mind that Jesus can not be Teacher and Priest to any man unless He is to that man, Lord and King. Our Lord will have nothing but a whole-hearted surrender to His Lordship. There is no salvation promised unless this condition is met absolutely. The primary meaning of *homolagro* is "to say after." When we make the good confession, we "say after" the Father who has made it before us, and all the millions of others who have acknowledged Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King. The word was also used many times in a military sense, and when thus used had the meaning of "unconditional surrender." When we make the good confession, we acknowledge that we have made an unconditional surrender to the authority of Jesus Christ; that we have accepted Him indeed as Lord and King. And Jesus will be satisfied with nothing less than this. The burning words of Matthew's Gospel are unmistakable in their meaning: "Not every one that saith unto me,

Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). The necessity of bowing to the absolute authority of the Christ as Lord is also emphasized by the writer of the Hebrew letter when he says: "And having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). One reason to-day why many do not become Christians is to be found in the very fact which we have been considering. They do not want to bow to the authority of the Lord. Absolute and whole-hearted obedience to Christ as Lord is necessary if we would have Him as Prophet and Savior.

*3. The good confession is a public subscription to the creed of the New Testament church.*

(1) The truth of this confession is the creed of the church founded by the Lord Jesus. We frequently hear members of the church of Christ to-day say that the Bible is our creed. The Bible is not our creed. No book is the creed of the New Testament church, nor is there any possible way by which a book of any kind could be the divine creed. Christ Jesus Himself, as He is revealed in the New Testament as Prophet, Priest and King, is the creed of the church which He founded, and which He purchased with His own precious blood. The faith upon which my salvation is based, therefore, is not in a book, but in a crucified, but gloriously resurrected, Redeemer, a living Savior who is revealed to me through that book which is His word.

(2) Jesus Christ made the wonderful truth of the good confession the mighty rock foundation of His

church. In that memorable conversation with His disciples when He asked them, "Who do men say the Son of man is?" and Peter in his ever-impulsive way had given the enthusiastic answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:13-18). The church of the Lord is builded upon a rock; not *petros* (masculine), a little stone or rock, but *petra*, a mighty Gibraltar, a tremendous, unshakeable mountain of rock. Paul, in speaking of the foundation, tells us plainly that it is not Peter, the little rock, but that it is the great, immovable rock which is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, when he says: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Peter himself speaks of the rock, and in his testimony is a denial that he was ever the rock which Jesus meant to be the foundation of His church when he says: "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in the scriptures,

Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect,  
precious;

And he that believeth on him shall not be put to  
shame.

For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve,

The stone which the builders rejected,

The same was made the head of the corner;  
and,

A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Pet. 2:3-8). Do these strong words of the apostle, who, as far as we know, never even saw Rome, sound like one who believed himself the rock upon which Jesus has built His church? Not for a moment, for Peter knew well that when, after the great confession, the Lord had given him that answer, the mighty rock was the King Himself. Many have been the storms which have beat with foam and thunder against the church of God. But amidst them all she has stood serene and confident, for she is built upon a mighty mountain of rock which all the storms of earth or Hades can not move.

(3) The subscription to the divine creed in the good confession makes a man a Christian, and a Christian only. It is indeed a confession of *faith*, and not of *opinions*. We are not giving our opinions about some great theological doctrine or system of doctrines; but we are confessing our faith in a person, in the divine person, as our Lord and Redeemer. Such a faith in Christ only will make a man a Christian only. He will belong to Christ only, not to a sect or denomination; for there is nothing in this confession which smacks of denominationalism or sectarianism. He will be just a follower of Christ Jesus. It always takes something more than that which Christ commanded to make a man a member of a division or party.

## II. THE SOLEMN DIGNITY OF THE GOOD CONFSSION.

1. *The good confession derives supreme dignity from the sublime truth to which it gives expression.*

Truly it is an act which should fill one with awe, to stand before his fellows and confess that he believes with all his heart that God was manifest in flesh and that He actually came to dwell among men in their sorrows and joys. It is ever a dignified thing to say great words, and certainly none greater could be uttered than those which give expression to the truth of the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is no act of greater dignity than that of making the good confession.

2. *The good confession receives a wonderful dignity from the exalted character of those who have made it.*

God the Father made the good confession. As Jesus rose from the waters of baptism, from the cloven heaven streamed with dovelike radiance the Spirit of the living God, and the voice of the Father, like the voice of many waters, spake to the sensitive ear of John the Baptist in the words of approbation and confession: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). And yet again—on that wonderful day when in the dim light in which but faintly was reflected the gleam from Hermon's eternal snows; when to the wondering gaze of the transfixed disciples Jesus appeared transfigured in gleaming white before them—the voice from the excellent glory once more uttered its great confession, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" adding to the words which on the former occasion echoed from the flinty cliffs of Jordan the solemn command: "Hear ye him"

(Matt. 17:5). Does it not add sublime dignity to the good confession to know the Creator and Lord of the universe made it gladly?

Christ Jesus Himself made the good confession. Before the high priest, when the sharp word of command was given, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God," He gave the calm answer: "Thou hast said" (Matt. 26:63). Again, before Pilate, He confessed in the same words that He was the Christ and the King of the Jews.

Peter the apostle made the good confession when, in an answer to the question of the Lord, "Who say ye that I am?" he confidently affirmed: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

Stephen, the first great martyr of the church, made the good confession and died for making it. In the scathing sermon which he preached to the infuriated multitude, he again and again affirmed his faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And how beautiful was his faith in death when, being filled with the Spirit of the living God, he "looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55, 56). And when the cruel stones were crushing the life from the poor tortured body, he called upon the Lord in whom he so confidently believed and whose name he had so courageously confessed, saying: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). How proud and happy was Stephen to make the good confession of faith in his dear Master. And like Him whom he confessed, he nobly interceded for those who

were his murderers, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," and then he "fell asleep" (Acts 7:60).

Timothy made the good confession, and in the words of Paul, "in the sight of many witnesses." There is also in this statement an intimation of the boldness of the faith which characterized these early witnesses. They would not hide their faith as though they had done that of which they should be ashamed, but with a great and "holy boldness" they spake forth before the greatest possible concourse of people their undying faith in Christ Jesus as Lord and King, and their unswerving loyalty to His holy cause.

Millions of Christians have made the good confession. Unending volumes would not suffice to contain the names of all those immortals who have gladly confessed that they believed in the Lord as the Son of the living God and the Savior of the world, and who, because of that faith, have given their all of this world's goods, yea, even to their lives, that His cause might not perish from the earth. Is it not a dignified thing that we do, then, when to-day we stand in the presence of our fellow-travelers to the judgment-bar of God and make this glorious confession? What wonderful company we are in when we, for the first time, in faith lisp the name of Jesus!

It is a significant thing to remember that those who constitute the membership to-day of the churches of Christ, those who call themselves "Christians only," have all made the good confession. This is not true of many of the denominational bodies of our day, for there are hundreds of the members of such bodies who have been received into the churches before they knew

anything about the matter at all. But it is true of the members of the churches of Christ that, before their baptism and reception thereupon into the membership, they have all made the good confession.

3. *The dignity of the good confession is also manifest when we consider what it has cost those who have made it.*

Jesus made it; but He died for making it. Peter made it all of his life after Pentecost; but he was, according to tradition, crucified head down. It cost him his life. Stephen gave his life because he was willing boldly to tell the world of his faith. Paul and James and John, and all the rest of the martyrs, suffered untold agonies because they loved the great Lord of life and were not afraid to name His name before the world. I can not here refrain from quoting from that splendid and inspiring book of Sylvester Horne, "The Romance of Preaching," as he eulogizes these first Christian martyrs: "There are no words in any language which can express how dear they held their faith and how cheap they held their lives. In all the instrumentalities on which we too often rely to win our victories they took no stock. They knew nothing of art, architecture or music; nor, for the most part, did they reck much of education. They met the mailed hand of Rome unarmed and defenseless. With no material weapon, no organized army, no display of force, they shook the mightiest of world empires till it trembled and tottered. From the handful of recreant apostles who, in His crisis, had failed their leader, sprang the invincible legion that did not know the meaning of fear, and that, to use the words of one of our own Puritan fathers in exile, 'triumphed over

cruelty with courage, over persecution with patience and over death itself by dying.' Rome had conquered every race, and trampled upon every creed, only to be baffled by men whose bodies she could burn, but whose hate she could not provoke; nay, whose love she could not alienate. When the sands of the Coliseum were red with their blood, or when, in Nero's gardens, converted into torches, they passed through smoke and flame to their rest, their message swept in triumph from convert to convert; while in the subterranean seclusion of the Catacombs, the martyr missionaries preached and prayed, and signed the galleries of Death with the symbols of eternal hope" (p. 90). What supreme dignity, therefore, does this good confession receive from the exalted character of those who have made it and from the terrible price they have paid in making it!

### III. THE SCRIPTURAL METHOD OF MAKING THE GOOD CONFESSION.

#### 1. *It is to be made with the mouth.*

The good confession is not to be made by signing a card or holding up the hand, but it is to be made in an open, straightforward manner with the mouth. In the before-quoted verse the apostle Paul makes this very clear when he says: "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9, 10). We are to come right out in the open and boldly declare our faith in the Son of God. Jesus will have no secret disciples.

Secret discipleship is akin to cowardice. We are to let the world know so that there can be no doubt about the matter that we accept Jesus as Lord and King.

2. *It is to be made publicly before as many witnesses as possible.*

Timothy made the good confession in "the sight of many witnesses." The greater the number of witnesses to our confession, the better for us and for those who are influenced by our actions. Do not take the attitude which I have known men to take many times, as illustrated by the words of a young man who once said to me: "Brother Kellems, I am coming, but I want to wait until there is a small crowd, and then I will come. I am naturally reticent and I do not like display." Ah! but this attitude is entirely at variance with the whole spirit of the good confession. When we make this confession we are witnessing for Christ. It is a testimony; a testimony should be made so that all men may hear it.

(1) Note the effect of such a public confession upon our own souls. To stand out bravely and tell of the faith in our hearts gives us the proper start in the Christian life. And there is everything in starting right. One of the greatest of the principles enunciated by Professor James in his famous laws of habit is that we should start the new habit with a strong initiative. Begin with great earnestness, start with boldness, and the good start will assist mightily in bringing the race to a successful conclusion. To make a strong public confession gives us spiritual nerve.

(2) Note the effect of such a confession upon others. We may talk to our friends from now until the day of judgment, but all of our words combined will not have

half the effect of one strong, determined action. It is trite, perhaps, to say that actions speak louder than words, but certainly they do when it comes to the matter of making the good confession. If we want to win our friends and neighbors, we must show that our faith is vital enough to prompt us to action. Draw them by the power of a mighty example. Lead them to the Lord instead of waiting for them to lead you.

#### IV. THE IMPERATIVE NECESSITY OF MAKING THE GOOD CONFESSION.

*1. It is one of the definite conditions of the forgiveness of sins or of our salvation.*

In his great letter to the Romans, Paul speaks plainly of the necessity for the good confession when he says: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10: 9, 10). No words could be plainer than these. There are certain steps which every sinner who comes to Christ must take, and this is one of the steps. In order that he may make a real break with the old life, he must make a public acknowledgment of his faith in the Lord, and that he intends from this time on to lead the kind of life that Jesus would have him lead. Christ has done His part for the salvation of the world, and He will do no more until we do our part in coming to Him. It is necessary, therefore, that a man make the good confession if he is to be saved from his sins and inherit the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, the Lord and Savior. There have been very

few in the past who have given to the good confession the proper place which it occupies in the glorious plan of human redemption.

*2. It is necessary that we make the good confession because we are all going to have to confess Him some day anyway.*

There is no escaping the great confession. We will make it here in this life among friends, and with the profound joy in the heart which is the possession of the one who loves the Lord—we will make it here as those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior; or we will make it before all the assembled hosts around the great white throne as conquered rebels. This is the meaning of those words of the apostle to the Gentiles when he says: “Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10, 11). Some there are who think that they can be indifferent to Christ. They are neither for Him nor against Him. Theirs is the attitude of indifferent neutrality. But the Lord does not consider any man a neutral. We are for Him or we are against Him. We are in His army or we are His enemies. That is the sad part of it all. The man who, though in his own heart he may be friendly to the cause of the Lord, is nevertheless not actively engaged in battling for Him, is considered by Jesus as an enemy. You can't treat Jesus with indifference always. Some day, my friend, you are going to confess Him. Either you will confess Him here as your Lord and Savior, or

there in the realms of glory, before all the assembled hosts, around the judgment throne of Christ, you will confess, in sorrow, that He is the Christ and the Judge of the world. Which will it be for you? Why not confess Him here and know all the joy of a forgiven soul?

3. *Because if we confess Him here He will confess us before the Father and all the glorified ones of heaven.*

As plain as the words of Paul, concerning the necessity of making the good confession that we may be saved, is the promise that Jesus Himself has given to those who will confess Him before men. "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10: 32, 33). What an amazing promise is this! That the Prince of glory should actually confess our names in heaven! That He should tell the great Father of all the world that He knows us, and that we are His!

Can you visualize the scene which these words imply? Yonder, in the ivory palaces gleaming in the light of Him who is forever the Way, the Truth and the Life, in that city of splendor where they need no sun, a glorious host is waiting, anxious and expectant, attending to a scene on the earth. A battle is raging. The mighty powers of evil are contending with the armies of the great Captain of the armies of righteousness for human souls. Long and fierce and determined is that conflict. Again and again do the forces of the evil one advance to the battle. Every art known to the ingenious deviltry of the arch-deceiver of souls is employed; every temptation possible to devise, is

thrown in the way. For long the struggle continues. An invitation song is ringing. A man of God, in the name of Him who in heaven so anxiously waits, is pleading for a full surrender to the Son of God, for a public profession of faith in Him as the King. The sinner turns white with the terrible ordeal through which he is passing. He can not sing; he can only grasp the seat in front of him as Satan whispers in his ear, as the forces of the evil one strive for the mastery. But suddenly! Ah! yes, there comes a change. A new light gleams from the eyes, a smile of glory breaks over the face, and, thank God, he starts for the front of the church. With manly stride he steps forward and takes the pleading servant of King Jesus by the hand. In a voice firm with a mighty conviction he speaks: "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and my Savior." The decision is made, the battle is won, the fiendish schemes of the destroyer of souls are defeated, and he is backward hurled. Then what a change in heaven! The mighty hosts of God, who with such concern have been leaning over the battlements of heaven, eagerly waiting for the momentous decision, send up a tremendous shout of praise. The Son of God, with the glittering diadem of the adoration of a universe, stands before them. He speaks! What is it that those lips so pure would utter? He speaks, and all the hosts listen with rapture written upon their angelic faces, for before them all He speaks the poor name of the sinner who has just won the mighty battle against Satan. And then from that great choir, from those thousands upon thousands of white-robed singers, there rises a mighty song of

praise. In all the history of the world there have been but three times when the choirs of heaven sang. They sang at the creation of the world, when from the darkness which brooded over the face of the deep, there came forth, at the command of God, a creation in light and beauty, a dwelling-place fit for the noblest of all God's creatures; they raised that song again with holier and more lofty joy when the Savior was born in the manger at Bethlehem, when the beautiful star of hope shone over the Judean hills; and they raise it again, until all the courts of heaven ring with its entrancing melody, when a sinner repents and turns away from his sins to God. All heaven is interested in the salvation of a soul. All heaven waits upon your decision. You can start the choirs of glory to singing this hour. Will you confess Him to-day?

## VII.

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

TEXT.—“Then came Jesus on the scene from Galilee, to get baptized by John at the Jordan. John tried to prevent him; ‘I have need to get baptized by you,’ he said, ‘and you come to me!’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Come now, this is how we should fulfil all our duty to God.’ Then John gave in to him. Now when Jesus had been baptized, the moment he rose out of the water, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove upon him; and a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, in him is my delight.’ ”—Matt. 3: 13-17 (Moffatt’s translation).

**D**OWN in the wilderness of Judea, that barren waste of land near the fords of the Jordan, great things were coming to pass. If one had walked the rocky roads or winding paths which led to that secluded spot, he would have found them packed with eager, anxious travelers, all going in one direction and talking excitedly as they went. Varying opinions were expressed by the conglomerate mob, as in the clouds of dust they wended their way down the rocky steeps, into the yawning gorge through which the sullen, yellow Jordan pushed its way, from the snows of the glittering mountains of the north to the brackish sea of death. “He is Elijah,” they said, “for his words burn like a consuming fire.” “Now at last has salvation come to the house of Israel,” said others, “for verily he is the Messiah Himself.” And so they debated about this strange evangelist, this new prophet

who had risen on the horizon like a bright new star, as they came from lovely Galilee, from priestly Hebron<sup>1</sup> or from the holy city of the great King. There, at the very place where Israel had long ago entered into the promised land, in these dark days of shame and sorrow the new kingdom of God was beginning. Here, where through baptism their fathers had entered into the smiling land flowing with milk and honey, the modern Israel, through baptism, was to enter into a Kingdom of which there should be no end and with which no other could ever compare in glory. For, in that desolate and uninhabited waste which tumbles away from Jericho south to the Dead Sea, in Bethany beyond Jordan, a mighty revival of religion had broken out. The long darkness so hopeless and drear had passed; the new light was dawning, for the forerunner of the King was sounding his mighty voice through the land: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For, in the wilderness of Judea, there was one whom it was worth while to hear, a wild eagle, a man of fire, an eremite whose sins had been burned out of him by the blazing, blistering heat of many suns. Out of a pure heart rang his cry of warning, his appeal to repentance. That we may understand more clearly Christ's baptism let us

#### I. CONSIDER AS A BACKGROUND FOR OUR STUDY THE WORK OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

##### 1. *Note, first of all, the condition of the age.*

It was an age of doubt. Uncertainty reigned in every heart. The old things were passing away and

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<sup>1</sup>I am indebted in the outline here to Farrar—"The Life of Christ," pp. 55-62.

chaos blighted the souls of men. To the Jew it was a prolonged horror. The scepter had long since passed from the hands of Judah, and an insolent, cruel dominion was exercised over ravaged Palestine by the conquerors of the world. The sacred institutions of the race were rapidly losing their holy character, for the high piesthood was tampered with at will by half-savage Idumean princelings and Roman procurators. That body of dignified men who in times past were looked upon as the highest and holiest in Israel, the Sanhedrin, was already under the unscrupulous influence of "supple Herodians or wily Sadducees." Indeed, as the ever-darkening clouds rolled up on the horizon, menacing with their warning of impending doom all things which to the pious Jew were sacred, it must have seemed to him that already the fountains of the great deep were broken up. In such times there is, to many, no hope of consolation save in a vigorous espousal of the old positions, a return with the whole heart to the things that were once taught and believed. And to many of the Jews, with this sense of the nearness of the wrath to come, there seemed nothing to do but to return with feverish enthusiasm to the teachings of the law, to ever deepen the expectancy of the coming of a deliverer, the long-expected Messiah. "The world had grown old, and the dotage of its paganism was marked by hideous excesses. Atheism in belief was followed, as among all nations it has always been, by a degradation in morals. Iniquity seemed to have run its course and reached its farthest goal. Philosophy had abrogated its functions except for the favored few. Crime was universal, and there was no known remedy for the horror and ruin which

it was causing in a thousand hearts. Remorse itself seemed to be exhausted, so that men were 'past feeling'! There was a collosity of heart, a petrifying of the moral sense, which even those who suffered from it felt to be abnormal and portentous. Even the heathen world felt that 'the fulness of time had come.'"<sup>1</sup>

(1) There is a desire, in such a time as this, to escape from the world and its horrors. The soul grows sick, and the heart longs for the vastness of the desert, the ruggedness of the towering ranges. To be alone with God, to exist upon the scantiest fare, to commune with indifferent nature—all this seems to be far better than the follies of a life of luxury and ease, or the miseries of a corroding poverty. To let the life of the wild and untenanted places burn out the poison drawn from a dispirited, pagan civilization; to be alone, and to renounce it all—has been the desire of yearning hearts in many such times as that through which Israel was then passing.

(2) There was a higher motive than this, however, in the asceticism of John. His was the desire to prepare himself for a glorious mission. In his heart the consciousness of it had long been burning. He knew that God had called him to be the path-maker for the King who was soon to come. The rigors of his life, then, were not inspired by the motive which leads the voluptuary in disgusted satiety to leave the world of men, that he may perchance find refuge, in the solitary places, from himself. Neither were they dictated by a cynical arrogance which demanded that he should stand apart from all men, nor yet did they take their roots in fear, the fear of the fanatic whose eyes are

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<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Christ," Farrar, pp. 55, 56.

turned inward so that he can do naught but contemplate his own salvation. Though a Nazarite from his youth, yet it all had its beginning in the consciousness that he was to be as a flaming fire, to consume with the breath of his mouth, to burn like a torch into the rusted, corroded souls of a wicked and adulterous generation. It was a schooling, a stern and mighty discipline, whereby he might become the chosen voice of the All Highest, that that voice should ring forth from a body clean and a heart pure. Well has he been called the "prophet of fire."

## 2. *The preaching of John and his baptism.*

(1) The character of this firebrand of God was full of impetuosity and courage. The calmness of peace which at times filled him was the result of a long and fiercely fought battle for self-mastery. His desire to bow in self-abnegation before his Lord, his unassailable intrepidity in the face of dangers, his unsparing courage to cut to the heart the astounded multitudes whose presence his ringing message had brought flocking from city, village and countryside in unending streams—these qualities were his because of his life of communion in the solitudes of the desolate places. On his face were the traces of the struggle, and in the flash of his eyes still slumbered the lightning; in the awful intonations of his voice muttered the thunders that had scarcely departed. "While he was musing, the fire burned and at last he spoke with his tongue. Almost from boyhood he had been a voluntary hermit. In his solitude he had learned things unspeakable; there the unseen world had become to him a reality; there his spirit had caught a 'touch of phantasy and flame!' Communing with his own great, lonely heart—

communing with the high thoughts of that long line of prophets, his predecessors to a rebellious people—communing with the utterances of the voices that came to him from the mountain and the sea—he had learned a deeper lore than he could have ever learned at Hillel's or Shammai's feet. In the tropic noonday of that deep Jordan valley, where the air seemed to be full of subtle and quivering flame—in listening to the howl of the wild beasts, in the long night under the luster of the stars 'that seemed to hang like balls of fire in a purple sky'—in wandering by the sluggish, cobalt-colored waters of that accursed lake, until before his eyes, dazzled by the saline efflorescence of the shore strewn with its wrecks of death, the ghosts of the guilty seemed to start out of the sulphurous ashes under which they were submerged—he had learned a language, he had received a revelation, not vouchsafed to ordinary men—attained not in the school of the rabbis, but in the school of solitude, in the school of God."<sup>1</sup>

(2) It is not to be wondered at that such a teacher was exactly suited to such a time. There were many teachers who preached flattery and blinked at the sins which were eating out the life of the nation, yea, who were themselves all too often rotten with the same sins themselves. Scribes and Pharisees, fat with good living, clothed in the finest robes, stood up and tried to edify with their essays on the precedents of the law and the traditions of the fathers. But John was another type of teacher. His was a countenance burned and bronzed by the purifying, blistering rays of the desert sun; his body clean because of his drink

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<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Christ," Farrar, p. 58.

of the water from the river and his food of locusts and wild honey; his lean, strong face, the lips pressed together and the eyes gleaming with the light of Heaven's own giving; the leathern girdle about his loins and his mantle of camel's hair—all this spoke of a man of rugged strength, of the courage which comes from self-denial and godliness. Here is a teacher to whom life is known; it is an open book; his words come from direct experience with God, the God of the mountains and desert, of the flinty crags which now were ringing with the scorn and righteous wrath of his voice.

(3) The message which he preached had its effect upon the people. With such a voice ringing at the fords of the Jordan and echoing back from the hills of Moab, it was no wonder that from far and near the eager crowds streamed forth to hear the words of him who "recalled Elijah by his life and Isaiah by his expressions." For as they came they heard a message, a message of fire; for it came out of a heart which blazed and burned with indignation, which flamed forth in denunciation of the sins of a rotten race of vipers. On the throne of an empire ready soon to totter into ruin, a beast in human form (Tiberius) ever exhibited more and more revolting excesses. Herod Antipas was leading in the attempt to be known as the worst in lust and the most apostacized in his loss of faith. Priests there were whose lives were stained with extortion and adultery, whose hearts were as rotten as the people whom they blindly led. Soldiers came into the audience—wild, brutish fellows whose sole thought was graft and a life with as little honest service as possible. Scribes, Pharisees and tax-gather-

ers—all flocked to the preaching of this man who dealt in such a mighty way with the deep issues of life; this one who was so fearless, so heart-searching in speech, so downright in his scornful denunciations.

For John was a preacher to the heart and conscience. Direct was his attack, and he dealt with those things which have never failed to win interest—sin and its forgiveness, reformation of heart and life. The preacher who deals with these themes will never lack for an audience. These were the themes discussed by the mighty Whitfield when he touched the hearts of the colliers at Kingswood till the tears poured from their eyes “and made white gutters down their cheeks.”<sup>1</sup> Twenty thousand assembled to hear the message, and many hundreds were soon brought to contrition and repentance. And so it was with the stalwart precursor of the King of kings. His was the message of fire, awful in its warning, moving in its power to touch the very hidden things of the heart—yea, to pierce through and break open those hearts now listening in rapt attention and growing consternation to his words. “Without a shadow of euphemism, without an accent of subservience, without a tremor of hesitation, he rebuked the tax-gatherers for their extortionateness; the soldiers for their violence, unfairness and discontent; the wealthy Sadducees, the stately Pharisees, for a formalism and falsity which made them vipers of a viprous brood. The whole people he warned that their cherished privileges were worse than valueless, if, without repentance, they regarded them as a protection against the wrath to

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<sup>1</sup> “The Days of His Flesh,” David Smith.

come.”<sup>1</sup> Never was there such a pride in noble descent as that which swelled high in the breasts of these whited sepulchres who had the form of godliness without knowing the power of it. They loved to speak of their lineage from Abraham, not knowing that not merely he who has the blood of Abraham in his veins is Abraham’s son, but he that hath the spirit of the great father of Israel in his heart, even though by blood he be unrelated—this one is the true son of Abraham. Pointing to that old, gray pile of stones which fifteen hundred years before Joshua had placed where Israel had lodged that night, a stone for each tribe—those monuments which remained even unto that day—John flashes forth the sentence which struck their hearts like the blows of a mighty hammer: “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” It is not a matter of blood at all, for from the very stones which reminded them of their glorious forebears, whose conquering tread had long ago awakened the echoes from the very flinty crags which then frowned upon them, God was able to raise up a people with the spirit of Abraham. “And so He did when from the Gentiles, those stony-hearted worshipers of stones, He raised up a seed unto Abraham, heirs according to the promise.”<sup>2</sup>

But there was more to this message than one imperious call to immediate repentance. Not only was the exceeding sinfulness of their sins reason enough for their repentance, but there was one even now more im-

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<sup>1</sup> “The Life of Christ,” Farrar, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> “The Days of His Flesh,” David Smith.

perative. The day of wrath was at hand! They had intuitively felt it for long, in the consciousness of impending doom. Deep in their hearts, in the degradation and horrible immorality which everywhere surrounded them, they felt that all things were passing away. John simply gave their feeling articulate form, for, like a trumpet-blast, he announces the coming of the King, the awful avenger, the One who in wrath, with fan in His hand, shall cleanse His threshing-floor, gathering His wheat into the garner, but without mercy burning up the chaff with consuming fire. This was the message which most of all warmed their hearts, for he (John) was not the prophet, he was neither Elijah nor the Christ; but after him was coming One whose shoes he was not worthy to bear—yea, He was already with them, and among them, and they knew not of His presence. Vengeance was in the air; its coming was but the matter of moments.

This was the message for his time, the message which was to inaugurate the new dispensation, repentance and the kingdom of heaven. Without claiming the credentials of a single miracle, relying only on the moving power of his mighty message, the forerunner makes ready a people for Him whose advent was so near. “While he threatened detection to the hypocrite and destruction to the hardened, he promised also pardon to the penitent and admission into the kingdom of heaven to the pure and clean. ‘These two great utterances,’ it has been said, ‘which he brings from the desert, contain two capital revelations to which all the preparation of the gospel has been tending—law and prophecy: denunciation of sin and promise of

pardon; the flame which consumes and the light which consoles—is not this the whole of the covenant?’ ”<sup>1</sup>

## II. LET US NOW CONSIDER THE BAPTISM OF JESUS WITH ITS ATTENDANT MANIFESTATIONS.

### 1. *What did Jesus do to be baptized?*

(1) He, first of all, went *to* the water. In the thirtieth year of His age Jesus came from Nazareth in the valley of Galilee to the preaching and baptism of His kinsman, John. Though by birth they were related, their lives had been wholly separated and each had grown up amid different surroundings. John had lived in the house of the saintly priest, his father, at Juttah, in the far south of the land of the tribe of Judah, and not far from Hebron; Jesus had spent His life in the quiet and seclusion of Joseph's carpenter shop in the smiling northland of Galilee. When the Master first came to the banks of the Jordan, doubtless for a time He listened with the crowds about Him to the scornful, biting words of the prophet: for, according to the emphatic testimony of John, at first “he knew him not.” It was undoubtedly his usual custom to examine with insistent care all who presented themselves for baptism, that they might by their true penitence be duly prepared for the solemn rite. When, therefore, Jesus presented Himself, requesting that like the others who had preceded Him He, too, might go down into the waters, John must have also examined Him as to His preparation. Immediately the preacher is filled with astonishment. This One, who, when but a lad of twelve, had amazed the great rabbis and doctors in the temple, now, after

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<sup>1</sup> “The Life of Christ,” Farrar, p. 61.

His eighteen years of communion with God and meditation on the Scriptures, could look into the eyes of the Baptist and fill him with astonishment. All who had come to John heretofore had come with trembling and tears, deep in the throes of a soul-racking repentance; but this One stood before him with manifestation of neither guilt nor fear, His look so noble, His bearing so majestic and solemn, the sinless beauty of His ways so apparent, "that at once He overawed and captivated the soul of John. To others he was the uncompromising prophet; kings he could confront with rebuke; Pharisees he could unmask with indignation; but before this Presence all his lofty bearing falls. As when some unknown dread checks the flight of the eagle, and makes him settle with hushed scream and drooping plumage on the ground, so before 'the royalty of inward happiness,' before the purity of sinless life, the wild prophet of the desert becomes like a submissive and timid child. The battle brunt which legionaries could not daunt—the lofty manhood before which hierarchs trembled and princes grew pale—resigns itself, submits and adores before a moral force which is weak in every external attribute and armed only in an invisible mail."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus came to the water. Seventy-one miles He walked that He might comply with the command of God; that He might fulfill every requirement; that He might be able to say in everything to His disciples, "Follow me." Does this not contrast to-day with the attitudes of those who say, "I do not think it necessary to be baptized. I think it but a formal thing without moral power or beauty"? Would it not be well for

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<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Christ," Farrar, p. 61.

such to think of their Lord who endured the fatigue of that long march that He might be baptized of John in the Jordan?

(2) Jesus not only went to the water, but He went down into the water and was buried in it and raised from it. To the astonished protestation of John, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" the Master makes reply which settles the matter forever. John, who had so many times received the trembling confession from the thousands of penitents, now humbly and reverently makes his own. But Jesus answers in words so dignified, with explanation so satisfying, that immediately John accompanies Him down into the sullen, yellow waters and buries Him beneath them. And to the question which so often has been asked, "Why should our Lord submit to baptism?" the words of His reply to John constitute an answer which is so clear that it should forever set at rest all doubts about its meaning, "Suffer it just now, for thus it is becoming for us to fulfil every ordinance."<sup>1</sup> This that John was doing was according to an ordinance or command of God. Jesus was being obedient to the law of God as He had always been obedient, for though He was the Son, yet learned He obedience. When but a helpless infant He had been circumcised, and had been thus submitted to that rite which signified the putting away of all defilement of the flesh. Though He was the Son of the One to whom the Temple belonged, yet all through His manhood He had paid year by year the Temple tax, though from it, because of His Sonship, He might justly have claimed exemption. He was born under the

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<sup>1</sup> "The Days of His Flesh," David Smith.

law that He might redeem them that were under the law, and it was becoming that He should fulfill all righteousness, that every ordinance of God He should obey, and that He should "fulfil his duty to God" (Matt. 3:15—Moffatt). It is here that the public ministry of our Lord truly begins, here that all He came to do for sinful man has its starting-point. It would not have been a strange thing had Jesus come from Nazareth to stand beside John in the waters and baptize men; but that He should come and submit with them, that He who knew no sin should come and submit to this baptism which was a baptism of repentance and for the remission of sins, surely this is an evidence of His Sonship, of the fact that He truly was the Servant of the Lord. "The astonishing thing is that, being what He was, He came to be baptized and stood side by side with the people. He identified Himself with them. As far as the baptism could express it, He made all that was theirs His. It is as though He had looked on them under the oppression of their sins, and said: 'On me let that burden, all that responsibility, descend.' The key to the act is found in that great passage in Isaiah 53, in which the vocation of the Servant of the Lord, which, as we have seen, was present to our Lord's mind at that moment, is most amply unfolded. The deepest word in that chapter, 'He was numbered with the transgressors,' is expressly applied by our Lord to Himself at a later period (Luke 22:37), and, however mysterious that word may be when we try to define it by relation to the providence and redemption of God—however appalling it may seem to render it as St. Paul does, 'Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin for us'—here

in the baptism we see, not the word, but the thing—*Jesus numbering Himself with the transgressors*, submitting to be baptized with their baptism, identifying Himself with them in their relation to God as sinners, making all their responsibilities His own. It was a ‘great act of loving communion with our misery,’ and in that hour, in the will and act of Jesus, *the work of atonement was begun.*”<sup>1</sup> Jesus does not say “I must,” for He did not need to be baptized for cleansing, but, “Thus it becometh us to obey.” Can any better reason be given, then, than that He did it to obey the Father?

There is another beautiful thought growing out of the obedience of our Lord in submitting Himself for burial and resurrection. It was hinted at in the quotation just made from Dr. Denny, and is boldly put forward as an explanation by Papini, that in this act Jesus prefigured His own death, burial and resurrection. The life of our Lord ended with those three fundamental facts which indisputably prove Him to be the divine Son of God—His death and burial and triumphant resurrection. And here, also, it is to be noted that His public ministry begins with a death to the old life of silence and preparation, a burial in the waters of Jordan and a resurrection from those waters into the glorious mission whereunto God had called Him. The work of atonement ended with a death and burial and resurrection, and began with the same facts as well. Though but the baptism of repentance, “yet it may serve to prefigure ‘the laver of regeneration.’”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “The Death of Christ,” Denny, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> “The Life of Christ,” Farrar, p. 62.

But there is yet another lesson as to the meaning of this rite which, in the case of Jesus, John himself acknowledged was exceptional—a lesson for this confused age of ours. Jesus did not submit to baptism in order that He might show us how the act is to be performed. That, indeed, were a ridiculous explanation. But from what He did we learn what we ourselves must do. If we would follow Him, there can be but one thing for us to do: submit to death and burial and resurrection. As He identified Himself with the transgressors, with us, so we in this must identify ourselves with Him, and that can only be accomplished as we are buried with Him and raised with Him too. There is but one way to settle the controversy about baptism—a return to Jesus. If we will be baptized as He was baptized, there can be no longer any doubt in our minds. This thing the early disciples did, this all the Christian world one day will do.

(3) Jesus arose out of the water and was anointed with the Spirit of the Lord. As from the waters of the river the Lord arose, from the cloven heavens in dovelike radiance, there streamed forth the Spirit of God descending upon Him, and the “Bath Kol,” which, to the dull, unpurged ears of the watching thousands upon the bank, was but the roar of inarticulate thunder, to the sensitive ears of John and Jesus was the voice of the heavenly Father confessing His own: “This is my Son, the Beloved; in him I am well pleased.” For John, the voice swept away all doubts. Now he knew that the One whose way he had so well prepared had come. For Jesus, it was the final revelation that His hour had come. From this day on He went forth in the “Spirit and power of Jehovah,”

And does not this glorious anointing of our Lord once again prefigure our own experience? Does it not bring to mind the words of Peter on the first Pentecost, when he had said: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; *and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*"? (Acts 2:38). Only as Jesus was the obedient Son of God could the Spirit come upon Him with power, for only to the obedient is the power of God vouchsafed. It is significant that the first recorded public utterance of Jesus is in exact accord with and the expression of a desire to be obedient to His Father. And thus, as we obey the Lord in His appointed command, to us comes the gift of the Spirit, the gift of power to live as He would have us live.

(4) As Jesus "came up out of the water" (Mark 1:10), He was "praying" (Luke 3:21). Is not this beautifully expressive of what our own attitude should be as we rise from the "laver of regeneration" into the new life which is in Him? It is to be a life of prayer, of close fellowship and walk with God. What better place for such a life of prayer to begin? Here, as always, our Lord can say: "Follow me." As we follow Him into death, as with Him we go trustingly down into the waters of purification, so let us rise with prayerful hearts—hearts which are prayerful because they now are cleansed and thus can have close communion with our Father.

(5) As Jesus was baptized, so, to us, He leaves a command. How often have we heard this, but does it not now grow in its meaning as we think of it in relation to His own baptism? Just before the ascension clouds received Him from the sight of His wondering

disciples, the now resurrected and soon to be crowned and glorified Lord commissions them: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19, 20). With those who follow Him, who keep this command and teach others to keep it, He has promised to abide as the living Lord forever. It is not ours to tamper with baptism, for that were indeed an unholy act. It is ours only to obey, even as He Himself so beautifully "would fulfil every ordinance of God." Follow Him, and He will make you fishers of men. Follow Him down into the waters and, rising from them, receive His spirit, for the path which He trod led at last to glory in the realms whence had come the approving voice of His Father. Follow Him! for as it meant to Him a reunion with His own Father, so to us will it mean a going home to be with that innumerable blood-washed throng of loved ones who have preceded us, and who in the "ivory palaces" of the redeemed are waiting for us now. Follow Him; for He is the way, the truth and the life.

## VIII.

### THREE ANSWERS TO THE SAME QUESTION

TEXTS.—“And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.”—Acts 16: 29-31.

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”—Acts 2: 37, 38.

“And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee all the things which are appointed for thee to do.”—Acts 22: 10.

“And why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.”—Acts 22: 16.

#### INTRODUCTION.

**I**T is a strange thing, to many, that the greatest question in the world is answered three different times in the New Testament, and the answer in each case seems to contradict those that have been given in the other places. The jailor, when he cried aloud in the agony of fear which possessed him, was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; the three thousand of Pentecost, when, for the first time, the realization broke upon them that they had actually murdered their

own Lord and King, were told to "repent and be baptized"; while Saul of Tarsus, when, in blindness, for three days he had poured out his heart in penitence, was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins, calling on His name. I remember a young man in a Western State who came to me saying that he had read the Bible carefully from his childhood, and that he had been kept out of the church because he could not understand why the answers to this all-important question should contradict each other. After the explanation he walked down the aisle and gave his heart to the Lord.

To any one, who has been a student of audiences, it is apparent that in every crowd there are those who are closer to the Lord than others. Some there are who attend the services with regularity. They are interested, and they sing the songs and enter into the spirit of the prayers, and listen with reverence and interest to the sermons. They are close to the Kingdom. They have even felt the desire in the heart to surrender their souls to the keeping of the King of glory. On the other hand, there are those whose interest is but casual. They come to the services with perhaps some frequency, but they are not deeply affected by the message. They have friends who attend, and they come in order that they may be with those friends, that they may be entertained or amused. There are still others who are interested not at all. They come to the church once in a great while, but of the things of the Kingdom they are utterly ignorant. They are not at all concerned about their soul's salvation. Now, with these facts in mind, one realizes, if he thinks about the matter, that it is impossible to give

a blanket answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" to all the classes of people in one audience with their varying states of mind. The answer might fit one man and miss the others entirely. And yet this same mistake has been made thousands of times. I have attended meetings again and again when the blanket answer given to all the inquiries was: "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Some poor fellow would come to the front weeping because of his sins, convicted in heart and penitent, if ever a man in this world was penitent; and yet he was told to believe a little more. Many souls have been lost because of the blind teachers, who knew not what to say save to give one answer to all who came. We should remember that we must take into account the progress that a man has made on his journey to the Christ, before we can give him the true answer to the great question. In this message we will consider the three cases and see if this law which we have noted applies.

## ARGUMENT.

### I. THE CASE OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR.

Paul and Silas had been preaching the gospel in Philippi, a Roman colony. Wherever the gospel is preached in its fullness and power, without any fear, but with holy boldness, there is sure to be consternation and furor. Paul and his companions were gospel preachers, whose courage was unflinching, and to whom there was nothing in the world worth while save the proclamation of the glad tidings. Hence, with all the earnestness at their command, they had published in Philippi the glorious news that a Savior had been

born, whose death on the cross had opened to men the way of salvation. A certain maid possessed with a spirit of divination, a poor creature by whose strange powers much gain had been brought to her masters, followed Paul and Silas, crying out: "These men are servants of the most high God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). Paul, being disturbed and humiliated by the unwelcome publicity thus secured, turned finally and rebuked the spirit in the name of Jesus, commanding him to come out of her. This action caused the wrath of the masters, thus cheated out of all hope of gain, to descend upon Paul and his companion with unabated fury. They were dragged before the authorities, and after being severely beaten were thrown into the prison, the jailor being charged to keep them securely. Receiving such instructions, the jailor cast them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. What a predicament this is for the servant of the Most High to endure! But such men were not to be daunted by such persecutions as these. They were men whose hearts were unafraid, so, even with dark prison walls greeting every turn of the eye, even with the discomfort and actual pain caused by the stocks, even though their backs were bloody because of the lash, they were unabashed. Thus, in the midst of the night, with courage high, they were "praying and singing hymns unto God." And they were not without an audience, for the prisoners were listening unto them. Undaunted courage such as this, unswerving conviction so mighty, will never fail to attract an audience of willing and eager listeners, and on this occasion "the prisoners were listening to them." What aston-

ishment the words of the bruised and bleeding disciples must have caused in the darkness of that jail! What new and strange emotions must have surged through the hearts of the silent listeners as these God-intoxicated men preached and sang, in this midnight evangelistic service, the triumphant praise of their glorified Lord. Was it the songs that were sung which, like the music of old, had crumbled the proud walls of an ancient, haughty and arrogant city, on that black night brought to startled ears the first rumbles of the earthquake? Was it the mighty message of truth which echoed through those foul cells, piercing through crime-hardened hearts, and into shivering souls rotten with sin, which caused the rocking of that prison to its very foundation, riving the rocks of the walls, tearing open the doors, and striking from the hands and feet the unholy fetters which bound the innocent messengers of the most high God? Did the hand of Him whose work can not know defeat, reach out and smite that prison that His own might carry on their mission? Who but the Most High can tell? Strange indeed are His ways, and none but Jehovah knoweth His inmost thoughts. But, whether it was special exercise of His power or not, we read in the terse words of Luke: "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:26). And, amidst it all the prisoners were not the only ones affected; for the jailor was suddenly roused from his sleep, and, rushing to the doors of the prison and finding them open, and supposing that at the splendid opportunity for escape, thus afforded, the prisoners

had fled, in accordance with the Roman code of honor he drew his sword and was in the act of committing suicide, when, from the inner prison darkness, there came a great cry which stayed his hand and filled his soul with relief: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here" (Acts 16:28). Here in the midst of the night, with the ruin and desolation and horror of the earthquake around him, with the noise of it all beating upon his ears, the jailor's thoughts turned to God and to his own salvation from the sinful life which was then the usual thing with men of his class. Trembling with fear, he called for lights, and, springing into the prison, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then, arising, he brought them out, and in shaking voice he asked the great question of our text: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Immediately the answer is given: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."

And why did Paul and Silas give this answer? Let us study the character and religious condition of the jailor that we may have a proper background for our answer. In the first place, he did not know anything about Jesus Christ or His church. He had not even heard the preaching in the prison, for at that time he was asleep. We have no record that he had heard any of the preaching in the city. He, of course, knew about the charges against Paul and Silas, and probably in an indirect manner he knew that they were preachers of some new and strange doctrine, which had caused commotion and consternation in the colony. At any rate, in the spirit of the mob he had thrown them into the inner prison and had done all in his power to see that they had no chance to escape. It

was only when, by the timely cry of Paul, he had been hurled back from the brink of eternity, that all else was forgotten and his thoughts turned to God and his own salvation. We may sum up his condition by saying that he was an untaught unbeliever in the Lord Jesus Christ. The answer given to him, then, is the one which meets the state of mind in which he finds himself. He is told to "believe on the Lord Jesus." In order that he may believe, we are told in the next verse that "they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house" (v. 32). This is in accordance with the divine plan, for we are told by Paul that "belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10: 17). How eagerly he must have listened to the wonderful word of life which, to him, would bring a new life indeed. Those who would contend that the jailor and his household were saved by faith, and by faith alone, "leave the jail too soon." The rest of the conversion must be studied in order to understand its full meaning. "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly with all his house, having believed in God" (Acts 16: 33, 34). In these words the writer of Acts tells us the story that while the jailor was told to do but the one thing, to believe on the Lord Jesus, yet he did all three: he believed, he repented and he was baptized. In a word, while told to comply with but one condition, he complied with all the conditions which are laid down as steps into Christ. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that the first step always

leads to the other two, and that without the other two there is no salvation. He was told to do the one thing, because that was the first step to be taken, and the jailor was an untaught unbeliever and had to go all the way. The fact that he repented is found in his act of washing the stripes of the disciples after he had entered into knowledge of the spirit which had caused them to be so unjustly beaten. The answer, then, to the jailor is one which meets his state of mind. While told to do but one thing, he did as all men do who fulfill the laws of God, he obeyed completely.

## II. THE CASE OF THE THREE THOUSAND OF PENTECOST.

Here we have a case far different from the one which we have just been considering. How thrilling is the very name of Pentecost! What visions it stirs up in the mind of the true follower of Christ! What movement and excitement are there in those visions! The birthday of the church of God! The beginning of all that the name "Christian civilization" denotes! A great audience had assembled. The immediate cause of their coming together is the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the ecstatic speaking in tongues on the part of the apostles of the Lord. And what an audience it was! Some there were who were amazed and confounded, filled with wonder at the fact that they were hearing each man in the language in which the hearer was born. Others there were who were filled with derision, and, mockingly incredulous, made fun of the whole proceeding, saying: "They are filled with new wine" (Acts 2:13). Here were interest and enthusiasm. What a chance for the preacher to bring his message with pile-driving force to the hearts and

consciences of the multitude! The very air was surcharged with a spirit of expectancy. All was attention and eagerness. It was then that Peter arose and preached the first great gospel sermon. In it, for the first time, and under the glorious new dispensation, the terms of pardon in Jesus Christ were given! When at last the question was asked in agony of spirit, "Brethren, what shall we do?" the answer given was one entirely different from that given to the jailor; for Peter replied: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And why this answer? A study of the religious condition of the audience will tell us the answer; and inquiry into the state of mind in which, at the close of that message, they found themselves will show that the answer was the only one which in the circumstances could have been given. These people knew Jesus Christ. They had lived with Him, talked with Him, witnessed His miracles of healing, and had heard Him preach the wonderful things of the coming Kingdom. These were they who had come with Him into Jerusalem as He made His triumphal entry, throwing their garments in His path and crying with delirious joy: "Hosanna to the son of David." Many of these were they who went with the officers into the garden, on the night at Gethsemane, to arrest Him and bring Him to trial. They were the ones who had stood before the judgment-seat of Pilate, howling in crazed rage: "Crucify him, crucify him." These were the same fickle traitors to their great national hope who, forgetful of all the past—or was it with deliberation?—had yelled: "We

have no king but Cæsar.” Hundreds of these were the same people who had walked the way of sorrows, but without sorrow in their hearts. They were the same ones who had stood at the cross and had mocked the Lord in His sufferings, had polluted His holy body with their vile spitting, and blackened their own souls by their unrelenting cruelty and hatred. These were the same stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart who had gazed into each others’ horrified eyes as the darkness came down over the earth and, as if in protest against the awful wickedness of it all, even the earth itself rocked and shuddered. These people knew Jesus Christ. They had known His life; they had seen Him die. And what did they think about Him? They thought Him dead and buried. They believed the story which had been told by the Roman guard, that the disciples had come by night and stolen the body away while the soldiers were sleeping. When, therefore, Peter faced the crowd he had but one task before him. It was to prove to his hearers that Jesus was not stolen from the tomb, but that He had been raised from the dead by the power of God. And a study of the sermon reveals the fact that He did this great thing; in a word, the whole burden of his sermon is that Christ had risen and that He was at that very moment by the right hand of God, exalted to be a Prince and Savior. The whole thesis of the sermon is summed up in those powerful words: “Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.” As Peter progressed in his sermon toward this mighty conclusion, there came a gradual change in the souls of his audience. From sneering and

mockery there grew up a deep interest. That interest deepened, and finally all over the audience there were men who were asking each other the burning question: "Is he right? Can this thing be? Is it possible that we have actually crucified the Messiah to whose coming we have so ardently looked forward all these years? No, it is impossible. Our King could not be a crucified one, for He was to come in glory and power. He was to be a ruler like unto David. His was to be a rule of blood and iron toward the enemies of Jehovah. No, this one could not be our King." So, the old national ambition battled in their minds for supremacy against this new thought of the world kingdom of hearts, the true kingdom of God. But the arguments of Peter, guided as he was by the Holy Spirit, were irresistible, and gradually the truth of what he was preaching cut into the hearts of the multitude, bringing with them terrible conviction, until at last there arose that great, hoarse cry of agony, that cry of thousands of those who, in their sorrow and horror, were experiencing the anguish of the very damned: "Brethren, what shall we do?" Why did not Peter tell them to believe on the Lord Jesus as Paul told the jailor? Many to-day would have told them to do that very thing. I have attended meeting after meeting where this very thing was done. Some penitent, in deep contrition of heart, would come to the front of the building, only to be told to believe on the Lord Jesus as his Savior, or only to believe more, when the very reason that he had come was the fact that he already believed. He had come, in some way, to do something that would express the faith in his heart. Peter did not tell the three thousand to believe

because of the fact that their cry, "Brethren, what shall we do?" was the cry of believing men. They had been made believers in the deity of Jesus by the powerful sermon which the fiery apostle had just preached. Building upon the foundation of the previous knowledge of the Lord, he had proved unto them, in a manner utterly indisputable, that this Jesus is their long-expected Messiah. He did not, therefore, tell them to believe, for they already were believers, but he told them to do that which they had not already done; that is, repent and be baptized. That same day they gladly received the Word and were added to the church of the Lord by their repentance and baptism. In one word, then, the answer given to the three thousand of Pentecost is the answer which met the state of mind in which they had found themselves at the time of the asking of the question. It was the state of believers, but impenitent believers, in Jesus.

The jailor was told to believe in the Lord Jesus, and, that he might believe, the gospel was preached unto him. When he believed, he repented and the same night was baptized into Christ. The three thousand of Pentecost were told to repent and be baptized, because of the fact that when they asked the question they were already believers in Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. They therefore believed, repented and were baptized. The jailor also believed, repented and was baptized. The same law of pardon was complied with by both, the only difference in the conversions being that the three thousand were nearer the Kingdom at the time of their asking the question than was the jailor. The law is, however, the same.

### III. THE CASE OF SAUL OF TARSUS.

The third case in which the answer to the great question occurs is the most intensely interesting of all. I can never fail to become enthusiastic at the very mention of the name "Saul" or "Paul." How much he has meant to the cause of our Lord! "No man exercised so powerful an influence upon the thought and life of the early church as the apostle Paul. This fact is, no doubt, due in large part to his native enthusiasm and energy. Throwing his whole soul into any cause which he espoused, he proved as efficient and vigorous in the character of a champion as he had formerly been in that of a persecutor of Christianity. The intellectual gifts of the apostle were also highly favorable to his influence. He took a clear and strong hold upon principles. He defined his convictions sharply, cherished them intensely and carried them out consistently in action."<sup>1</sup> He is ever a man of strength, and strong men always admire a strong man. I think that this is the reason why all truly great soul-winners have been ardent admirers of the apostle to the Gentiles. And then his career is so romantic. From an ardent and determined enemy he became an ardent and determined advocate of that which he had persecuted.

Saul was a young man, a young man of talent and education, a man before whom stretched long and happy vistas of advancement and opportunity in the service of his people. The greatest teachers of his people had been his, the finest blood of the race flowed in his veins, the distinction and privileges of

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<sup>1</sup> "The Pauline Theology," Stevens.

Roman citizenship were his prized possession. With all the ardor of his fiery nature, and with all the intensity of his soul, he had entered into the persecutions of the new sect called "Christians." He reasoned that if these people succeeded, there must, of necessity, be an end to his ancient and honorable faith. All the hoary centuries of glorious history must come to an end in eclipse and oblivion if the message these people preached prevailed. And what would become of the great Messianic hope? How anxiously had he, in his patriotic zeal, looked forward to the time when the great new King should come, at the clarion call of whose bugles an unconquerable army would rush to arms, and under His mighty leadership break the iron band of Rome and set His people free. His eye would shine at the thought of it, and his cheek would burn red as he dreamed of that glorious day. His zeal for the law of his fathers, that law which had come into being amidst the thunders of Sinai, and his uncompromising patriotism, a patriotism which was a part of his very blood, would therefore cause him to throw himself into the persecution of these heretics with a cruelty and fury which could scarce be equaled. The utter abandon of himself to this persecution, the terrible intensity of it, is told in his own words as he makes his defense before Agrippa: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in the synagogues, I strove

to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities" (Acts 26:9-12). The very spirit of a demon seemed to possess the zealot of the Jewish faith as, without quarter and in his words, "even unto death," he persecuted the Way.

But one day there came an experience in his life which changed it forever. Just outside the walls of the Holy City he was witnessing the execution of a young man, a young man who was a believer in this hated new faith. The young man was about thirty years of age, full of life and vigor, with all the greatest and best things in the world before him. Saul was standing at a little distance. At his feet were piled the garments of those who were, in their fiendish rage, hurling the stones upon the bruised and prostrate form of the first martyr of the church of the Lord. Saul was intensely interested in it all. How would this fellow die? Will he be true to his faith to the end? Doubtless these and many other thoughts were running through the mind of this inveterate enemy of the church of Christ, as he watched the sad scene of the death of a young man whose only crime had been that he believed in Him whose life had meant naught but good to the world. And it was just at this moment that Stephen spoke again. "But he, being filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55, 56). "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). And with these words a prayer for his mur-

derers, "Lord Jesus, lay not this sin to their charge," in the simple and beautiful language of the writer of Acts, "he fell asleep." The execution over, Saul turned away. There was a sickness in his heart, for the whole sordid affair had affected him strangely. There was not so much assurance in his soul as there had formerly been. Stephen was so kind, so compassionate, that even in his death he held no malice against his murderers, though knowing that he died unjustly. And then his confidence in his vision that he had seen the Lord. Did he really see the One whom he (Saul) had been so determinedly persecuting? These, and a flood of other tormenting questions, surged through the unsettled mind of Saul, further unsettling him in his conviction that all this was a heresy which at all costs must be stamped out. But Saul was ever a man of action, and one of the best ways in the world to quell tormenting doubts is by action. Hence, from the execution of Stephen, he went forth into a persecution of the church even more ferocious and terrible than he had waged before. How much of suffering is contained in the brief words of the inspired writer: "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 9:2, 3). Here is a picture of unassuageable grief. The church had lost one of her greatest men, and at the same time had been made the object of

unswerving hate and ravaging persecution, by that very one whom God had chosen to take the place of him who so gloriously had died. At this time none in that stricken group of Christians could understand why their greatest young prophet should be taken, and why their most feared enemy should be allowed to rage up and down the land, bringing suffering and death to the saints. How strange are the ways of God, and yet, if we have but the faith to trust His will, how glorious are the ends which are revealed by the working out to the conclusion of His plans.

Like a raging lion Saul continues his work of death. How often it has been, in the history of the church, that just before their conversions some of the greatest of her saints have seemingly been furthest away. And so it was with Saul. Blindly, seeing in his blindness nothing save the ruin of that which was to be to him so precious, he goes at last to the high priest. How vividly Luke describes him as he says: "And Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-3). What a scene that must have been which took place in the presence of the high priest. As the leader of the people thought of the rising power of this sect, to whom persecution was seemingly the very breath of life in that the more it was scattered the more it grew, his face no doubt clouded with black anger. "Saul, thou knowest what thou art to do. If this damnable thing goes on, the very life of our ancient faith is in danger. All the

years of glorious history which have been the pride of every true son of Israel are as naught, if these heretics have their way. Hence thou art to have no mercy, thou art to show no quarter; bring them to us here, and we will see if stern punishment can not at last bring these deluded ones to their senses. Go, and may the blessings of thy fathers be with thee, for thou art indeed the defender of thy people." Some such words as these would the young Sanhedrist hear as he went with his commission to the city of the north.

How proud, and even haughty, is Saul as he starts on his journey to Damascus, 140 miles northeast! In the leisurely manner of travel in the east this was at least a week's journey. A week! Ah! how much thinking Saul could do in a week; for he was essentially a thinker, and perhaps the greatest and keenest thinker of his day. What a tumult must have racked his soul! Now and then there must have come before his tortured eyes the picture of the blood-stained face of Stephen, and to his ear those words: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Again and again must have come those insidious doubts, gradually becoming stronger. "Am I right? Has the Messiah already come and have I missed Him? Or, is He yet to appear as a mighty conqueror, a man of blood and iron, a warrior at the thunder of whose legions even proud Rome shall tremble? A crucified Jew? My mighty King crucified like a common robber? Incredible! Impossible! No, He would not come like that. All the traditions of our fathers tell us that He is to come in pomp and glory as a proud soldier

and prince.” And then he would think of the law. How carefully he had tried to keep it, and how miserable, after all, had been his failure. And the law offered no life save as he kept it to the very letter. To fail in one part was to fail in all. He must keep it all or every effort was vain. The utter impossibility of this he could not deny. The very hope he wanted, for which his soul was so thirsty, the law did not and could not give. But these Christians had it. They could die with a shout of praise upon their lips. They could go down to death saying: “Lord Jesus, lay not this sin to their charge.” They had something that he did not possess, and yet something which his heart longed for as it had never longed for anything else. And then once more there must have come before him the picture of the angelic face of Stephen as he fell asleep in his calm faith in the Lord. There must have rung once more in his ears the words of assurance: “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” And so the time went by—days of brooding over it all: nights of anguish when sleep came not to his tortured pillow, but, in tossings and turnings of body, the battle raged within his doubting spirit. At last the final day of the journey came, and Saul and his companions climbed the long hill to the plateau upon which Damascus is situated. For a time they traversed a bare and bleak plain where there is naught to relieve the terrible glare of the sun as it blazes with its intolerable heat upon the weary traveler. At last, on this undulating plain, they came to the village of Kaukab, or “The Star.” “At this point,” in the beautiful words of Farrar, “a vision of surpassing beauty bursts

upon the eye of the weary traveler. Thanks to the 'golden' Abana and the winding Pharpar, which flow on either side of the ridge, the wilderness blossoms like a rose. Instead of brown and stony wastes, we begin to pass under the flickering shadows of ancient olive-trees. Below, out of a soft sea of verdure, amid masses of the foliage of walnuts and pomegranates and palms, steeped in the rich haze of sunshine, rise the white-terraced roofs and glittering cupolas of that immemorial city of which the beauty has been compared in every age to the beauty of a paradise of God. There, amid its gardens of rose and groves of delicious fruit, with the gleam of waters that flowed through it, flooded with the gold of breathless morn, lay the "Eye of the East." To that land of streams, to that city of fountains, to that paradise of God, Saul was hastening, not on messages of mercy, not to add to the happiness and beauty of the world, but to scourge and to slay and to imprison those perhaps of all its inhabitants who were the meekest, the gentlest, the most pure of heart. Can we doubt that at the sight of this lovely glittering city, 'like a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald,' he felt once more a recoil from his unhallowed task?" His heart must have turned sick within him as he looked upon the peaceful city by the side of the golden waters, quiet and at rest in its noonday sleep.

It was high noon. Any traveler who has been in the east at high noon knows exactly what an experience these words recall to him. The Syrian sun blazes with an intensity almost impossible to imagine. Not a cloud in the sky, the sun overhead glares until it is like molten brass; the earth underneath glows like

white-hot iron in the midst of the furnace; "the whole air, as we breathe it, seems to quiver as though it were pervaded with subtle flames." And yet in this intolerable blaze of the sun, with its prostrating heat, Saul orders his companions forward to the city. At this time of day all travelers in the east take their rest, and that Saul thus orders his companions to go on is but another evidence of his tremendous effort to quell the recurring doubts which must have kept his soul in turmoil so long. His is a restless and troubled impatience and impassioned and eager haste.

"Then suddenly all is ended—the eager haste, the agonizing struggle, the mad infatuation, the feverish desire to quench doubt in persecution. Round them suddenly from heaven there lightened a great light. It was not Saul alone who was conscious of it. It seemed as if the whole atmosphere had caught fire, and they were suddenly wrapped in sheets of blinding splendor. It might be imagined that nothing can out-dazzle the glare of the Syrian sun at noon, but this light was more vivid than its brightness, more penetrating than its flash." Was it a flash of lightning more brilliant in its dazzling wonder than any that ever flashed before? Frequent are the mighty storms of thunder and lightning which occur when the warm air from the desert meets the colder air of the mountain summits. Did Saul hear in the terrific peal of the thunder-blast the voice of the Lord to his soul? Was that awful, and, to his traveling companions, unintelligible, sound formed into articulate language to the receptive soul of the doubt-tormented persecutor? As if by the hand of the mighty One Himself, all of them were struck with terrible force to the earth,

and when at last the companions of Saul were able to rise, they beheld Saul lying prostrate there. They were conscious that something awful had happened, that this was no ordinary occurrence; for they had heard the sound of the voice, though they understood not the words. "Had we been able to ask them what it was, it is more than doubtful if they could have said. Had it been suggested to them that it was some overwhelming burst of thunder, some inexpressibly vivid gleam of electric flame, some blinding, suffocating, maddening breath of the sirocco, they might have known." But to Saul all was clear, for about him, above him, around him, he heard a great voice speaking its thunderous tones to him in the ancient tongue of his fathers: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Acts 26: 14). In dazed tones came the amazed question of Saul, "Who art thou, Lord?" and the reply of the King: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, stand on thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee." To what end? Nine out of ten religious teachers of the day would answer: "To convert him from his sins, to make a Christian of him." Ah, no! for while this was one of the blessed results of the appearance of the Lord, it was not the primary reason. The Lord Himself tells Saul why He has appeared—"for to this end have I appeared unto thee: to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may

receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26: 15-19). The Lord appeared unto Saul that He might appoint him to the exalted position of the apostle unto the Gentiles. An apostle must be one who had seen the Lord Jesus Christ. This qualification is expressly stated in the words of Peter, as he talks to the one hundred and twenty regarding the successor to the apostle Judas, when he says: “Of the men therefore that have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of his resurrection. And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show of these two the one whom thou hast chosen, to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place” (Acts 1:21-25). It is here clear that one, to be a minister in the sense that he was an apostle of the Lord, must be one who had seen Jesus Christ after He had risen from the dead, and one who could, therefore, with the rest of the apostles, be witnesses concerning Him. “We know that he is the Son of God, because we have seen him after his resurrection.” And for this reason, in the words of the Lord Himself, had He thus, in this amazing manner, appeared unto him who was to be the greatest of all the apostles, that He might give to him, as a precious gift, that great commission which in all his after life was the very foundation of all that he said and did. Everything in the life of Saul,

from this very hour on, centers in his conversion, in the appearance to him of Jesus as the enthroned Messiah and King. How many have missed the whole point here, have missed the big thing in the reason for this miraculous appearance of the Lord to the soul of the future apostle.

That the primary purpose of our Lord's appearance to Saul was not for the purpose of converting him is further established by the other words spoken on the occasion. After telling Saul that He has manifested Himself to him that He may make him an apostle to the Gentiles, He says unto him: "Rise, and enter into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6). Here the Lord actually appears unto a man and refuses to tell him what to do to be saved from his sins, but sends him into the city, telling him that there a man will tell him what he must do in order to get rid of his sin. And why, think you, did the Lord thus treat Saul? The answer is found in the fact that, since the death of our Lord and the establishment of His church, He has left in the hands of men the glorious task of telling the gospel to the ends of the earth. Men are to tell men what to do to be saved.

And so it was that Saul arose and continued his journey to the city. How different was the end of this memorable journey from its beginning. How strong and haughty was Saul as he left the city, how filled with threatenings and breathing out slaughters upon all them who call upon the name of Christ. And now, like a feeble old man, he is led by the hands of his companions, for he is blind. Oh, to think of the horror of it! To be thirty, a university man, with all

the best of life before you, with every possibility for advancement in your chosen line, and then to be stricken blind! Never more to see the faces of loved ones! Never again to have one's soul regaled by the beauties of God's world! To be forced to turn one's eyes inward and to see only the naked things of the soul! Thus he was led to a quiet little home in the city, the home of one called Judas, in the street called Straight, where for three days in his blindness he did not eat nor drink. Three days, and alone and blind! Can you imagine the horror of those three days? Three days, and after he had seen the Lord Jesus, and had learned to know of a certainty that he was all wrong in his thinking, and that he was a persecutor of that Messiah for whose coming he had been so anxious and in whose service he had thought himself so ardent! Three days, when in the imagination of his anguished soul he could hear the cries of little children as their mothers are torn from them to be bound and led away to prison! Three days, in which he, at every turn of the sightless eyes, can see only the blood-stained faces of those who—better men than he had ever been—had died rather than renounce that which to them was dearer than life itself! Three days of anguish, of horror so deep and maddening that at last he could endure it no longer and his soul broke forth in entreaty to the Lord who had promised him relief, if he would but come to Damascus! We can but imagine his prayer: "O Lord, Thou didst promise me that if I came here, Thou wouldst send to me the messenger who would tell me what to do, that the weight of my damning sins might forever fall from me, and that in Thee I might be pure again.

Send Thou the messenger, O Lord, that I may hear." Some such prayer as this must have fallen from those lips which but yesterday had spoken only words of hate concerning this One to whom now he bows in penitence. And then came to him the messenger of the Lord. After telling him that it was the will of Christ that he should receive once more his sight, the preacher told Saul what to do to be saved from his sins. He gave him the message which the Lord had promised Saul would be given when he had come to the city. And is it not wonderful that the messenger told him to do but one thing, and one alone? And what was that command? Did he tell him to believe on the Lord Jesus? Nine out of ten of the modern teachers would have told him that very thing. Believe?—to a man like Saul of Tarsus, who had seen the glorified Lord. Why, an answer of this kind would have been an insult to one in the mental and spiritual condition of Saul. And yet I have seen men as broken up as was this man, and as full of faith in the Christ as he was, coming to the front in evangelistic meetings only to be told that they should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. No, the answer was not to believe, because Saul was already a believer in the deity of Jesus. Why did he not tell him to repent? This was the answer that was given to the three thousand of Pentecost. Repent?—to a man like Saul, who for three days in blindness had been enduring the torments of the condemned. Repent?—to a man who had almost lost his mind in those days as he thought of the awful sins he had committed. Such an answer as this would have been positively wicked; for if ever on God's earth there was a penitent man,

that one was Saul. The answer given, therefore, is one which meets the state of mind in which Saul finds himself, a penitent believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is told by Ananias: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Just one thing is he told to do, and that the thing he has not so far done—to arise and obey the Lord in his appointed command. Is there not here a hint as to the absolutely imperative importance of baptism? The Lord sends Saul into the city, that he may be told to do the one thing further necessary for the washing away of his sins. His faith and repentance alone were insufficient. He must do this thing which brings us finally to the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it is that Saul arises and is baptized, and partakes of food and is strengthened.

#### CONCLUSION.

A brief recapitulation will bring to our minds once more the law to be followed in understanding the three seemingly contradictory answers to the same great question. The jailor was told to believe on the Lord. He believed, he repented and he was baptized. The three thousand were told to repent and be baptized. They believed, they repented, and they were baptized into Christ. Saul was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins. He believed, he repented and he was baptized. In a word, they all obeyed the same great law of the Lord, the compliance with which makes us saved men and members of his Kingdom. The difference in the three cases is the same. Each man was in a different position from the others when he asked the question. The jailor was an untaught

unbeliever; the three thousand were believers, but impenitent believers; while Saul of Tarsus was a penitent believer in the Lord when he asked the question. The answer in each case meets the state of mind of the individual who asks it. Some are nearer the Lord than others, and the answer, therefore, must be that which applies to one who has already gone part of the way.

And so there are some in the audience to-night who are very far from the Kingdom. To them we would give the answer given to the jailor. Others there are, and perhaps a far larger number, who believe in Christ, but as yet they are not willing to forsake sin and obey Him. To these we would give the answer given to the three thousand. Still others there are who believe and who are honestly trying to forsake sins. To such we would give the answer given to Saul: "Arise, and obey the Lord without further delay." In a word, the whole lesson of the sermon and the exhortation is that this very hour you do that which so far you have not done and receive the blessings which always come to the obedient.

## IX.

### A MODEL CASE OF CONVERSION

**READING.**—Read carefully Acts 8: 26-40.

**TEXT.**—“And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from the same scripture, preached unto him Jesus.”—Acts 8: 35.

**T**HE story of this conversion is, like all the others recorded in this wonderful book, an illustration of the working out of the great commission of our Lord. It is, in a word, an execution of the commission. The Book of Acts is a book of conversions. It is a book in which we are told what men and women did in the days of the apostles and evangelists of our Lord, in order to become saved men and women, and in order, thereby, to enter into the church which Jesus had founded and which He loved so much that He died for it. The book, therefore, is the first one on church history. Now, if we to-day do what these men of the long ago did, we will become now what they became then, and the same blessings which were theirs then, when they complied with the divine conditions, will become ours now. The great law of induction into the kingdom of God has not been changed; no one has had the authority to change it. It is exactly the same now as it was then. This conversion is the clearest in detail of any that are recorded in the book, and, best of all, illustrates this very law of

redemption of which we have been speaking. We have, therefore, called it a "model case of conversion."

Now, if, in reading the lesson, you have noted carefully, you will have observed that there are five agents mentioned in this conversion: the angel of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, Philip the evangelist, the Ethiopian officer and the Lord Jesus Himself. We propose in this sermon simply to inquire as to the work of each of these agents in the conversion, for thus can we find out just what was the work of the Divine and what the work of the human in bringing a soul to the salvation in Christ which we all so earnestly desire.

### I. THE WORK OF THE ANGEL OF THE LORD.

What is an angel? The Greek word *angelos* in the Bible, literally translated, means "a messenger of God." I used to think that an angel was a white being with golden hair and long wings. This is the artistic conception, and it is wonderful how much our views of the Word of life have been influenced by the conception of the artist. In the sense that he is a messenger of God (though he does not look like the artistic conception of the angel, and perhaps does not always act like such a white-robed being would act), Brother Taubman is an angel. So it was that a messenger of the Lord, or an angel, "spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert" (Acts 8:26). Here it is expressly stated just what the work of the angel in this connection was: to speak to the preacher and command him to go toward the south unto the Jerusalem-Gaza highway. In a word, the work of the angel—and

remember that the angel represents the Divine in this conversion—is to get the preacher and the man who is to be converted together, in order that the gospel may be preached and that the man who is a sinner may hear it and believe it and obey it. The angel does not say a single word to the convert. There are many who are waiting for some manifestation of divine power to be given them in some miraculous experience before they accept the gospel of the dear Lord. Here in this New Testament case the divine manifestation is made to the preacher, and not to the convert at all.

Philip immediately obeys the command of the messenger of God, and by making a rapid journey of about fifty miles south comes at last to the Jerusalem-Gaza highway, a Roman paved road running straight southwest from Jerusalem fifty miles to the city of Gaza. As soon as he reaches this highway he sees a man, evidently of high estate, riding along in a chariot and busily engaged in reading a scroll. At the sight of the gentleman thus reading there comes to Philip an intimation that here his mission is to be fulfilled, that this must be the one whom he has come so far to find for Christ. He is thus in the rear of the chariot, which is rapidly drawing away from him down the road, when the second agent in the conversion appears upon the scene, in the person of the Holy Spirit.

## II. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CONVERSION.

In one short sentence is the work of the Holy Spirit explained: “And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8:

29). He does not tell Philip what to do when he comes to the chariot, for well he knew that there would be no need to tell one of such evangelistic passion as that which possessed Philip to preach Christ. Philip would do that whenever the chance presented itself, and the angel and the Spirit representing Divinity knew that all that was necessary was to make the opportunity for the God-intoxicated disciple of the Lord. The only thing, therefore, which the Spirit does is to get Philip and the officer together, for well does He know that Philip will do the rest of his work and in a great and effective manner. Here, then, we have an interesting thing to remember. The work of the angel and that of the Spirit, in this model case of conversion, are identical: to get the preacher and the convert together. The Spirit does not say a single thing to the man to be converted. There are many in our time who have long been passively waiting for some word from the Spirit of the living God that He may come in a direct way and convert them. He never has done this, and there is nowhere a promise that He will ever do it. In this clear-cut case in the New Testament He speaks to the preacher, and tells him simply to go and join himself to the chariot. The work of the Divine is to get the preacher and the sinner together, that the gospel may be preached, and by the convert heard, believed and obeyed. Ever since the inauguration of the new dispensation the task of converting the world has been left in the hands of men, under the guidance of the Spirit of the living God. It has pleased God "by the foolishness of preaching" to save men from their sins, and in this case the plan must be carried out; hence

Philip the evangelist is sent to the officer that he may tell him the life-giving story.

### III. WHAT WAS THE WORK OF THE EVANGELIST?

#### 1. *First of all, who was he?*

He was not an apostle of the Lord, but was an evangelist. The word *euangelistou* means "one sent forth on a special mission." It comes from the word *euangelizo*, meaning "to send forth." Philip, therefore, was in a sense a special messenger of the Lord. While every preacher of the gospel is an evangelist, there is nevertheless a special order of men in the church whose office is that of telling the story from place to place, and this man Philip was an evangelist; he belonged to this exalted order of God's servants. It is not probable that Philip was formally set apart or ordained to this special work, but, rather, that he began it under the stress of special circumstances. There was an apostle by the same name, but it is clearly stated that the apostles remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). He was, however, a deacon in the church, one of those mentioned as the first ones to be chosen, for he was one of the seven (Acts 21:8).

#### 2. *Notice his work in the conversion.*

We have already found that he obeyed the word of the angel, and have followed him until the Spirit told him to join himself to the chariot of the officer. One verse tells us how eagerly and enthusiastically he obeyed the Spirit. "And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Acts 8:30).

(1) "And Philip ran to him." What eager haste, what enthusiasm for the cause of the Lord, what earn-

estness for the salvation of souls, is manifest in this act of Philip! Oh that we could get men and women of our day to run after folks for the Lord! The greatest trouble with the church in evangelistic efforts to-day is that we are not really and vitally interested, as men, in the souls of our fellows. We need to run after them with that earnestness and determination and enthusiasm which will compel them to give the gospel a hearing; for if they will but give it a hearing, it will bring them to Christ Jesus.

The officer turned to Philip a puzzled face, and yet there was relief in his tone as he politely answered the equally polite question: "How can I, except some one shall guide me?" And he "besought Philip to come up and sit with him" (Acts 8:31). Intuitively sensing the fact that this stranger, who so abruptly accosted him on the public highway, was evidently acquainted with the very book which he is so unsuccessfully reading, he immediately invited him to climb into the chariot and explain the whole matter. Hence, Philip climbed into the chariot, took the scroll from the hands of the officer, and read the Scripture which had been puzzling the traveler. "Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,

So he openeth not his mouth:

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:

His generation, who shall declare?

for his life is taken from the earth" (Acts 8:32, 33).

This is the passage which had brought the puzzled look to the face of the officer, for he asked: "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself,

or of some other?" (Acts 8:34). Here is the opportunity which Philip desired. What a text he had! For these words refer to the suffering and the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, whom this man did not know, but whom to know aright is indeed the life eternal, and in the question which Philip had asked him he had found immediately the religious position of the man. If he was Jew, he would not understand this prediction, for the Jews were unwilling to apply it to the Christ. They looked for Him to come as a mighty temporal potentate, with great armies and with a scepter of earthly power. This verse would therefore be the last one which they would use concerning their king to come. If the man was a believer, however, he would at once understand the meaning of the passage, hence the question of Philip, "Do you understand what you are reading?" was for the purpose of determining the man's religious position. In the next verse of the record, therefore, we are told of Philip's answer. "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

(2) He began at the same text and preached Jesus unto the officer. How much is condensed in this verse! How much is implied in these words of the inspired writer! "He preached unto him Jesus!" That message, so much neglected to-day, was the message to the longing, hungry soul of the man from the southland. Not fads and theories, nor social gospels, nor ethical movements, but the glorious news of Jesus the Savior, who had come that He might redeem men from sin, and present Him to the Father in the eternal Kingdom.

And what would one preach if he preached Jesus to a man who never in his life had heard of Jesus? If you were in the same position and were to meet one who never had known of Jesus, what would you preach?

*a.* First of all, he would preach the facts concerning Jesus. He would preach the great facts of the gospel of Christ. He would tell the officer of the birth of Jesus in the manger, of the baptism in the Jordan, when the Father had publicly acknowledged Jesus as His Son in whom He was well pleased. He would tell him of the power of Jesus: how He had turned the water into wine at the happy marriage feast of Cana of Galilee, how He had healed the sick, how He had cast out demons, how He had given the power to walk unto the lame, how He had cleansed the leper, and how He had raised the dead. He would tell him of that wonderful time when Jesus had walked upon the waters, and when at His calm command those waters had ceased their thundering, and the winds their shrieking, and where there had been tumult and storm there came a great calm. He would tell him of the gathering opposition until at last the multitudes turned against the Lord, and He was brought to trial. In tones of sorrow he would tell of the condemnation of Jesus, and, at last, of His terrible death upon the cross for the sins of the world. In deepest anguish he would tell of all the gibes which were hurled at Him there, as, in sorrow and bitter suffering, He paid the awful debt. But then the tone would change as the preacher would relate the story of that gladsome morning when from the tomb the Savior came forth the conqueror over death, hell and the grave, forever. In a word, the preacher, if he preached Jesus, would

preach the great facts which prove that without a doubt this Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the Savior of the world. Paul tells us that these three great facts are the facts of the gospel when he writes to the Corinthians: "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-5). These are the three great facts which prove the divinity of Christ, and they are the first facts which must always be preached to the unconverted man. The religion of the Lord is based upon great and indisputable facts, and the first appeal of the gospel is always to the intellect and through the intellect to the heart.

b. Now, in the second place, not only would the preacher preach the facts of the gospel, but he would also preach the great commands of Christ to sinful men. It is not sufficient to prove to a man that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world, but those commands which Jesus gave, the obedience to which will bring the sinner into covenant relationship to God through Christ, must be preached, if the whole gospel is to be proclaimed. No man can preach Jesus without preaching the commands of Jesus. And since Philip was a gospel preacher, I am sure that to this man, so eager to know the truth and without the blindness and hard-heartedness of prejudice, he

preached those great requirements of the Lord. And what were some of the positive requirements? First of all, the officer must believe in the divinity of Jesus, and we have already noted that Philip was doing the proper thing to bring this faith into his heart. He was preaching the facts of the gospel, and this would bring faith, for "belief cometh of hearing, and hearing of the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Then, also, the Lord had commanded the officer to repent of his sins; and that Philip preached this, there is not a shadow of doubt. There is no salvation without repentance, and repentance means to be sorry enough to quit our sins. On Pentecost Peter told his conscience-stricken hearers that they must "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Jesus had spoken, and with His usual powerful emphasis, of the necessity of repentance when He had said: "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" (Luke 13:3). And so, if this gospel preacher of old did as all the rest of the servants of the Lord had done, he preached with all his power to the officer on the absolute and imperative necessity of repentance.

Now, in the third place, not only would Philip preach repentance for the remission of sins, but he would also preach to the officer the necessity of making the good confession. In the Authorized Version of our New Testament, the good confession is stated, and the fact mentioned that the officer made it; but our modern study of the book has shown that this, without a doubt, is an interpolation. It is significant, however, even if this is an interpolation, that there

should have been an interpolation of this character. At the time the verse was written in, it was the custom for all those who became members of the family of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, to confess that faith, in the presence of witnesses, and the scribe, or whoever it was that wrote in the good confession, knowing this custom, assumed that the officer did the same thing. And that he did it we can not, with reason, doubt. Paul speaks of this confession and of its necessity in the great plan of salvation when he writes to the Romans: "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9, 10). And how wonderful is the thought which comes to our minds, when we read the words of our dear Lord on this same theme: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32, 33). There can be no doubt but that Philip, the gospel preacher, in preaching Jesus to the hungry soul of the officer, preached to him that he must, before men, confess his faith in this Jesus. Not only would he, if he preached the commands of Jesus, preach the necessity of faith and of repentance, and of making the good confession, but the preacher, if he preached Jesus, would also preach the imperative necessity of being baptized into Jesus. This also is a great and positive command of our Lord. One of His very last commands was that to be found in the words of the

great commission: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19, 20). That Philip preached baptism to the officer is clearly manifest by what happened later on in the conversion. We shall note this as we progress with our study. Therefore, in summing up, we find that, in preaching Jesus to the officer, Philip preached the commands of Jesus, or those requirements of Jesus which must be fulfilled in order that the sinner may come to the application of the cleansing blood of Jesus. We find that, in preaching these commands, he preached the necessity of faith in Christ, of repentance toward Christ, of confession of his faith in Christ, and of baptism into Christ.

c. Now, in the third place, not only would the preacher in preaching Jesus preach the facts and the commands of Jesus, but he would also preach the exceeding precious promises of Jesus. How rich they are, and how consoling to the weary and heart-broken soul. And what were these promises?

(a) The remission of sins was one of them. We have already noted, in our study of Acts 2:38, that Peter had told the three thousand of Pentecost that, if they repented and were baptized, they would receive the remission of sins. How precious must this word have been to the soul of the officer. There has been but one religious problem in all the history of man, and that problem the remission of sins. How to free from sin is the most burning question which

has tormented the races of the world. And that there had been this same struggle in the soul of the officer we have every reason to believe. At last here was a promise, here was the solution to the age-old problem. In Christ he could be free from his sins.

(b) And then another promise which would bring delight to the wondering soul of the hearer was that of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only would the Lord forgive and remember his sins no more, but He would give unto the obedient one the power to live the new life, and that power enter come through His Spirit, which would come as an indwelling guest, to be forever in the heart of the Christian. He was not to be left desolate and alone to fight the battle of the world, but he was to have an ally in the presence of the holy Comforter, who would "be with him for ever."

(c) In the last place, the promise of an eternal home in the heavens was given to the officer, if he would but obey the Lord. And what a promise this was! In company with all other men who had ever thought upon these things at all, the officer had wondered about immortality. To him oft had come the question, "If man die, shall he live again?" And though there had ever been somehow the feeling in his heart that it must be so, and that beyond the solemn portals of the grave there must be an endless day, yet there was nowhere any promise of this fact. But here, at last, was a promise, and it was not builded upon words. For here was one who could promise because He Himself had gone down into the darkness and silence of the grave, and had come back a conqueror. Because He had conquered, He had the right to

say: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-4). With what joy must the officer have received these words of the Master, as preached by Philip. Here were the three great promises meeting the three greatest needs of man—the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promise of eternal life.

What a sermon this was as they rode along the highway through the hills on either side and across the streams toward the old city of Gaza. What a sermon of truth, and what experience it brought to the attentively listening eunuch as Philip preached unto him the facts and the commands and the promises of Jesus.

#### IV. WHAT DID THE OFFICER DO?

1. In the first place, he listened, with all his heart, to the words spoken by the preacher. He had been puzzled and he desired to know the meaning of all these words. His interest had deepened by reason of the fact that he was already a religious man. He had been to Jerusalem to worship, and this shows that he was either a foreign-born Jew or a Jewish proselyte. It is most probable that he was a foreign-born Jew, for it was a frequent thing for such to attain to high positions in the governments of the nations in which they were born. His interest in the passage, therefore, was a genuine one, for he was by

nature and training a religious man. The fact, also, that the case of Cornelius is much emphasized in the Book of Acts, as the first Gentile conversion, seems to add force to our contention here that this man was a Jew born in a foreign land. And so, because he was interested, he listened with all his power to the sermon of Philip, because he did want to understand it all and therefore he would pay the strictest attention.

2. Not only did he listen to the words of Philip, but he believed what he heard. Doubtless in Jerusalem he had heard of this Jesus, although he did not think of Him as the Messiah, and he, as did all the Jews, looked forward to the coming of that Messiah who was to redeem Israel. That the events of the crucifixion, and all that had happened then, had reached his ears there is every reason to believe; for he had but recently been right among those who had witnessed these things and in the scenes where they had been enacted. Therefore, as Philip preached, he had doubtless been thinking of these very stories which he had heard in Jerusalem. While it is not expressly stated that he believed, his subsequent actions make this fact so plain that we can confidently affirm that, with all his heart, he believed in the divinity of the Lord Jesus.

3. In the third place, not only did the officer hear and believe the gospel, but, as they are traveling along the road, he suddenly interrupts the sermon of Philip with a strange request. As they were traveling along, in the words of the record, "they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8: 36). In a word, he interrupts the message of Philip

with the request that he be baptized immediately. This shows that Philip had preached unto him the commands of the Lord, and one of those commands was that he should be baptized. And right here, the very first thing he desires after hearing of Jesus is to be baptized into Jesus. How different he is from some of our people of to-day. Seemingly the very last thing they want is to obey the Lord in baptism. What eagerness there is in the tone of the officer. He wants to obey the Lord and he does not want to put it off at all. He was indeed a man of faith, for a man of faith is always one who is willing to do what the Lord commands him, and without any questionings about it.

4. In the fourth place, not only did the eunuch hear the gospel, and believe it with all his heart, and not only did he request baptism, but, in the words of the writer of Acts, "he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:38). There are many things that Philip might have said to the officer when this sudden request for baptism came from him. He might, for instance, have said unto him: "Why, my brother, this is the first sermon you have ever heard in all your life, and do you now desire so soon to accept it? Your people believe something else, and they are sure to be much exercised over this precipitate action of yours. What will your grandfather say? And your parents? Will they not be overcome with anger that you have come all this distance only to renounce the ancient faith of your fathers for this new religion, saying that a crucified Jew is the long-expected

Messiah? And then, you do not know all the rules of the church, her creeds and catechism. Do you not think, therefore, in view of these things, that you would do well to postpone your decision for a time?" How glad we are to-day that Philip did not say all these things to the officer, but, rather, that just as soon as he knew the desire of his hearer, he commanded the chariot to come to a halt, and right there they both went down into the convenient waters and "he baptized him." Here is a man of action, one who, when he sees the truth, is ready and eager to obey it; and here is a preacher who does not for a moment postpone his part in helping the anxious soul to obey the Lord who had done so much to make it all possible.

"And he baptized him." Who was baptized, Philip or the officer? Is not this a silly question? And yet I have heard it asked again and again. Not only so, but I have heard supposedly educated ministers of the gospel say that it was impossible to determine just who was baptized in this case. In a plain effort to delude their followers were these ridiculous words said. A story comes to mind just here. Two ministerial gentlemen were walking together one day and were discussing this very passage. Said one to the other: "My brother, that verse in the eighth chapter of Acts has always been a puzzling one to me. It says that 'he baptized him.' Now, who was baptized, Philip or the officer?" "Ah, yes!" replied his friend, "you are right; that verse has also bothered me, for I have never been able to find just who was baptized." An old negress, with a basket of clothes upon her head, was walking just a few feet in front of the two reverend gentlemen, and, overhearing the

conversation, she turned and very timidly said: "If yo' will pawdon me, Ah think Ah can tell yo' who was baptized in dat connection." "All right, Auntie," was the condescending reply, "go right ahead and tell us; for we are anxious to know." "Well," she replied, "I ain't got no larnin'; but it has always appeahed to me dat de one dat wanted to be baptized was probably de one dat was baptized, sah." And did not auntie answer the question? The one who needed it and the one who wanted it was probably the one who received it. Permit here another illustration of this passage which you will never forget as long as you live. I am reading now just as it is in the New Testament, with a few changes. "A long-haired farmer was walking down the street. On his way he met a bald-headed barber. Said the long-haired farmer to the bald-headed barber: 'I desire a hair-cut.' Said the bald-headed barber to the long-haired farmer, 'If thou hast fifty cents, thou mayest.' And he said, 'I have the fifty cents!' And they both went down into the barber-shop, both the long-haired farmer and the bald-headed barber, and he cut his hair. Now, who got the hair-cut?" The man who wanted it and the man who needed it was the man who received it. The French New Testament, though it has not been translated exactly, has nevertheless made it absolutely clear when it says: "*Et Philippe baptisa l'eunuque*"—"and Philip baptized the eunuch."

But sometimes we hear another objection: "Brother Kellems, how could the officer have been baptized there on a desert? It plainly states that the place was a desert; and no one could have been baptized in a desert, for there is never water enough on a desert to

baptize anybody.” This thought was doubtless in the mind of a man at a prayer-meeting one time where this passage of Scripture was under discussion. One brother arose, and, explaining the verse, said: “In the east every chariot in ancient times carried a jug of water, for the places where water might be secured were few and far between. And in this case, since the chariot was being driven over the desert, the officer was baptized from the water in the jug.” Another gentleman, who happened to know the Scripture, arose and said: “I will read the passage with the idea in it as expressed by our good brother to-night. ‘As they went on their way they came to a certain jug, and the eunuch said, See, here is a jug; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the jug, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.’” Of course the reading provoked a roar of laughter. But, after all, perhaps it was a jug. If it was, however, this we know about it, that it was big enough for them *both* to go down into it when the baptism took place.

But regarding the desert. The Greek word *eremos* does not mean “a desert” as we think of a desert, as a vast expanse of sand where there is no water at all. It many times means merely a sparsely inhabited portion of the country. In the New Testament it frequently has this meaning, for it is stated that there were conditions present which we never think of in connection with a desert. In the feeding of the five thousand, for instance, in the fifteenth verse of the fourteenth chapter of Matthew, we are told that the place was desert, and in the nineteenth verse of the

same chapter, in describing what took place, Matthew says: "And he commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass." In referring to the same incident, John says: "And there was much grass in the place" (John 6:10). There has been much confusion regarding this statement concerning the desert, and many of the older writers and preachers found consolation in this for their views regarding baptism. Many were the arguments made from it to show that it was utterly impossible for the eunuch to have been immersed. To-day, however, we have found that there is no desert between Jerusalem and Gaza, and that there has never been. I can not refrain here from quoting Professor McGarvey regarding the road which Philip and the officer traveled. "Much error and confusion concerning this way, or road, is found in the older commentaries, which were written before the recent thorough exploration of the country; but these, and especially the actual surveys made by the Palestine Exploration Fund of Great Britain, have cleared up the subject by showing that there was a Roman paved road leading from Jerusalem direct to Gaza, some traces of which are still visible, though the route, in the roughest part, is now impassable for vehicles. This road is laid down on the great map of Palestine made from the surveys, and can be easily traced by any one in possession of the map. The whole distance from city to city is about fifty miles, and the direction from Jerusalem is nearly due southwest. Some five or six miles from the latter city the road begins to descend from the central ridge, which it follows that far, through a rough and narrow ravine called Wady el Mesarr, into Wady es Sunt,

known in the Old Testament as the valley of Elah. After traversing this valley a few miles nearly due south, the road turns to the west, and rises through another wady to the level of the great Philistine plain, which it follows the rest of the way to Gaza. This passage along the mountain ravine must be the part called desert, for all the rest of the way the road passes through the midst of villages, pastures, and cultivated fields; that is, it did so when the country was well populated. If Philip's path intersected the road in this desert, he traveled due south from the city of Samaria, and passed to the west of Jerusalem, all in compliance with the angel's direction.''<sup>1</sup>

But, after all, the real explanation of the word "desert" is not to be found in the condition of the country between the two cities at all, but rather in the condition of old Gaza. "There is nothing in the construction of the Greek sentence which would at all indicate that the word *aute* (this or the same) refers to *hodon* (the road or way). It may just as well refer to *lazan*. There is nothing, therefore, in the original to indicate that the road from Jerusalem to Gaza is meant when the word *aute* is used. The word *autos* generally refers to the nearer noun, and *ekeinos* to the one farther away. Now, *aute* (feminine), if *autos* is used, would regularly refer to Gaza, whereas if it meant the 'way' or road, a very accurate writer would have used *ekeine*. If, therefore, Gaza is feminine (and I presume it is), then in my judgment it refers to that. The translation is, then, 'this [not which] is desert.'''<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Commentary on Acts," p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. John Straub, Professor of Greek, University of Oregon.

In further explanation of this position, which will be to many a very strange one, I wish to make a somewhat extended quotation from that truly epochal work of Dr. George Adam Smith, "Historical Geography of the Holy Land."<sup>1</sup> Referring to Gaza, he says: "Gaza never lay within the territories of early Israel, though Israel's authority, as in Solomon's time, and temporary conquests, as in Hezekiah's, might extend to her gates; and this is to be explained by the prestige which Egypt, standing immediately behind, cast upon her. Under the Maccabees, as we have seen, Jewish armies carried fire and sword across Philistia. Ekron and Ashdod were taken, and Askalon came to terms, and, after Jonathan had burnt her suburbs, Gaza was forced to buy him off. It was not till 96 B. C. that Jews actually crossed her walls, but in that year the pent-up hatred of centuries burst upon her. Alexander Janneus, taking advantage of the withdrawal from Syria of the Egyptian troops, invested Gaza. After a year's siege in which the whole oasis was laid waste, the town itself was captured by treachery, its buildings burned, and its people put to the sword. Gaza, to use the word which is echoed of her by one writer after another for the next century, lay desert. In 62, Pompey took Gaza, now called a maritime city—like Joppa—from the Jews, and made it a free city. In 57, Gabinius rebuilt it, certainly on a new site, and possibly close to its harbor, which all through the Greek period had been growing in importance. In 30, Gaza, still called a maritime city, was granted by Cæsar to Herod, but at the

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<sup>1</sup> "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," George Adam Smith, pp. 185, 186.

latter's death, being Greek, as Josephus says, it was again taken from the Jews, and added to the imperial province of Syria. 'New' Gaza flourished exceedingly at this time, but the old or desert Gaza was not forgotten, probably not even wholly abandoned, for the trunk road to Egypt still traveled past it. In the Book of Acts, in the directions given to Philip to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, this is accurately noted: 'Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza; this is desert.' Most authorities connect the adjective, not with Gaza, but with the way; yet no possible route from Jerusalem to Gaza could be called desert, and this being so, and several writers\* of the period immediately preceding having used this phrase of the town itself, it seems that we are not only encouraged, but shut up to the same reference here. If new Gaza, as is probable, lay at this time upon the coast, then we know that the road the Ethiopian traveled did not take that direction, and in describing the road it was natural to mention the old site—desert, not necessarily in reality, but still in name—which was always a station upon it. That Philip was found immediately afterward at Ashdod suggests that the meeting and the baptism took place on the Philistine plain, and not among the hills of Judea, where tradition has placed them. But that would mean the neighborhood of Gaza, and an additional reason for mentioning the town."<sup>1</sup>

But I believe the Scripture, and the Scripture tells us that they "both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts

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<sup>1</sup> *Polun chronon epemous* (Josephus XIV. Antt. V. 3); *menousa eremos* (Strabo XVI. 2-30); and *he eremos Gaza* (the anonymous Greek geographer in Hudson's *Geographiæ veter. script. Græci Minores* IV. p. 39).

8:36). The Greek word is *amphoterols*, followed by the little word *te*, meaning "both," making it doubly emphatic. This construction would not have been used at all save for emphasis. The idea to be emphasized is that they both went down into the water, in order that the baptism might take place. Now, there must have been water enough for them both to have gone down into, or the statement would never have been made by the inspired writer. The same reason which prompts us to go down into the water to-day when we baptize a man doubtless prompted them to go down into it then. But one objects: "Brother Kellems, do you not think that they might have gone down into the water, and then have had water sprinkled or poured upon the head of the eunuch?" Yes, they might have done that. Is that the way you did it when you had water poured upon you? "No, I did not do it that way." Well, then, if they were right, you were by your own confession wrong, for you did not do it as you claim they did it. No, the reason is manifest, and it is so clear that there can be not even the shadow of a doubt about it; they went down into the water because to do what they wanted to do they needed both to be in the water. Paul tells us what they did in the water, when, in speaking of baptism, he writes to the Colossians: "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). The officer went down into the water in the likeness of the burial of the blessed Lord, and from those waters he was raised into a newness of life in Christ, in the likeness of the Lord's resurrection.

Now, regarding the place where the officer might have been baptized, I can do no better than once more to quote from Professor McGarvey: "The first natural water to which they came, unless it were a spring on the wayside, was the brook which flows through the valley of Elah, the brook which David crossed in going forth to meet Goliath. It is a mountain stream, which goes dry in the summer, but flows with a strong current through the winter and the spring. Such streams always wear out pools here and there suitable for baptizing. If the chariot had already crossed this stream when the eunuch requested baptism, there was another in the Philistian plain, now called Wady el Hasy, which Robinson, the first to institute any intelligent inquiries on this subject, fixed upon as the place of baptism. It is a perennial stream, and suitable for baptizing at any season of the year. It is not at all improbable, however, that the real place of this baptism was one of the many artificial pools with which the country abounded at that time, and the ruins of which are found in every section. The rainless season of seven months, which is experienced there every year, made it necessary, when the country was filled with people and flocks and herds, to make extraordinary provision of water for stock, and for irrigating the summer crops: and no country was ever so well supplied in this way as Judea."<sup>1</sup>

To sum the matter up, then, the eunuch heard the gospel, believed it, and immediately obeyed it. He was a man of decision, who, when he heard the truth, was willing without any hesitancy to accept it.

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<sup>1</sup> "Commentary on Acts," pp. 157, 158.

## V. WHAT DID THE LORD DO FOR THE EUNUCH?

He did just exactly what He said He would do. He always does this. We can trust Him, for He never breaks His word. He had promised the officer the remission of sins. Let there be no question, therefore, but that the sins of the eunuch were forever forgotten and that he was from henceforth cleansed. The Lord had also promised him the gift of the Holy Spirit, and from this time on that Spirit, as an indwelling Comforter and Helper, "the hidden man of the heart," was present with him, helping him to live the Christ life. Then, too, the Savior had promised that there should be, for the officer, a home eternal in the heavens, one not made with hands, but one whose builder and maker is God. That home was to be his when the time came for him to embark upon the journey on the deep, dark river. Through the purple mists of death, from this very day onward, he could see the shining light which comes from that wondrous city where they need no light of the sun by day, for in it the Lamb is forever the Light. The Lord fulfilled His promises, and it is no wonder, therefore, that the last picture we have of the officer is one in which he continues on his way rejoicing.

## CONCLUSION.

How plain and simple is the path to Christ. We wonder that it should ever have been made so difficult that, from the clear road to the cross, it should have been converted into a veritable maze. Here we find so clearly set forth the conditions of salvation by our Lord: that one must hear the gospel and believe it

and obey it if he is to be saved. There is no wonder that the last view of the officer which the inspired writer gives us is one in which he "goes on his way rejoicing." He had great reason for joy. He now understood the passage of Scripture which had been a source of stumbling to him, and the understanding of it had brought to him a glorious new hope. He now had the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins, and this was based, not upon an intangible feeling which might be produced in many other ways, but it was based upon the positive word of the Father, and that word will never fail. He had the consciousness also of the gift of the Holy Spirit within him as a guest and guide. No wonder, then, that he rejoiced, for now he could go back to his land in the south with the story of life to tell to his friends and loved ones. Is it possible that the churches which later on sprang up, in the south, were due to the conversion of this man? Who can ever tell? But one thing certain, there could be none better able to bring the message with such convincing power than this one, who in his religion found such joy.

And, in this, is there not a mighty lesson for us to-day? Christianity is a religion which brings joy to the heart. But note that it comes after we obey the Lord and not previous to our obedience. It is an evidence that we have obeyed Christ, and not that we should obey Him. Many there are who are waiting for a great flood of joy to come into their hearts, and when that comes, they say they will obey the Lord. In every New Testament conversion the happiness always came after those converted had obeyed Christ. Long-facedness is not an evidence of religion. Rather

is it an evidence of the lack of true Christianity; for Christianity is a religion of hope and joy. And this certainly should characterize the child of the Lord to-day, that he rejoices in the faith which is his because of the hope and consolation which it brings.

A brief summary of the conversion will be proper. The work of the angel and the Spirit was clear: to get the preacher and the convert together. The preacher when he came preached Christ—His facts, commands and promises. The eunuch heard, believed and obeyed, and the Lord kept His promise in that He forgave his sins, gave unto him the gift of the Holy Spirit and the home eternal.

## X.

### THE NON-CONVERSION OF FELIX

TEXT.—“But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.”—Acts 24: 24, 25.

#### INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE Book of Acts is a book of conversions. It is really the first book on church history. In this book we learn how men and women became Christians in the days of the apostles of the Lord. We see how the commission of the Christ was executed by those whom He had called from the various walks of life to be His ambassadors to the lost world. The way of salvation is made so plain, by these cases as recorded in Acts of Apostles, that no one need make a mistake in the solemn business of the salvation of his soul.

Not only is the Book of Acts a book of conversions, but it is also a book of non-conversions. We are not only told of how many gladly accepted the Word of life, and became followers of the blessed Lord, but we are also told how some refused the message of hope, and the reasons are given for that refusal. The apostles of the Lord were not always successful. There

were times when they could do nothing at all because of the opposition of the enemies of the Christ. This thought has often been of great strength to me. There have been times in my ministry when I worked with all the ardor at my command, when I did all within me to bring men to a saving knowledge of the truth of God, and yet seemingly nothing was accomplished. Beware of the preacher who never fails. The apostles failed once in awhile; and the case which we are to consider in this message is one in which the magnificent effort of the apostle Paul brought no results.

The event which is the basis of our sermon to-day followed immediately after Paul's brilliant defense before Felix. So powerful was that defense that Felix had sent the accusers away, and had ordered that Paul be treated with indulgence. The plans of his enemies were thus, for a time at least, thwarted, and Paul's friends were allowed to visit him. Perhaps it was but an idle desire to know this man more intimately that caused Felix to summon him, that he might hear him concerning the faith which is in Christ Jesus. At any rate, Paul was called and the opportunity given him to say what he wished concerning his position, or concerning the faith which had brought him to this place.

#### ARGUMENT.

### I. THE CHARACTER OF FELIX.

In order that we may better understand the message as delivered by Paul, let us for a moment consider the character of his audience. What kind of a man was this one who sat there before the great apostle to listen to him? What were the emo-

tions which surged through him as he called the man of God into his presence?

First of all, Felix was an adulterer. At this very time he was living in open and scandalous sin. The beautiful woman by his side was Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa, the brutal and egotistical king who had murdered the apostle James, had persecuted the church of God and had so miserably perished afterwards. Evil blood was in her veins, for she came from the family which more than any other had been the enemies of the Lord Jesus. She had been the wife of Aziz, the king of Emesa, but Felix, through the schemes of a certain sorcerer, Simon by name, had induced her to leave her husband and come to him. She was but twenty years of age and one of the most celebrated beauties of her age. Thus the memory of their rotten sin was a veritable stench in the nostrils of all the people. Though a ruler, Felix was living in insolent calculated wickedness.

But the sin of adultery was but one of the many awful sins of an awful life. Felix was corrupt to the very heart! He was depraved and godless to an almost unmentionable degree. Tacitus says of him that, "with every kind of cruelty and lust, he exercised the authority of a king and with the temper of a slave."<sup>1</sup> Farrar gives a vivid description of him: "He had been a slave in the vilest of all positions, in the vilest of all epochs, in the vilest of all cities. He had crept with his brother Pallas into the position of a courtier at the most morally degraded of all courts. He had been an officer of those auxiliaries who had been the worst of all troops. What secrets of blood and lust

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<sup>1</sup> "Commentary on Acts," McGarvey, p. 289.

lay hidden in his life we do not know; but ample and indisputable testimony, both Jewish and pagan, sacred and secular, reveals to us what he had been: how greedy, how savage, how treacherous, how unjust, how steeped in the blood of private murder and public massacre, during the eight years he had spent as the governor, first of Samaria and then of Palestine.”<sup>1</sup> Felix had risen from the position of a slave in the court of Agrippina, the mother of Nero, to the position of a governor. Thus, before Paul was the typical Roman pagan, a man without God and without conscience, a degraded beast in the form of a man.

## II. THE SERMON PREACHED BY PAUL.

As Paul faces Felix and Drusilla, what are his thoughts? These people can exert influence which may save his life. Does there come to him the temptation to speak soft words of flattery? Does it even enter his mind to use this golden opportunity to purchase his escape? Ah! here is the test of the real preacher. Here is the ordeal by fire. Never was the courage of the apostle so clearly manifest as on this occasion. Paul was filled with but one great desire, and that to tell the story to all men, rich and poor, high and low, learned and unlearned, good and bad. Thus without a moment of hesitation he launches into his message. And what a message it was! So earnest and powerful, so Spirit-filled, so pulsating with life and inspiration, so terrible in its warning, that the mighty walls of the heart of Felix crumbled, as a fortress crumbles under the impact of a great modern shell! In the words of the author of Acts, there were three divisions

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Paul," p. 550.

of the sermon: "he reasoned of righteousness, of self-control, and the judgment to come."

1. *He reasoned of righteousness.*

Think of it—of righteousness to a man to whom the very fundamental meaning of the word was foreign! What knew Felix of righteousness? What cared he for purity of life? His life had been one long and uninterrupted dissipation. His desires had been satisfied at all costs. His passions had run riot. There was no purity in him. How could a man who could plan to take another man's wife from his home think of righteousness? How strange and startling must have sounded the words of the apostle to a man whose soul was filthy with sins and all uncleanness! And to think of the courage of Paul! Here he dares to speak of Felix as a sinner. In imagination I can almost hear his tones of warning as he tries to bring Felix to a realization of the enormity of his sins before God.

2. *He reasoned of self-control.*

What must have been the thoughts of Felix as the pure-souled man of God before him reasoned of self-control or temperance? His own life rotten with adultery, and the beautiful woman beside him, the partner in his sin, the glaring reminder of a life of unbridled passions, of uncontrolled lusts! He had never controlled himself, and to him a message of this nature was the newest and most astounding thing he had ever heard. What kind of a man was this, anyway? Whence came such audacity? Where got he such courage, that, even though a prisoner, he dared thus to denounce his ruler for his sins? What a tumult of emotions must have surged through the soul of the sinner as the sermon proceeded!

### 3. *He reasoned of the judgment to come.*

Ah! but Paul was a preacher. How well he knew the soul! How artistic was he in the arrangement of his message! The denunciation of sins, followed by the solemn warning of the impending judgment! He clinches his argument with this. Not only is Felix a vile sinner in the presence of God and man, but there is a time to come when Felix and all men are to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ and answer for the deeds done in the body. And how terrible will be that judgment to him who has known nothing of self-control, and to whom the very meaning of the word "righteousness" is a stranger! The terrors of the judgment were set before him, with all the power at the command of the great apostle. What a sermon! All honor to the bravery of the man who delivered it. No better argument can be given for the genuineness of the religion of Christ to the heart of Paul than this sermon. He was preaching no ethereal tale. His message was not a psychic Christ, a phantom Savior who never did really save a soul. His was a faith so mighty, so real, so ever present, that his own life was nothing compared to the telling of it on every occasion, for men were awful sinners. To him they were going the downward way to eternal loss, and he alone knew the power which could save them.

### III. THE EFFECT OF THE SERMON.

And what was the effect of the burning message? Did the shot go home? Did the sullen and hardened heart remain unaffected by the terrible thunders of the mighty broadside of truth?

1. *And Felix was terrified.*

Ah! the shot did go home. Felix was terrified. And no wonder! As he thought of his past life, so filled with uncontrolled lust, so sinful and debauched, it is not to be wondered at that his teeth chattered as though his frame was racked by a horrible fever. "As he glanced back over his stained and guilty past he was afraid." There were footsteps behind him and he began to feel as though the earth was made of glass. What a testimony to the mighty power of the word of God, when preached by one who is on fire for the success of the divine message, is the effect of this sermon on a sinner like Felix! He was terrified, shaken like a leaf in the wind, unsettled as though an awful explosion had taken place in his life.

2. *He sends Paul away.*

"And Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." In these brief words the Divine Spirit tells us the rest of the story. Felix abruptly terminates the conference. Can you not imagine the scene? As he shakes with terror he suddenly interrupts Paul with the agonizing cry: "I have heard enough. I can not bear more now, Paul. Cease thy words and leave us. Go thy way, and there will be a better time; there will come a moment when I can hear thee again. Then do I give thee my promise that I will call thee. But go thy way for this time, for I can not stand more now." Palsied like an old man, he leaves the audience-chamber and goes out again into his world of sin, a damned soul.

## CONCLUSION.

## I. WHY WAS FELIX NOT CONVERTED?

1. *Because he allowed his lust and ambition to smother the fires of conscience which had been set burning by the sermon of Paul.*

These very fires of conscience, burning for the first time in his wicked, adulterous soul, marked the beginning of a change of life for him. Had he only allowed them to burn on until they should bring him in agony of repentance to throw his burden on the Lord! But he was too deeply steeped in sin. His lust was too strong, he could not give up his sins. If he accepted Christ, it meant that no longer could he live as he had been living, no longer could he be the kind of ruler he had been.

2. *Felix was not converted because he deferred his decision to a more convenient season, which never did and never would come.*

It would never be a convenient thing for him to put away the beautiful woman with whom he had been living in sin. It would never be a convenient thing for him to revolutionize a whole life, and especially a life so depraved as his. It is never convenient to repent. "Repentance is the very antithesis of convenience. The man who repents throws convenience to the winds. He sacrifices convenience and pride, and decides to do right. To the wicked man, the act of repentance is always a wrench in his life. It can not come smoothly and with ease. There must be a battle, and Felix was not man enough, he was not strong enough, to enter the battle."

And Felix never found it convenient. He went on and on with his wicked life, becoming worse and worse to the end. The day when in terror he listened to the awful words of Paul was the highest moment in his life. Had he but known it, had he but accepted the loving Savior whose invitation that day was so graciously extended to him, what a different end to the story there might have been! But he refused it all, and from that very day onward he went lower and lower until at last there came to him a death of sorrow and disgrace. After his experience with Paul, the Jews preferred charges of misgovernment against him, and he was recalled to Rome. Here, after a very narrow escape from death, he lived for a short time, and then was exiled to Gaul, where he died in misery and disgrace. Drusilla clung to him to the last, perhaps the most gracious thing she had ever done. A son, who was afterwards killed in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which destroyed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, was born to them. The story of Felix is the old, old story; for all men of this kind end the same way. The word of the long ago—how true it is and always will be, “The wages of sin is death!”

## II. THE EXCUSE OF FELIX WAS ONLY AN EXCUSE TO HIDE THE REAL REASON FOR HIS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT CHRIST.

It has always been the way of the sinner. He gives what he calls a reason for his disobedience, but it is not a reason. Very few men give the real reasons why they do not accept the Savior. It is human nature to desire to justify one's self if possible. The real reason was deeper than the mere surface excuse. That reason,

in the case of Felix, as in the case of thousands to-day, was a reluctance to put away sin.

Ah! here is the real reason. Felix was a sinner, and he did not want to quit his sin. He had gone so far that he did not want to repent. And is that not the real trouble with men to-day? They do not want to be saved. I fear much preaching fails because we tell men what to do to be saved, when the majority of them are not really concerned about salvation at all. A conscience concerning sin, this is the need of the hour. One of the saddest characteristics of our modern day is the declining sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. There are many who would like to come into the church for the social position it would give them, for the air of respectability which they could then wear, if they could drag their sins in after them. Frequently we have talked with young people who say: "We would come into the church if we could drag the dance with us. If we can do what we please, then we will come."

How well do I recall an experience here in the beautiful State of California! A woman came to the minister and myself one evening after the service. She was in an agitated frame of mind. That she was very nervous was evident by the restlessness which she could not control. "I do so want to accept Christ as Savior, Brother Kellems." We pleaded with her to come that night. "Madam, you do not need to leave this house, even though the service is closed, without making it right with God. Why not confess your Lord and Savior and do it now? You can, this night, be baptized into His name and go on your way rejoicing." After a seemingly bitter struggle, she re-

plied: "No, I can not do it now. But I will give my promise that when I return from a two weeks' journey which I am beginning to-morrow, I will accept the Lord and Savior." Our further urgings were of no avail, for she had made up her mind. She was gone the two weeks, and in two weeks to a day she returned. But she did not return to confess Christ. When she came again, it was to her own funeral. In a machine driven by a crowd of drunken men and women, of whom she was one, she was instantly killed by a fast express train. She had known of the debauch ahead of her when she talked to us that night, but she did not have the courage to give it up and turn to the Lord.

And so it ever is. The excuse "a more convenient season" is given to hide our real reasons—a reluctance to give up sin, a lack of courage to live the Christian life, or mere indecision. There is but one end of the way called "a more convenient season," and that end is death. When you are tempted to think in these terms, when you are tempted to procrastinate, remember the non-conversion of Felix.

# XI.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCHES

TEXT.—“And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”—Matt. 16: 18.

IN these words our Master, in answer to the confession of Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” gives us the principles which will solve every fundamental difficulty which shall ever beset the church. His church is to be builded upon a rock, and as it is builded upon a rock it shall be eternal. Times may change, different constructions may be placed upon the gospel, various Christologies may arise, but His church, firmly builded upon a mighty rock, shall endure triumphant. Even the gates of the unseen shall not be able to prevail against it. That rock was not to be Peter, a little rock (*petros*), but *petra*, a tremendous mountain, an awe-inspiring Gibraltar of rock. The difference between the two words, one masculine, the other feminine, is the difference between a little stone and a great ledge of rock. The misapprehension of the character of the rock has been the fruitful source of division and strife among those who, more than any other people in the world, should dwell together in unity. The rock is only indirectly the confession of Peter. It is the truth of the confession, or, better still, the person con-

fessed, Jesus Himself. Paul understood this when he wrote: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3: 11). Christ Himself is the rock upon which the church is builded. Oh that men had realized this through the years; that they could have understood with Paul that only as we build upon the divine foundation can we have unity and peace and power to work His will in the world! Only as we build upon the divine foundation can we keep pace with the ever-changing conditions of thought in which men live and move and have their being. Peter, upon whom, as a little rock, men have tried to build the church of Christ, himself denied that he was the rock when, speaking of Christ as the foundation stone which the builders rejected, he says: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner" (1 Pet. 2:7). At last, in this modern time, after almost two millenniums of trying other foundations, men are turning as never before to the simple New Testament attitude: to our Lord Jesus Christ as the only foundation upon which a united, progressive and efficient church of Christ can be builded.

The title of this address, or, better, essay, though it was delivered in the form here written as a public address, is, in a sense, misleading. It were indeed a presumptuous thing to attempt a history of almost two thousand years of Christianity on the earth, in one sermon. We are not therefore concerned about all the intricacies of the history of the various sects and divisions in the body of Christ, but will confine ourselves to a study of those elements which arose in the church, resulting at last in the formation of the

Roman Catholic organization, and later on in the Protestant denominations. For there is a widespread ignorance of these things to-day. Men are wanting to know just why it is that we have so many denominations, when we love the same Bible and worship the same Lord Jesus Christ. We can never understand the how of Christian unity until we understand the how of division. I am convinced that a consistent study of church history would go far toward bringing about the lost unity of the body of the Lord. Hence we will consider here the rise of those elements which have resulted in a divided church.

I. AS A PRELIMINARY TO OUR STUDY, LET US CONSIDER BRIEFLY SOME OF THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AS IT IS DESCRIBED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. *That there was a New Testament Christianity no real student of the New Testament will deny.*

Throughout the blessed volume there beats upon us a mighty religious life, a life the like of which had never been seen in the world before; a life so glorious and powerful that it transformed the known world. And it is to be remembered that the New Testament did not produce that life. It was the result of that life, and had it not been for the fact that the church was in existence, and the life was being experienced and lived by thousands, the New Testament would never have been. And yet, the New Testament exhibits that life to us to-day and with great fidelity. Its chief characteristics are described with clarity, and the reason for its existence gleams in glory from almost every page. It is possible, then, to understand

what the New Testament church was. We will ever have a pattern to which we can refer, when we would know how the first Christians thought, moved and lived their life in Christ. That we may understand the great apostasy and the attempts of the reformers to get back to the true standard, it is necessary that we understand the place and significance of the primitive New Testament church in the world.

*2. Some of the general characteristics of the church as they are exhibited in the New Testament.*

(1) The church was founded by the Lord Himself and is known as *His* church. This fact is established by the verses which we have alluded to before in our consideration of the text. The statement of the Master that He would found an organization to be known as His church arose upon the occasion of His conversation with His disciples in the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, when He asked them: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" Peter, with the keen eye of faith, replied, after they had said that the people were divided about the answer to the question, some thinking that He was John the Baptist, others Jeremiah and others Elijah, saying the words with which His name will ever be associated as long as the world stands: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock *I will build my church*; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16: 17, 18). The church was to be built by Him and it was to be His. Those who were to belong to it were

to be a holy people, bought by Him at a tremendous price. They were to be called out of sin, by Him, to a holy service. This is the meaning of the word *ekklesia* (church—the called out of God).

(2) Christ Himself was to be the foundation of His church. It was not to be on this or that Christology, or this or that interpretation of Him, or this or that creed about Him, that the church was to be founded, but upon Christ Himself as Lord and Savior, as divine Son of the living God. How many troubles would have been saved the church had men only realized that the foundation was not to be some interpretation petrified into a creedal statement, but the living and exalted Lord. This is the meaning of the already quoted words of the apostle to the Gentiles: “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). He further affirms the same great fact when to the Ephesians he writes: “So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being *the chief corner-stone*” (Eph. 2:19, 20). This, as we have already discovered, was the meaning of our Lord when He referred to the rock upon which His church is to be built. Not a dead rock, but a living rock, that rock to which Paul referred once more when he says: “And they did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:3, 4). When all the present church of Christ eats and drinks of the same spiritual rock and builds upon

that rock, then will the lost unity of His church be restored in splendor and glory.

(3) The church was established in the city of Jerusalem A. D. 29, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the apostles. That this was to be the time and place was a matter of prophecy. "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: *for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem*" (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1, 2). Jesus also affirms that Jerusalem shall be the place of the beginning of the new order which shall be known as His church. "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, *beginning from Jerusalem*" (Luke 24:46, 47). Repentance and remission of sins in His blood could not be preached until He had died and shed His blood and had been raised from the dead. Then, upon the foundation of such facts, could the new dispensation be ushered in. The writer of Acts further attests the fact that Jerusalem is to be the place of beginning when he says: "And, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized

with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence'' (Acts 1:4, 5).

The church could not be established until the coming of the Spirit, the new Comforter and Guide. Now, in the second chapter of Acts we have the record of the coming of the Spirit and the first gospel sermon. It is in Jerusalem, on Mount Zion, that Peter, the one to whom Jesus had given the keys of the Kingdom, preached with mighty power the first gospel sermon, and for the first time in the world gave the conditions upon which the remission of sins could be obtained. All the predictions of the prophets were fulfilled in the time and the place. When Peter tells the Jerusalem Christians of his wonderful experience at the household of Cornelius, he refers back to the day of Pentecost in the words: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning'' (Acts 11:15). To him and to all the apostles the day of Pentecost was *the beginning*. The words of Professor Fisher sum up the matter: "With the day of Pentecost the career of the church militant fairly begins."'<sup>1</sup>

And is it not significant that in the place where Jesus had been persecuted and reviled, where He had done His work and had been hated as few men in this world have ever been hated, that He should be glorified in that here His church should be born?

(4) Christ Jesus was considered by all the early Christians to be the Head of His church. The authority was not to be in a pope or council of men, but in Him. He Himself had said: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth''

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<sup>1</sup> "History of the Christian Church," Fisher, p. 19.

(Matt. 28:18). The New Testament Christians looked to Him and His words as the authority. So taught Paul: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:18). So also in the letter to the Ephesians he affirms: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22). The authority is in Him, and that authority is made known to us through His word.

(5) Christ Jesus was also the creed of His church. The New Testament was not the creed. The Lord never intended, as far as we know, that any book should be the creed of His people. It was never His desire that the faith of His people be buried in a dry, creedal statement. The creed of the church was the Christ Himself as the risen and glorified Lord. But we know of Him through the word of God, the Word which the early apostles and evangelists have left to us. Thus to us, to-day, the Christ as revealed in the New Testament is the creed of the church which He founded. After all, the creed of the church is the foundation, it is that upon which the church is builded. And the church was builded—can we say it too many times for this age of ours which is groping so anxiously back to the Christ of the New Testament?—upon the living Christ. Jesus said it Himself in that best loved verse in the best loved book: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The same great truth was preached to the frightened Philippian jailor: "Be-

lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:31). The universal faith of the universal church was expressed in just one article: "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God." Having repented of their sins and having made this confession publicly, they were baptized into Christ, and by that act were constituted members of His body, or church, upon the earth. They were thus brought to the blood of the Lord which brings remission of sins, and were added to the church (Acts 2:37). All the blessings of reconciliation, all that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit meant to them, they derived from their living foundation, the Christ in whom they had believed.

(6) The names of the church and of the individual members of it were those which honored their revered founder.

The names of the organization were "church of God" (1 Tim. 3:5; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1), "churches of God" (1 Cor. 14:33), "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16), "my church" (Matt. 16:18). All these names were such as would honor the Lord Jesus. They ascribed all glory and honor to Him.

The names of the individual members of the church were of the same type. When they were referred to as learners of the Lord they were called "disciples" (Matt. 20:17; Acts 9:1). The very name, however, derives its significance from the relationship which they sustained as students or learners of the great Teacher. When the family relation is meant, they are called "children of God" (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 3:20). When the results of their attitude to the Lord are in mind, they are called "saints" or "holy ones," for through His

sacrifice for them have they in Him become holy (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 14:33). When their relation to the Lord as obedient learners is thought of, they are always called "Christians" (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). They have become Christian ones by virtue of having become obedient to the commands of the Lord.

(7) The ordinances as practiced by the New Testament church were those which had been commanded by the Master and which in their observance honored Him. There were two of these ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism was the burial in water of a penitent believer in the Lord, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of that one from the watery grave as a symbol of the three great facts of the gospel, which were then universally believed—that Christ died, that He was buried and that He had been raised from the dead. It was, therefore, an act which in every respect honored Christ in that, every time it was performed, it was a witness in a powerful way to the great facts which indisputably prove Him to be the Son of God. (See 1 Cor. 15:1-5; Rom. 6:4, 5; Col. 2:12.) Baptism, therefore, in the New Testament church was never anything but one—a burial and a resurrection. Anything else than this would have failed utterly to show forth the significance of the act. To change its form would have meant to destroy its meaning. Paul, speaking of it, says, "There is *one* baptism" (Eph. 4:5), and it is significant that the one who made this statement always thought of that one baptism as a burial and a resurrection (Col. 3:12; Rom. 6:4, 5).

The Lord's Supper, instituted by the Master on the very night on which He was betrayed, was an act the sole purpose of which was, like that of baptism, to honor the Lord. In speaking of the purpose of this institution, Paul says: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim [or publish] the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). That they might do this on the day on which in triumph He had come forth from the grave, the early Christians came together on the first day of the week, which was known as the Lord's Day, and assembled themselves around the table of the Master. Every time they did this they felt that they were testifying to their faith in the fact that He had died for their sins and that He was coming again. Luke says: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them" (Acts 20:7). The main reason for their assembly was that they might keep the sacred feast. The writer of the Hebrew letter exhorts them: "And let us consider one another to provoke one another unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). That day was the Lord's Day, and they were to exhort one another to keep in mind the feast, its observance and its holy meaning. There is but one first day of the week, and that comes every week. For seven hundred years the church met on this day, and every Lord's Day, for the observance of the Supper.

(8) The government of the New Testament church was very slight. In the main there were two classes of officers: elders, or bishops, and deacons. Each local

congregation had these officers, and their authority was restricted to the local church alone. There is not a shred of evidence anywhere that they ever had any authority outside at all. The apostles had no successors in the sense that there were those to take their places. When the words of the Lord were committed to writing in the New Testament books, the message which they brought was final, and there would not be another. The apostles and evangelists, guided as they were by the Holy Spirit, had spoken the Spirit's word; and from that time on, this Word was to be binding upon the church. To Timothy, Paul writes: "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). The words thus written in the New Testament were to be given throughout the generations, not to learned men necessarily, or to men of philosophical turn of mind, but to *faithful* men who were to teach others through the years. That this revelation was to be the last one, and was to be received and preached as such, is evident from many verses in the New Testament: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:24, 25). "As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you, exhorting you to contend earnestly

for the faith which *was once for all* delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). No words can be stronger than these. Whatever else they signify, it is clear that in the mind of the apostles and early Christians the revelation was final. The meaning of such expressions as "the word of the Lord endureth for ever" and "once for all delivered" is unmistakable.

The words "elder" (*presbuteros*) and "bishop" (*episkopos*) were simply two names used interchangeably for the same officer in the local congregation. His authority extended to that congregation alone. The word *episkopos* means literally "a shepherd." An elder or bishop, therefore, was a shepherd of a local flock. Paul uses the terms interchangeably in at least two places in the New Testament. "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint *elders* in every city, as I gave thee charge; if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly. For the *bishop* must be blameless, as God's steward; not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospitality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled; holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:5-9). Here Paul is talking about the same officer and his qualifications for that holy office of overseer or shepherd of the flock, and he uses both words in speaking of him. In his beautiful farewell conversation with the officers of the church in Ephesus the apostle also uses these terms interchangeably. In Acts 20:17, Luke says: "And

from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the *elders* of the church. And when they were come to him he said unto them." After this follows the exhortation of Paul addressed to the *elders* of the church. In the twenty-eighth verse in this same exhortation, he says: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you *bishops*, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." Here he is speaking to *elders* of one local congregation, and he calls them *bishops* or shepherds of the flock. There can be no doubt that, in the New Testament meaning of the terms, the bishop or elder was the officer of a local congregation.

Each congregation did its own work in its own way, and disciplined its own members. Paul, in speaking of an incestuous person, tells the Corinthian church to "put away that wicked man from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:13). He also speaks of both classes of officers when he writes: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). Each congregation was separate and apart from every other. They were indeed free churches of Christ, independent, yet interdependent. They were united by their common relation to the Lord and their common debt to Him by their "common salvation." They helped each other in time of need, but no church had any authority over another.

(9) The rule of faith or discipline was at first the words of the apostles, and, afterward, those words as committed to writing in the New Testament. These books constituted a sufficient guide to faith, and needed not the additions of men to make them a proper rule

of life. In them Christ was made known to men, and Christ is not only the object of faith, but He is the standard as well. Everything in the life of a Christian is measured by Him as the standard, but the revelation of His will is made in the New Testament Scriptures. Paul speaks of these sacred writings in their capacity as a rule and guide of faith when he writes to Timothy: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

3. *It should also be noted, before we complete our survey of the church as it is exhibited in the New Testament, that it was a united church.*

The New Testament not only describes this unity among the followers of Christ, but emphasizes the necessity of the continuance of that unity, if the purpose of Christ's coming into the world is to be fulfilled. Christ Himself prayed that the unity which characterized His disciples might never be broken: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, *that they may be one even as we are*" (John 17:11). "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20, 21). In scathing language, of which he was at times such a master, Paul denounces divisions as wicked, and emphasizes the prime necessity for a continuance of unity among those who follow the Lord: "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord

Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. *Is Christ divided?* Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius; lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name” (1 Cor. 1:10-15). Once again he lashes them with almost bitter words, and yet tender in his yearning for their restored unity: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men?” (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Whenever men have walked after men and as men, without the guiding of the Spirit, there has always been division. The Spirit and His teachings have never divided the church of the living God. That division has always been the work of men.

The New Testament not only describes the unity of the church of Christ, but it also leaves no doubt in the minds of those who read it as to the nature of that unity. There is a great difference between union and unity. And yet frequently this difference has not

been realized. Union means simply the joining together of two or more bodies in one body. There might conceivably be union without unity at all. A minister friend one time illustrated this by saying: "If you tie the tails of two tom-cats together, you will have union, but you will not have unity." Union involves neither similarity of structure nor identity of nature, but unity always supposes "homogeneity, similarity, congruity, singleness, a common pervading principle or nature."<sup>1</sup> Thus is it always "that, in a religious point of view, unity *implies a common nature or joint relation, arising from a joint participation of the Holy Spirit, imparting to each individual similar dispositions, feelings and purposes.*"<sup>2</sup> With this position agrees the late Professor Denny: "To the present writer it is conclusive evidence that, in spite of the various modes of thought and feeling which the canonical Christian writings exhibit, there is really such a thing as a self-consistent New Testament and a self-consistent Christian religion. There is a unity in all these early Christian books which is powerful enough to absorb and subdue their differences, and that unity is to be found *in a common religious relation to Christ, a common debt to Him, a common sense that everything in the relations of God and man must be determined by Him.*"<sup>3</sup> The unity of the New Testament church was indeed a unity of the Spirit. This unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) means the unity which is brought into being and maintained by the Spirit. Those who have a common relation to God, who enjoy "the common salvation," are those in whom similar feelings and emotions and

<sup>1</sup> "The Office of the Holy Spirit," Richardson, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> "The Office of the Holy Spirit," Richardson, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> "Jesus and the Gospel," Denny, p. 90.

experiences have been wrought by the Spirit of God. This common relation to God through Christ manifests itself in similar actions. Paul describes these manifestations of unity which are brought into being by the Spirit of God, when he says: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4:1-6). When the spirit of unity dwells in Christians, they will join themselves in one body, for they have similar experiences in Christ, a like love for Him, a congruous relation to God through Him. They have the one hope because of Him and a common faith in Him. There was with these early Christians but one baptism, because they had the same Spirit in their hearts, the common faith in the Lord in the three great facts concerning His death and burial and resurrection, and these could be manifested only by that one baptism, that one which showed forth His burial and resurrection. The one baptism, therefore, was a visible manifestation of that in which they stood united, a common relation to God through Christ.

To conclude, then, our *resume* of the characteristics of the New Testament church as they are exhibited to us in the New Testament, it is evident that one attitude characterized everything which the early Christians did, thought and experienced, an attitude to Christ as

Savior and Lord. That this common relation to God through Christ is the fundamental thing, the universal faith and the principle by which the unity of the church was maintained is manifest in the characteristic elements which we have already studied. Christ was indeed to them "all in all"; He was Christianity. To them He was founder of the church, foundation of the church, head of the body; His name they wore before the world; His death, burial and resurrection they symbolized as they obeyed Him in baptism; the fact that He had died for the remission of the sins of men they remembered every time they met together to observe His Supper. He was to them Redeemer, Savior, Lord and Judge. In opinions about what was the significance of the experience which had been wrought in their souls as they listened to the words about Him, the meaning and ultimate significance from the standpoint of Christology of the faith which had been evoked within them—in all these things they might differ, but they were always one in their religious relation to God through Him.

## II. LET US NOW CONSIDER THE RISE OF THOSE HUMANISMS IN THE CHURCH WHICH RESULTED IN THE FORMATION OF THE APOSTATE ROMAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION.

Had the churches continued in their primitive faith the unity which was their salvation would have continued also. Left in possession of the New Testament books, they had a sufficient guide in all matters pertaining to faith and discipline. These books, inspired as they were by the Holy Spirit, would have kept them progressive and powerful in their "common salvation."

But very early the desire of men to add to the divine plan was manifest, resulting, as it has always resulted, in confusion and division. They began to "walk as men," with the result that the church of the Lord became carnal. We shall therefore consider the human elements which crept in, flowering at last in the Roman Catholic Church.

1. *The rise of ecclesiastical government or hierarchy.*

The first change in the apostolic plan, and one with tremendous consequences, was the distinction made between the office of elder and that of bishop. In the New Testament plan there was no such distinction, as we have already found, for the two words were simply two names for the same officer. After the death of the apostles, uninspired men began to elevate in each local church one elder above the others and call him by the name overseer or bishop. He was to be the shepherd of the entire flock and presiding officer at the meeting of the elders. In this one action began that which was to come forth for hundreds of years in a divided church. Professor Fisher speaks of this change in the apostolic plan: "In the New Testament, as we have seen, there are two classes of officers in each church, called, respectively, elders, or bishops, and deacons. After we cross the limit of the first century we find that with each board of elders there is a person to whom the name 'bishop' is specially applied, although for a long time he is likewise called a presbyter."<sup>1</sup>

One of the reasons for the exaltation of one man, and he was generally the most able man in the church, the one in whom it was thought the Holy Spirit dwelt in the fullest degree, was that the church might be pro-

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<sup>1</sup> "History of the Christian Church," Fisher, p. 51.

tected against false teaching. Early was there great fear of heresy and of the wolves which should come in sheep's clothing to deceive the elect. Jerome speaks of this change in the original order and the reason for it when, in the fourth century, he writes: "With the ancients, presbyters were the same as bishops, but gradually all the responsibility was deferred to a single person, that the thickets of heresies might be rooted out."<sup>1</sup> Thus early was there afloat the idea that only through human authority could heresy be stopped.

One of the immediate effects of the exaltation of the bishops was that the churches were drawn closer together. If a Christian desired to visit a neighboring city, and, while there, to be with the church, he was given a letter by his bishop, and on the presentation of this letter he was received with hospitality by the brethren and entertained while with them. The larger churches began early to organize congregations in their immediate vicinity, and these new flocks were ministered to by the elders of the organizing body, under the direction and supervision of the bishop of the mother church. In one local church, then, with its dependent churches ministered to by those who, under the direction of the bishop, were its elders, we have the Roman Catholic organization in miniature. If any member were excommunicated from a congregation, the bishop informed all the other bishops of the fact, that they might be on their guard against him. The larger the city, generally speaking, the stronger the church, and consequently the more were churches organized around it, and the greater the power of the bishop.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Eight Leading Churches," Berry, p. 18.

The bishops of Rome, Antioch and Alexandria were considered the biggest bishops of all, because these places were supposed to have been the seats of the apostles in a very important sense. They were also cities of the first magnitude, and, consequently, their bishops would be looked upon as men of great influence and authority. At first the term "archbishop," or "big bishop," was applied to all the city bishops. These men were generally the best and brainiest men, and, as such, were looked up to with veneration. Gradually the term was restricted to the bishops in Rome, Alexandria and Antioch alone. The time came at last when they were called primates or patriarchs.

In the second century, also, the bishops began to meet together in conventions for the discussions of the various problems which confronted them. These meetings were termed "synods." The presiding officer was the bishop, and gradually all who were not bishops were excluded from membership. Such gatherings had a tremendous influence upon the church universal, for these men were the biggest and best men in it, and were supposed to be guided by the Holy Spirit in their deliberations. They themselves made this claim, and it was believed by the churches. The laws, which at first were but resolutions, were called canons, and were supposed to be binding upon all of those who had had anything to do with passing them. Thus the uninspired leaders began to create a deposit of tradition, which in time would have as much authority as the New Testament books themselves. Their claim to be guided by the Holy Spirit would lend power to the traditions or canons in the churches.

By the middle of the second century after the Lord had ascended to heaven, the churches were united under the rule of the bishops, whose powers grew with the years. The smaller towns gradually lost the right to have bishops appointed in their churches, and, as the years went by, the rule was more and more transferred to the bishops of the great cities. About this time, also, there came into being the first human name as applied to the church of Christ, for, in opposition to heretical sects, the church was called the "catholic or universal church."

The story of the exaltation of the bishop of Rome until he was acknowledged as the pope is so long that it can not be told here. The beginning of it, as we have just seen, was the unwarranted and unscriptural distinction early made between the elder and bishop. We can here but indicate the reasons why he was thus exalted until he was known as the chief one in the church.

(1) Rome was the capital of the empire. Therefore the Roman church was the most influential church, for it counted among its members some of the most influential people in the empire. As a city, the fame of Rome was world-wide. All roads led to Rome. The membership of the Roman church was very large, and the Roman congregation had established many churches in Italy. It was but the natural thing, therefore, that it should be looked up to as one of the most influential congregations among the churches of Christ.

(2) The Roman church had endured many persecutions. It seemed that the fury of the persecuting emperors was directed more at the Roman Christians than at others anywhere. The fact that the Roman

Christians had so suffered had exalted them and their bishop in the minds of the people in the outside world, but especially in Italy. This had a tendency to concentrate attention upon the Roman church.

(3) The Roman bishop had many times saved Rome from trouble. When the barbarians had come down upon the city, he had interceded for the people. All this conspired with other events to make him popular and to make the people outside think that he was the biggest preacher or bishop in the world. The generosity of the Roman Christians in relieving the needs of brethren far away had helped to exalt the Roman church also; and whatever exalted the Roman church exalted the Roman bishop. Accustomed to the authority of the bishop in the local congregations, it was not a hard thing for the people to begin to think of an authority over the church universal.

(4) As early as 170 A. D. a tradition began to be repeated in Italy, that Peter had established the Roman church and that he had been its first bishop. There is nowhere any evidence that Peter ever saw Rome, but this story was told and accepted by many. The Roman bishop was therefore considered to be the successor of Peter, and his position was immensely strengthened by the tradition. By the beginning of the sixth century the term "papa" or "pope," which had at first been applied to all the bishops in the west, was applied by the people of Italy exclusively to the Roman bishop. The first real pope was Gregory I., who reigned from 590 to 604 A. D.

## *2. The rise of human creeds in the church.*

We have discovered in our study of the New Testament church that the early Christians did not try to

reduce their faith to a creedal statement; in a word, that they did not believe in a written creed at all. Their creed was the living Christ, the Savior and Redeemer, and they were united in their common religious relation to God through Him. But about a hundred years after the death of the last apostle, uninspired men, in order to defend themselves against the attacks of heretics and, as they thought, to preserve the unity of the church, began to resolve the main facts of Christianity into short creedal statements. This short creed was erroneously called "The Apostles' Creed." For about fifteen hundred years it was thought that the apostles had composed it, but recent researches have utterly discredited this theory. The apostles had no such statement at all, but believed in the Christ as their creed, and the simple statement in the confession was deemed sufficient. This first creed was for the purpose of preserving unity, but it had exactly the opposite result.

The conversion of Constantine to the Christian religion in 323 A. D. was a momentous act in the history of Christianity. Thinking that his victory over his rival for the throne at Milvian bridge, near Rome, was the direct will of the Christian God, because he had imagined that in the sky he had seen a flaming cross on which was written in Greek, "By this sign, conquer," he adopted Christianity as the religion of the empire. From this time on, he converted men by edict, which has never been a method of converting them at all. The union of church and state, which was thus consummated, meant that the old Roman empire, dying, should not die, but that it should live on in the Roman Catholic Church. It had a further

tendency to consolidate the church under the power of the bishop at the capital.

In 325 A. D., the first council of all the church met at Nice, convened by the emperor. At this council was adopted the first real creed of Christendom, the Nicene Creed. We thus have added to the simple New Testament church an ecclesiastical government and a human creed, by which all men who desire to become Christians are to be judged. From this time on, a human document is to be the standard of faith. Instead of men believing in the Lord Jesus, and being united in their common faith in Him and the common experience that the preaching of His life and words evoked within them, they are to be judged by an interpretation of Him as made by men.

### 3. *The origin of infant baptism.*

In the New Testament there is no evidence that any one ever became a Christian unless he was old enough to hear the gospel, to believe it and to repent of his sins. "Whosoever *will* may come" is the burden of the invitation in the New Testament. But, about two hundred years after Christ, a discussion arose among some of the bishops on the question of original sin. It was contended that children were born in sin, and that they were therefore totally depraved. If, then, they should die in infancy, they would be lost. Now, the question which logically would next arise would be as to the method by which this sin could be removed. According to the New Testament, as was well known by all the bishops, the sinner comes to the blood of Christ in his obedience in the act of Christian baptism. If baptism would then bring a man to the remission of sins, it was contended that the infants

should be baptized. Naturally, a tremendous discussion arose over it all, some favoring and some bitterly opposing the doctrine. The first one in history to mention infant baptism was Tertullian, bishop of the church at Carthage in Africa. He did not believe in hereditary total depravity; hence, with all his soul he fought infant baptism. About the beginning of the third century he writes: "Our Lord says, indeed, do not forbid them to come. Therefore let them come when they are grown up. Let them come when they understand, when they are instructed whither it is that they come. Let them be made Christians when they know Christ." "What need their guiltless age make such haste to the forgiveness of sins?"<sup>1</sup> Tertullian here holds exactly the position of the New Testament church. Origen, however, an Alexandrian by birth, believed in hereditary depravity, hence in baptismal regeneration. He writes: "If there was nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them." In another passage he says: "Having occasion in this place, I will mention a thing which causes frequent inquiries among the brethren. Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or when have they sinned? Or how can the reason of the laver in their case hold good? But according to that sense we have mentioned even now, none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day upon the earth. And it is for that reason, because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptized."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Ante-Nicene Fathers," Vol. III., p. 678.

<sup>2</sup> "The Eight Leading Churches, Berry, p. 21.

Thus it was that infant baptism rested upon two speculative and totally unscriptural doctrines:

(1) Heredity, total depravity, or that an infant is born in sin, and is a sinner through and through, depraved in nature; and

(2) Baptismal regeneration, or that baptism will take away sin, even though there be no faith.

Those who to-day practice infant baptism, so called, should keep these facts well in mind, for, while it may be now that the act is but an act of dedication, it was not true at the time of its origin. It is not baptism and has never been in any sense baptism, for baptism must be the act which comes out of the very soul of the one baptized.

4. *The origin of substitutions for a burial and resurrection in baptism.*

About fifty years after the rise of infant baptism—for it should be held in mind that the infants were immersed in accordance with the universal custom of the church—arose the first substitution for the baptism commanded by the Lord and practiced by the New Testament church as a symbol of the universal faith in the death, burial and resurrection. The first case in history of any man being poured for baptism, as a substitute for that which the Lord expressly commanded, was that of Novatian, in 251 A. D. Novatian was ill, and the elders thought that he could not be immersed. What were they to do? Then came to them the thought that, since the Holy Spirit dwelt in them, what they did would have the approval of the Spirit, if it should not be the very work of the Spirit Himself. They decided, therefore, to pour water all over him as he lay on the bed. This would take the place

of an immersion in water, but it was understood that if he recovered from his illness, he must be immersed. Hence they poured water on him as lay ill on his bed. Eusebius, who has been called "the father of church history," writes of this revolutionary act: "Being delivered by the exorcists, he fell into a severe sickness, and, as he seemed about to die, he received baptism by affusion on the bed where he lay, *if indeed we can say that such a one did receive it.*"<sup>1</sup> But Novatian did not die. He recovered and became so influential in the church that finally, by one party of the church, he was elected bishop of Rome, the highest office in the church. Immediately there was great objection because of the so-called baptism which he had received. Dr. William Wall speaks of this case as follows: "In the year of our Lord 251, Novatian was, by one party of the clergy and the people of Rome, chosen bishop of that church in a schismatical way and in opposition to Cornelius, who had been before chosen by the major part, and was already ordained. Cornelius does, in a letter to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, vindicate his right, and shows that Novatian can not canonically come to the orders of the priesthood, much less was he capable of being chosen bishop, for that all the clergy and a great many of the laity were against his being ordained presbyter; for it was not lawful, they said, for any one who had been baptized in his bed, in time of sickness, as he had been, to be admitted to any office of the clergy."<sup>2</sup> Thus the origin of sprinkling and pouring was purely a substitution on the part of the Roman Catholic officials. But Rome is

<sup>1</sup> "The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," Vol. I., pp. 288, 289.

<sup>2</sup> "The History of Infant Baptism," Dr. William Wall, Vol. I., pp. 204, 205.

great for precedents, and this action established a precedent. From this time on, therefore, in cases of sickness, pouring was substituted for the immersion of the whole body, and was called clinic (or sick man's) baptism.

That this position is true is admitted by the great Catholic authorities. The Catholic Encyclopedia, a standard of authority in things Roman Catholic, in the article on baptism says: "The word 'baptism' is derived from the Greek word *bapto*, or *baptizo*, to wash or immerse." "Three forms of ablution have prevailed among Christians, and the church holds them all to be valid, because they fulfill the requisite significance of the baptismal laving. These forms are immersion, infusion and aspersion. The most ancient form usually employed was unquestionably immersion. This is not only evident from the writings of the Fathers, and the early rituals of both the Latin and Oriental churches, but it can also be gathered from the Epistles of St. Paul, who speaks of baptism as a bath (Eph. 5: 26; Rom. 6:4; Tit. 3:5). In the Latin Church, immersion seems to have prevailed until the twelfth century. After that, it is found in some places even as late as the sixteenth century. Infusion and aspersion, however, were growing common in the thirteenth century, and gradually prevailed in the western church."<sup>1</sup>

The late Cardinal Gibbons speaks in the same strain when he says: "For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity, baptism was usually conferred by immersion, but since the twelfth century the practice of baptizing by infusion has prevailed in

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<sup>1</sup> "The Eight Leading Churches," Berry, p. 49.

the Catholic Church, as *this manner is attended by less inconvenience than baptism by immersion.*"<sup>1</sup>

Dollinger, another of the greatest of Catholic historians and theologians, says the same thing in even stronger words than those employed by the American cardinal: "At first Christian baptism commonly took place in the Jordan; of course, as the church spread more widely, in private houses also. Like that of St. John, it was by the immersion of the whole person, *which is the only meaning of the New Testament word.* A mere pouring or sprinkling was never thought of. St. Paul made this immersion a symbol of burial with Christ, and the emerging a sign of resurrection with Him to a new life. Baptism is a 'bath.' Of the Ethiopian's baptism it is said that both he and Philip went down into the water and the Evangelist baptized him."<sup>2</sup>

The Council of Ravenna, in 1311, made by law the substitution of sprinkling and pouring equally valid with the immersion of the person. Up to this time it had been confined to those who were ill, but from now on it gradually prevailed in the western church. But it is to be kept clearly in mind that it was purely a substitution of the Roman Church, and that they had no authority to make any such substitution. The priests of Rome to-day are filled with amusement at those who tirade against them, and yet cling to the baptism, so called, which they themselves invented.

In the conclusion of our study of the rise of humanisms in the church, or, rather, the addition of humanisms to the revealed divine plan, let us remember that

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<sup>1</sup> "Faith of Our Fathers," Cardinal Gibbons, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> "The First Age of the Church," Vol. II., pp. 183, 184.

these humanisms created the Roman Catholic Church. That there are elements which are distinctively Christian in the Church of Rome, all will agree, but that which makes it Roman Catholic are those errors into which the uninspired men who followed the apostles were led by their refusal to abide by the divine revelation in the New Testament. The ecclesiastical government or hierarchy, the human name by which the institution is called, the human creed which is an interpretation of the Christian religion as it appealed to the minds of that day, the substitution of sprinkling and pouring for the baptism commanded by the Master, the addition of infant baptism to the New Testament plan—these are the errors which created the Roman Catholic organization.

III. WE ARE NOW READY TO NOTE THE FACT THAT THE INHERITANCES FROM ROME CREATED THE MODERN DENOMINATIONAL ORDER, AND THAT THAT ORDER PERSISTS TO-DAY BECAUSE OF THESE ROMAN ERRORS.

In a word, that which makes modern denominationalism is Roman Catholic in idea. As the Roman Empire did not die with the death of the physical empire, but lived on in the Roman Catholic Church, so even in those attempts at reformation, as they have expressed themselves in the Protestant bodies, live the roots of those errors which made the Roman Catholic Church. We will proceed to a brief examination of a few of the leading modern denominations in order that this contention may be substantiated.

1. *First of all, note that it is true of the church which was founded by Martin Luther.*

We can not say too much of the work of this mighty man of faith. What would the world have been had it not been for the intrepidity of this hero of steel, who would not flinch though excommunication and even death confronted him with all humiliation? We are building now on the work of this man, whose reformation was not only the beginning of the great return to the source of Christianity, and thereby to reunion among the people of God, but the great awakening in the mental life of the world, and all the amazing strides in science which have resulted are due to the work which he has done. None shall surpass your speaker in praise of the mighty work of Luther.

Let it also be borne in mind that Luther tried to restore the Christianity of the New Testament. With all his heart he advocated the reading and interpreting of the Bible by the members of the body of Christ. To him this was of supreme authority. His translation of the Bible into German was to that language what the King James translation was to the English. Luther also endeavored to restore the names by which the members of the early Christian organization were known, and also the names of the church, for he realized that human names were wrong. He writes: "I pray you to leave my name alone, and not to call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians, Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for any one. St. Paul would not that any should call themselves of Paul nor of Peter, but of Christ. How then does it benefit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all; and let us call

ourselves only Christians after Him from whom our doctrine comes.”<sup>1</sup>

Luther also was convinced that infant baptism was not of divine authority, although he did not contend against it with enough vigor to insure its not being adopted by his followers. Of it he says: “It can not be proved by the sacred Scriptures that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians after the apostles.”<sup>2</sup> He was likewise convinced that the New Testament baptism was such an act as would symbolize the burial and resurrection of the blessed Lord. How strong are his words: “First, ‘baptism’ is a Greek word. In Latin it can be translated ‘immersion,’ as when we plunge something into the water, that it may be completely covered with water; and although that custom has been given up by most persons, for they do not wholly submerge the children, but only pour on them a little water, yet they ought to have them completely immersed and straightway drawn out again.”<sup>3</sup> While he thus saw the light on the ordinance as it was taught and practiced in New Testament times, yet he did not insist upon it.

Let us, in thinking of the work of Luther, remember that he had been trained as a Roman Catholic priest, and it would have been nothing short of miraculous if he had come out of this early teaching so completely as to have given to the world a restored church. We are interested here in noting the fact that while he attempted honestly to return to the New Testament basis, still those very things which had made the Roman

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<sup>1</sup> “Life of Luther,” Michelet, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> “Eight Leading Churches,” Berry, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Berry, pp. 105, 106.

Church clung with tenacity to the new reformation. For the Nicene Creed, the Augsburg Confession of Faith was substituted. Though protesting against human names, yet the name of Luther was worn by those who followed him in his protest against Rome. While convinced that there was no Scriptural authority for infant baptism, yet infant baptism was retained in the Lutheran Church. Knowing that the New Testament form of baptism was the immersion of a penitent believer and resurrection of that believer into a new life, yet the Roman Catholic substitutes were retained in the new church which resulted from Luther's unsuccessful attempt to reform Rome from within. In a word, the same errors which had made Rome were retained in the organization of the new denomination.

2. *It is sad to note that the same thing happened in the case of the Presbyterian bodies.*

As we would laud Luther, so also could we spend much time speaking words of praise for the wonderful work of Calvin. He overthrew the authority of the pope; he did not believe in bowing to councils, nor did their words have binding power upon his thought. He believed, as did Luther, in the study of the Bible as the rule of faith and the guide to eternal life. He was also in line with the teaching and practice of the apostolic church on the subject of the time of the observance of the Lord's Supper: "And truly this custom, which enjoins communing once a year, is a most wicked contrivance of the devil, by whose instrumentality soever it may have been determined."<sup>1</sup> In another place he says: "It ought to

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<sup>1</sup> "Inst.," Book IV., Chap. 17; Book VI., Chap. 18.

have been far otherwise. Every week, at least, the table of the Lord should have been spread for Christian assemblies, and the promises declared by which, in partaking of it, we might be spiritually fed.”<sup>1</sup> Calvin was also convinced that the Scriptural baptism was the burial in water and resurrection of the believer, but he could not overcome his own Roman Catholic attitude toward the whole subject in general. He speaks of baptism, as to its original form, saying: “The word ‘baptize’ signifies ‘immerse,’ and it is certain that the rite of immersion was observed by the ancient church.”<sup>2</sup> His Roman Catholic training manifests itself in the following words: “Wherefore the church did grant liberty to herself, since the beginning, to change the rite somewhat, excepting the substance. It is no consequence at all whether the person that is baptized is totally immersed or whether he is merely sprinkled by an affusion of water. This should be a matter of choice to the churches in different regions.”<sup>3</sup>

But the same mistake which was made by Luther was made also by the immortal Calvin and his followers, the mistake of allowing to remain the very errors which had created the Roman Catholic apostasy. Consequently, merely another denomination was brought into being, as has always been the case, and as always will be the case, as long as those things which are distinctively Roman in their origin are retained. Instead of the Nicene Creed, the Westminster Confession was adopted. Instead of the name “Roman Catholic,” the name “Presbyterian” was adopted. As with the

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<sup>1</sup> “Inst.,” Book IV., Chap. 17; Book VI., Chap. 18.

<sup>2</sup> “Inst.,” Book IV., Chap. 15.

<sup>3</sup> “The Eight Leading Churches,” Berry, p. 110.

Lutherans, sprinkling and pouring were retained. The Catholic roots of division are always the same, and the idea as expressed, perhaps in different form in each denomination, is always the same: human names, human creeds, human governments, and human substitutions for the divine commands of the divine Lord. How much division and strife would have been saved to Presbyterianism, and how much more glorious would have been her already glorious accomplishments, had the words of her most outstanding modern scholar been followed, both in regard to baptism and in regard to creeds. In speaking of baptism, Philip Schaff said: "The baptism of Christ in the river Jordan and the illustrations of baptism used in the New Testament are all in favor of immersion rather than sprinkling, as is fully admitted by the best exegetists, Catholic and Protestant, English and German. Nothing can be gained by unnatural exegesis. The aggressiveness of the Baptists has driven pedobaptists to the opposite extreme."<sup>1</sup> In speaking of the effect of human creeds upon the body of Christ, the same great scholar says: "They keep alive sectarian strifes and antagonisms, but they also reveal the underlying agreement, and foreshadow the possibility of future harmony." "If we are to look for any new creed, it will be, I trust, a creed, not of disunion and discord, but of union and concord among the different branches of Christ's kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

3. *The same rule that the causes of division are to be found in the errors which created the Roman Catholic Church, and which continuing, have created mod-*

<sup>1</sup> "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," pp. 55, 56.

<sup>2</sup> "Creeds of Christendom," Vol. I., pp. 4-11.

*ern denominationalism, obtains with equal force in the case of the Church of England.*

Many have been the contributions of this church to the work of the kingdom of our blessed Lord. Time does not permit us to say what we would gladly say in words of praise. But we are interested here in considering the retention of those things which came from Rome, and which in other form created denominationalism. The same root ideas are found in the English Church. Instead of the Nicene Creed, she has the Prayer-book. As Rome claimed the right to legislate, so this claim is made by the bishops of the Church of England. The substitution of sprinkling and pouring for baptism was also retained, as was infant baptism. Instead of the name which had been worn by the early church, a name which honored and glorified the Lord, the new church wears a name of human origin and with human significance. The union of church and state, and the constant claim that the church can trace a line of unbroken succession back to Christ and the apostles, is one of the greatest barriers to-day in the way of Christian union. Both of these ideas were born in Rome.

*4. The principle that modern division is perpetuated by the clinging to the inheritances from the Roman Catholic Church is illustrated in the attitudes of the Methodist Church.*

The work of John Wesley was such that no one who has read of it could do aught but speak words of praise. He was one of the purest souls that has ever lived. He loved the church of Christ with all his great heart, and desired to see her brought to the unity which had once been hers. In the preface to his

“New Testament Notes,” he says: “My own conscience acquits me of having designedly misrepresented any single passage of Scripture, or having written one line with the purpose of inflaming the hearts of Christians against each other. God forbid that I should make the words of the most gentle and benevolent Jesus a vehicle to convey such poison. Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot, and that we might all agree to sit down together as humble, loving disciples at the feet of our common Master, to hear His word, to imbibe His spirit, and to transcribe His life into our own.” Of the New Testament practice regarding baptism, he says, referring to the meaning of Rom. 6:4: “Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.” Though he believed this, as did also his colaborers, yet they did not insist upon it in the practice of the church which followed their efforts. However, it should always be borne in mind that Wesley lived and died in the Church of England, and much of his prejudice clung to him—great soul as he was—to the end of his life.

Wesley became convinced also that the claim of the Church of England that the bishops were of higher order than the elders was not substantiated by the Scriptures. He writes: “On the road to Bristol, I read over Lord King’s account of the primitive church. In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that was a fair and impartial draught; but, if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order; and that originally every Christian congregation was a

church independent of all others.'"<sup>1</sup> Yet the prejudice of his early training and education was too strong to allow him to so contend that the reformation which followed his herculean efforts would return to the New Testament practice.

It is to be noted here, for in this lies our interest, that the same errors which, as we have found, created Rome, and which, when not renounced, created modern denominations, also were retained in Methodism. A rigid ecclesiastical government, a human creed which is "the fundamental law of the Methodist Episcopal Church," the retention of infant baptism, substitutions for baptism as commanded by the Lord, and a human name—all these are the characteristics of Methodism. Methodism has not succeeded because of the Roman Catholic elements which it has inherited through the Church of England, but because of the Christian elements upon which these were builded. The marvelous vitality of the movement is to be found in the mighty Christian piety which has characterized it from the beginning, and with this an insatiable enthusiasm for evangelism.

*5. It remains for us to illustrate our contention with but one more illustration.*

The Baptist brethren have made much progress toward the restoration of the Christianity of the New Testament. A study of their usages and practices can not but justify this contention. They long ago revolted against the idea of authority in religion as invested in a pope or council of men. They have also given up the idea of a human creed. Although in the United States for years they were bound by the Phil-

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<sup>1</sup> "The Eight Leading Churches," Berry, p. 173.

adelphia Confession of Faith, yet the major portion of the Baptist organizations have given this up now, and accept Jesus Christ as their only creed and His word as their only rule of faith and practice. They are, therefore, now, as a rule, free churches of Christ, with no authority, as far as men are concerned, except that which is in the local congregation. The Baptists have also taken Scriptural ground on the subject of baptism. This applies to the so-called form of it. They have found that to baptize in the New Testament manner it is necessary that the candidate be wholly immersed and raised from the water. The evangelistic and missionary zeal of the Baptists, coupled with the high type of Christian character for which they are universally noted, has made them a tremendous force in the religious world. As the years go by, they are going to do much in bringing about the unity of the people of God and saving a world from its sins.

There are two places, or perhaps three, where it is quite evident that the Baptists can improve their position, Scripturally speaking. While having no human creed, as such, which applies to the members of the churches, the candidates for the ministry are still examined according to one of the older "Confessions of Faith" which have been used by Baptists, either the Philadelphia Confession or the New Hampshire Confession being used. This is true of churches desiring to enter an association or seeking aid from a missionary society. This practice is out of harmony with the New Testament order of things, and will in time pass away, for the whole tendency of the Baptists is toward the complete restoration of New Testament Christianity. The Baptists are also on unscriptural ground on the

matter of the meaning of baptism. While in theory they do not believe that it has anything to do with the salvation of the sinner, in reality they do believe that it is for the remission of sins. One can not be a member of the church until he has been baptized, nor can he commune with the body of Christ until he has obeyed this command. The Baptist ministers will all admit that baptism is necessary to obedience. However, the New Testament makes it plain that obedience is absolutely essential to salvation—that there is no salvation whatever without it. If, then, baptism is necessary to obedience, and obedience is necessary to salvation, baptism is necessary to salvation, for “things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.” The Baptist people will also eventually be forced to modify their position on the question of a name, for the name “Baptist,” or “Baptizer,” was not the name of the church which Jesus founded. It is a human name, and the time is coming when these people who have been in the main so earnest for New Testament usages will surely return to the name which ascribes glory and honor to the Prince of life. The observance of the Lord’s Supper on each Lord’s Day will be another New Testament position which in time will be occupied by the Baptists. Many of them are following that practice now, and others are looking upon it with favor. The Baptist brethren are not as enthusiastic about Christian unity as we believe they should be. However, this may be due to their misunderstanding the real meaning of the unity for which Christ prayed. Doubtless, time will greatly modify their present somewhat antagonistic attitude to this important New Testament teaching.

IV. FROM OUR STUDY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH, AND ALSO OF THE ORIGINS  
OF DIVISIONS IN THAT MYSTIC BODY OF OUR LORD,  
WE ARE NOW READY TO CONSIDER THE ONLY  
METHOD BY WHICH THOSE DIVISIONS MAY  
BE HEALED AND THAT LOST UNITY BE  
RESTORED, THAT THE WORLD MAY BE  
BROUGHT TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE  
OF HIM.

1. It has, first of all, been evident through this study that those things upon which we have always been united are the things taught to us in the New Testament. We have never been divided in our faith in Christ, in our belief that the name which honors Him is the name "Christian," that His word is a sufficient rule and guide of faith, that the immersion in water of a proper candidate is valid Christian baptism. Upon the teaching of the New Testament, the church in belief has always been united. If we can be thus united in faith, we can also be in practice.

2. It is evident, in the second place, that everything which divides the church to-day is Roman Catholic in its conception and origin. There are five such remnants from Romanism which, as we have seen, stand as barriers to a reunited church of Christ. They are as follows:

(1) Human names—Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc.

(2) Human creeds—Nicene Creed, Augsburg Confession, etc.

(3) Legislative bodies—Councils, bodies of bishops, etc.

(4) Infant baptism.

(5) Substitution of sprinkling and pouring for immersion.

Not only are these divisive errors the remnants of Romanism, but in their original form they created the Roman Catholic Church, and without them that church would never have been. When, therefore, we think of our divided state as Christians, let us remember that everything which perpetuates our division had its root, its origin, its conception in that great apostasy which resulted in the Roman Catholic Church.

3. A third conclusion which, from our study, forces itself upon us is, that since these elements of division are Roman Catholic, and therefore human, there is in them no saving power at all. There is not now, and never has been, a single element of saving power in anything that has ever divided any real Christian man from his brother in Christ. A Methodist is not saved because of the fact that he wears the name "Methodist" or that he subscribes to the Methodist Discipline. He is saved by the experience which in common with all other Christians he has had because of his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. This, and this alone, has any power to save from sin—this covenant relation to God through Christ. A Lutheran is not redeemed from his sins because of the fact that he wears the honorable name of Luther, or because he subscribes to the interpretation of the Christian experience as expressed in the Augsburg Confession of Faith. He is saved and justified because of his relation to God through the blessed Lord Jesus. That which has saved him has saved his Methodist and Baptist and Presbyterian brethren also. If then, these humanisms,

these remnants from the apostasy of Rome, have no saving power, why should they be retained, since they only perpetuate all these evils which result from a divided church?

4. In the fourth place, it is evident that the only way to unity is by a return to the Christian attitude to Christ, by a courageous casting out of those things which are Roman Catholic, and a return to those things which are distinctively Christian. Christian unity can only come as the church is de-Romanized. Only by a return to the creed of the New Testament church, and an unqualified acceptance of the New Testament as the rule of faith and practice, can the desired unity of God's people be accomplished. Dr. Denny, firm Scotch Presbyterian as he is, catches the gleam of light when, in the introduction to his wonderful book, "Jesus and the Gospel," he writes: "The argument appeals, on the one hand, to those who are members of Christian churches and to the churches themselves. Amid the vast unsettlement of opinion which has been produced by the emancipation of the mind and its exercise on the general tradition of Christianity, it calls attention anew to the certainty of the things which we have been taught. It demonstrates, as the writer believes, that the attitude to Christ which has always been maintained in the church is one which is characteristic of the New Testament from beginning to end, and that this attitude is the only one which is consistent with the self-revelation of Jesus during His life on earth. But it makes clear at the same time that this Christian attitude to Jesus is all that is vital to Christianity, and that it is not bound up, as it is often supposed to be, with this or that intellectual

construction of it, or with this or that definition, of what it supposes or implies. The church must bind its members to the Christian attitude to Christ, but it has no right to bind them to anything besides. It can never overcome its divisions, it can never appeal with the power of a unanimous testimony to the world, till both these truths are recognized to the full." What a noble statement is this. The whole truth of the matter is stated. Only as this "Christian attitude to Christ" is recognized as the one essential fundamental can we ever attain to the long-desired unity of the body, in the bonds of peace. If we are to ask as to just what message it is which will produce this desired "Christian attitude to Christ," Denny again answers: "When we preach, we must certainly be able to tell men things about Christ which will justify the Christian attitude to Him. But these faith-producing things are not dogmatic definitions of His person; they are not doctrinal propositions, such as those of the Nicene Creed; nor are they less formal expressions of essentially the same character. They are such things as we have been in contact with all through our study of the Gospels: they are the life, the mind, the death, the resurrection of Jesus. If the exhibition of these does not evoke the Christian attitude of the soul to Him, the soundest metaphysical doctrine of His person is worthless. But if the Christian attitude is evoked by the revelation of Jesus in the gospel, we have found that in which all Christians can unite, and the theological doctrine of His person may be trusted sooner or later to come to its rights."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Jesus and the Gospel," Denny, pp. 347, 348.

Thus it is that we are forced to the one conclusion which we have been trying to state: that only as we divest ourselves of those things which are Roman Catholic in their inception—human names, human creeds and human governments in the church, and human substitutions for the baptism commanded by the Lord—and return to that divine platform which is exhibited with such clarity in the New Testament, can the unity of the body of our Lord be accomplished, and the salvation of a sinful and heartsick world be accomplished.

V. IT REMAINS FOR US, IN THE LAST PLACE, TO CONSIDER BRIEFLY THE FACT THAT THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES “CHRISTIANS ONLY,” OR “DISCIPLES OF CHRIST,” HAVE AS THEIR DISTINCTIVE PLEA THIS VERY RETURN TO THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO CHRIST.

Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists there were, among these men to whom early in the nineteenth century was vouchsafed the vision of how the work of restoration, so gloriously begun by the intrepid Luther, the mighty Calvin and the saintly Wesley, can be fully accomplished. These early leaders were too near to Rome to see it all. Their prejudices were those of Roman Catholics, their training was in the ways of Rome. It remained for these men who, in the freedom of a New World, environed by new conditions, could look upon the sinfulness of division fearlessly, to see the light which to-day is breaking in upon the minds of all Christian men. Thomas Campbell and his great son Alexander, Barton W. Stone and Walter Scott, these were the men who gradually came to the position that

only by a reproduction in the present world of the Christianity of the New Testament, and a reunion upon Christ Jesus as He is revealed in His word, can the lost unity of the church of Christ be restored, and the salvation of the world be attained. Hence, they accepted Christ Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament as their only creed, and the New Testament as the infallible rule and guide of faith. The epochal statement of Thomas Campbell, in his "Declaration and Address"—"Where the Scriptures speak we speak, and where the Scriptures are silent we will be silent"—was the key to discoveries the existence of which he had not even dreamed when he made it. Human names were to be forgotten, for these who would restore the New Testament church must use Bible names for Bible things. The employment of such Scriptural terminology would have saved untold disputations and divisions had it been adopted. The infallibility of the Scriptures as a rule and guide to faith had long been in theory the fundamental principle of Protestantism, but these courageous Christians in the New World actually put it into practice. Human substitutions for baptism were cast aside, and a return was made, not only to the form, but the meaning, of baptism as it is described in the New Testament. Infant baptism, so called, was cast out in practice, because no authority for it was found in the constitution, and that constitution Christ's revelation in His Word. The churches of Christ, as far as the government of them was concerned, were to be free churches, builded upon the New Testament model, with the two classes of officers—elders, or bishops, and deacons. The Lord's Supper was to be observed in apostolic custom every

first day of the week. It was to be the Lord's table and for His people. In everything it was the desire of these early restorers to exalt Jesus Christ as all in all. The Christian attitude to Him, with the faith in Him which it implies, and obedience to His commands which is also signified by "attitude," was to be the one fundamental. That this movement would have a tremendous reception was to be expected. That it would profoundly influence the thought of all Christians was certain.

There is but one work ahead of the Disciples of Christ, and that to press the battle; in love and kindness to continue until the victory is won. There is everywhere unmistakable evidence that the creeds are crumbling. On every hand we are hearing the cry, "Back to Christ." More and more are people realizing that they are not saved by the theological statements which they have inherited, but by a common faith and experience in the common Lord. The Scotch theologian, from whom we have already quoted several times in this message, once more sums the matter up in his inimitable way: "In spite, however, of all their responsibilities and obligations to the past, in spite of the duty incumbent on them to conserve its intellectual as well as its moral attainments, the pressure put on the churches, both from without and from within, to recognize the claims of intellectual liberty, is rapidly becoming irresistible. Christian people, who are consciously at one in their attitude to Christ and in their sense of obligation to Him, see that they are kept in different communions and incapacitated from co-operation in work and worship, because they have inherited different theological traditions to which they are assumed to be

bound. Without entering into any discussion of what these theological traditions—call them creeds, confessions, testimonies, or whatever else—are worth, they feel in their souls that they are not bound to them, and ought not to be, with the same kind of bond which secures their allegiance to Christ. For the sake of getting closer to those who share this allegiance and co-operating with them in the service of the Lord who holds their hearts, they contemplate with more than equanimity the slackening or dissolution of the bonds which attach them to the theology, or, if we prefer to call it so, the Christian thought, of the past. They will think for themselves as they can or must, but the primary necessity, if not the one thing needful, is the Christian attitude of the soul to Christ and union with all who make that attitude their own.”<sup>1</sup>

Christian unity is coming. In spirit it is almost here now. The remnants inherited from Rome are being more and more relegated to the background. Why not divest ourselves of them altogether?

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<sup>1</sup> “Jesus and the Gospel,” Denny, p. 343.

## XII.

### THE SOLDIER OF THE CROSS

TEXT.—“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”—2 Tim. 2: 3.

**W**HAT virile words are these, written by one who was a veteran of a thousand battles, to a young recruit in the army of the Lord! For Paul was a soldier; a battle-scarred veteran; a fighter who, as he looked back at his record, could proudly say: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing” (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8). What a story is told in these words! How much of emotion is crowded into them! A soldier is made in just one way; the pinnacle of victory is reached by just one path—the path of hardship! So, as Paul looks back over the years with their dangers and heartaches, as he thinks of the perils among false brethren, perils in the deep, battles with the enemies of the truth, he is moved to exhort this young man, this new soldier of the Lord Jesus whose feet are to walk that thorny, stony path, to suffer hardship “as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” The way is long and weary, but the crown to be gained is one of eternal life; the prize to be won is worth it all.

The church of the Lord is described in various ways in the New Testament. It is sometimes spoken of as a hospital, a place where sinners are convalescing from their maladies. It is spoken of as an athletic contest, a place where a man contends as in a race. John speaks of the tender relation which exists between God and man and between Christians as that of a family. But one of the favorite attitudes of Paul was that which expressed itself in military terms. He loved to think of the church of Christ as a great army steadily marching on to battle and to glory. He is ever a believer in the conquering Christianity, in the Kingdom which shall bring all things into subjection to his beloved Master. It is to follow out this strain of thought as it appears so often in his writings that we bring to you this message to-day.

## I. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE IN THE ARMY OF CHRIST.

### 1. *First of all, it is always a voluntary service.*

Christ never drafts any one into His service. If a man becomes a Christian soldier, he becomes such because he is forced to do so, not by the Lord, but by the pressure of his own conscience, by his faith in the Leader, by his attitude toward Christ and that for which the Lord stands. There are many who have taken the passive attitude toward the Savior. They wait for Him to do for them that which they themselves alone can do. For though the King loves the sinner, and though He has died that the sinner might have life abundantly, yet there is one thing that even the love of Christ can not accomplish, and that is to

decide for the man himself. He must come as a volunteer; for

“A call for loyal soldiers comes to one and all;  
Soldiers for the conflict, will you heed the call?  
Will you answer quickly, with a ready cheer?  
Will you be enlisted as a volunteer?”

Without discussing at all the merits of the selective draft as applied to the raising of an army in our day, it is to be noted that only the volunteer soldier is accepted in the army of Christ. Do not wait for the Lord to force you into His Kingdom, for this He will never do. He has not promised it; but He has emphasized the dignity which is yours as a free moral agent, and has left the decision to you. It must be of your own free will and accord, because you want to come and sincerely desire to serve Him in the great cause.

2. *A second characteristic is noted in that the term of service is for life.*

When the Christian soldier enlists, he joins up for the duration of the war. There will be no blast of mustering-out trumpet until the final victory is won. The soldiers of the cross are on service from the very beginning until the clouds of smoke have rolled away and the flag of King Emmanuel floats in glory from the summit of the hills. There should be no misunderstanding about this when one contemplates the serious matter of enlistment. Remember that the war is ahead and that it is bloody and long; that the word of the great Commander-in-chief is: “Be thou faithful until death.” Only death itself can be our mustering out.

3. *There are no furloughs or leaves of absence granted in the army of the Lord.*

Frequently there are those who take a furlough. They are A. W. O. L.—“absent without leave.” But no furloughs are granted by the leader in the conflict. I remember the story of a man in Indiana who, about election-time, came to the pastor of the church and said: “Now, pastor, I want to be free for this election-time to do just as I please. If I want to get out with the boys and have an all-around good time, I want to feel that it will be perfectly all right for me to do so. Therefore I am very frank in coming to you to ask you to give me a furlough or leave of absence. I promise you that at the expiration of this election I will come back and will be a good Christian, but for a time I want to feel that I am free to do as I choose.” Now, that man really believed the minister of the church could grant him a furlough. But such can not be given, for the term of service of the Christian soldier is for all the time, for every day and every hour of that day and every minute of that hour. There is to be no let-up, but the war is to be pushed forward from daylight until dark, from darkness to daylight, from enlistment until death.

4. *Desertion from the army is punishable by death.*

There could be no other way. He who takes upon himself the solemn obligation of a soldier of the Lord of hosts, and then in a moment of lust or greed or passion turns back to the enemy, ought to suffer death. For that is the meaning of desertion in the Christian army—desertion not merely from the ranks of the blessed, but desertion to the enemy. It means that the one who has once tasted of the joys of the life in Christ has gone back to the side of the enemy of souls. This is surely the meaning of the Master

when He says: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."

5. *The service in the army of the Lord is a supremely joyous service.*

One can not know real happiness until he becomes a soldier of Jesus Christ. This is the universal testimony of those who for long have been enlisted. There is no true happiness out of Christ. Some there are who have done their utmost to make themselves believe they are happy, but the sinner has a terrible time. When we entreat men to be reconciled to God, to turn from sins to serve Him in whom there is life and light, we are inviting them to do that which will bring to their darkened spirits the greatest glory, the highest joy, that mortal man can know.

## II. LET US CONSIDER ALSO THE METHOD OF ENLISTMENT IN THE ARMY OF CHRIST.

What must I do to become a Christian soldier? How may I enlist? There must be a road to Christ, a way into this wondrous experience which is called Christian. It is to be noted that we enlist in the Christian army just as we would enlist in any other army.

1. *First of all, to be Christian soldiers, we must believe in the cause.*

This is necessary in any army. One must believe in the cause before he becomes a soldier, or he must be made to believe in it after he is inducted into the army, or he will never become a real soldier at all. There can be no doubt but that the service rendered on the part of any army is directly proportionate to the intensity of its faith in the righteousness of the

cause for which it draws saber or shoulders musket. And this is peculiarly true of the Christian soldier. The fact of the matter is that one could not even think of a Christian soldier without this faith in his cause. The reason why men are banded together in an army called Christian is that they have become convinced of the righteousness and wonder of their cause. And how glorious is that cause!—the cause of world redemption, the cause of salvation from the consequences and the blight of sin, the cause of little children. It is altogether lovely, and it calls forth the noblest and best in any man or woman who would be dedicated to all that is highest and best. Firm and steadfast must be our faith, unshakeable must be our resolution, if we would do valiant battle for the Captain of our salvation.

*2. Not only is it necessary that one believe in the cause, but he must also believe in the Leader.*

Confidence in those who lead is a fundamental necessity, if success is to attend the efforts of an army. It is said that the troops of Napoleon were absolutely invincible whenever he was with them. The personal presence of the "Little Corporal" was worth a battalion of men. They would willingly scale the hoary Alps, fight like demons upon the plains of Italy and die like flies up in the bitter snows of Russia, if the peerless leader were only going on before them. And it is necessary that the soldier of the cross believe in the ability of his great Commander-in-chief, if the enemy is to be routed in confusion. What kind of Leader has the Christian army? Does He know the science of battle? Can He so direct the movements of His troops that they can successfully engage the

enemy? Where learned He the art of war? The apostle Paul answers our questions in one mighty statement: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author [or captain] of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). Is not this the way in which a leader is always made—through suffering? Jesus Christ, the author or captain of our salvation, was made a perfect leader through experience. He has suffered temptation, He has endured pain, He has experienced death. He knows how to lead in the spiritual battles, for He has been the way before us. He can say to us "Follow me," for He is a veteran; He has been through the training. The discipline has been His, for "though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author [or captain] of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8, 9). He is able to lead us; and without fear, but with absolute confidence, may we trust Him. And this is the meaning of faith as we come to Christ, that we believe that He is ordained of God to lead us through this life of trial and battle; that He is our perfect guide and helper, the pattern of our lives.

3. *If one would become an enlisted soldier of Christ, it is further necessary that he forsake everything which in any way interferes with his service in the army.*

The boys had to do this when they enlisted in the army of Uncle Sam during the Great War. One could not be a soldier of America and at the same time run a hardware store in his own home town. The store would interfere with his service; hence, when he en-

listed, he left everything behind to devote himself without reservation to the work in hand, that of winning the war. And this is certainly true of the Christian soldier. He must forsake those things which interfere with his service for the King. This does not mean that he is to forsake the ordinary duties of his every-day life and become a recluse or hermit. Asceticism belongs to the Middle Ages, but not to our day. It is through these very ordinary duties of our business, domestic or social life that we are to glorify God and fight the battles for the Lord of our salvation. To forsake those things which interfere with our service means to repent of our sins. In the next verse after our text, Paul writes to Timothy: "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4). And this is ever the meaning of repentance. We can not swear and be good soldiers for the Lord; for swearing interferes with our service. We can not lie and steal, and harm our fellow-man or ourselves; for these things interfere with that work whereunto, by the clarion call of the trumpet of the King, we have been called. We can not be entangled in the affairs of the world and serve Him. Moffatt has clearly translated the passage just referred to: "No soldier gets entangled in civil pursuits; his aim is to satisfy his commander." How strong is that word "entangled." It means to be wound round and round, tied up, enmeshed. And how many times we have seen the service of capable men and women nullified because of their much worldliness. They are tied up with the cares of this life, and they

have no time nor any inclination to do battle for the Lord.

*4. It is also necessary that, after a steadfast faith in the cause and a faith in the ability of the Leader, and after divesting himself of those things which hinder his service, the one who would enlist in the army should present himself before a recruiting officer and make known his desire to serve.*

The pastor of the church is a recruiting officer. He is constantly engaged in drilling his troops, but he is also always looking out for new recruits that the ranks of the army may be continually augmented. The evangelist is a recruiting officer. His business in a special way is to enlist men for Christ. And this we are trying to do now, so to present the glories of the cause, the ability of the Leader and the duty of all to be engaged in the battle for righteousness, that those who hear this plea may be constrained to "join the ranks of those who bear suffering, like loyal soldiers of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3—Moffatt's Translation). I can never forget that time when I presented myself before a recruiting officer and made known my desire to serve my country. It was a solemn moment. And such is surely that time when one comes before his fellows, and to the recruiting officer makes known his desire to become a Christian soldier, to engage in all that Christian service may mean. This he does in the act known as the good confession. It is a moment of decision, a moment of great change in the life, when we take a public stand for the faith which is in our hearts. The apostle to the Gentiles speaks of this confession as one of the conditions of final victory when he writes to the Romans: "If thou shalt confess

with thy mouth Jesus as Lord [or captain], and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation'' (Rom. 10:9, 10).

5. *The final step in enlisting in the Christian army is to take the oath of allegiance.*

A solemn thing is an oath. There was no experience to me so memorable as that of standing in the presence of others and swearing or affirming by all that was great and good within me that I would be true to the flag of my country, its Constitution and to the State which was my home. It is a time when the noblest emotions surge through the soul, when resolve beats high. So it is that the most solemn act of all in becoming a Christian soldier is that of the oath. An oath is a translational act. It is by the oath that one is translated from the position of a civilian to that of a soldier. His state is changed. I heard this illustrated by your minister, Brother Taubman. During the war, the time came when George, Jr., wanted to enlist. Brother Taubman accompanied him to San Pedro. Young George was the son; he was Brother Taubman's boy. But after that oath he no longer belonged to Brother Taubman. From that moment he belonged to Uncle Sam. He was Uncle Sam's son. By the oath of allegiance, his state or relationship had been changed. The oath did not make him believe in the cause; he believed in that before he came to take the oath; his faith in it brought him to the oath. He did not become a believer in the leaders by the oath. He was a believer in the power of those whose minds directed the war

before he took the oath. The oath was an act—an act by which he was in a formal manner made a soldier of his country.

And in becoming a Christian soldier there is an oath of allegiance to take, a solemn obligation, when, by all that is good and true within us, we promise to be true to the Lord to whom forever that oath commits us. That oath is the act of baptism. Baptism does not make us want to serve the Lord, nor does it give us faith in Him. It does not bring us to the place where we wish to divest our minds and consciences of those things which are sinful. All this we have experienced in our hearts before we come to the waters of baptism. Baptism translates us from the position or state of civilians to that of soldiers, from the state of non-combatants to that of warriors. In this oath of allegiance we formally leave behind us our sins, those things which interfere with our service for the Captain of our salvation, and formally take upon ourselves the obligations of those who from this time on, without stint, are to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the battle. This is the meaning of that statement of Paul: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). If we are baptized *into* Christ, we are necessarily baptized *out of* that position or state where we did not belong to Him. Here, then, is a change of state or relation. This is also the meaning of our Lord as in the great commission He says: “Baptizing them *into* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). If we are baptized *into* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, evidently we must have at the same time

been baptized *out of* that state where we did not wear the divine names and where all the privileges of those who are in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were not ours. A change of state or relationship, a formal induction into active service, this is the meaning of baptism as an oath. The more I have studied men in relation to this act of obedience, the more I am convinced that it is not water, nor the immersion in water, which intimidates many. It is rather the solemnity of that oath of allegiance, the wonder of that moment when the old world is left behind and we enter upon the new life.

When one thus believes in the cause, believes also in the Leader or Captain of our salvation; when one, divesting himself of every hindering incumbrance, presents himself before a recruiting officer and takes the oath of allegiance—he is then an enlisted soldier. He now is enrolled and has the name, and is under the military authorities. But in our text Paul speaks of Timothy enduring hardship as “a good soldier.” There is a vast difference between an untried soldier and a good one; between a raw recruit and a veteran. We will next, therefore, consider

### III. THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST JESUS.

It is one thing to enlist; it is quite another thing to become a good soldier. By enlisting, one places himself in that position in which he may learn how to serve with success the Lord who has called him. As one becomes a soldier in the army of Christ just as one becomes a soldier in any other army, so also

one becomes a *good* soldier in the army of the Lord just as one becomes a good soldier in any other army.

1. *After enlisting, the new recruit is turned over to the quartermaster's department and outfitted with a uniform and a weapon.*

And what an experience this is! That army uniform! Can a soldier ever forget it? I remember my own. It was too tight. The fellow next to me had one which was too big. What a sight we were as we assembled after the issuing of these uniforms. Now, in the Christian army we have a uniform. An armor it is called, but it means the same thing as a uniform. Paul so splendidly describes it, and tells the necessity for putting it on and wearing it unceasingly, that I must quote the whole passage here: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:10-18). In the study of this armor there is a sermon in itself. We can consider it but

briefly. The grand old soldier, after his own mighty experience, exhorts us to be strong because it is going to be an awful fight. More dreadful is it than all the wars of men, for we are to fight the unseen hosts as they gather round us. We are therefore to tighten the belt of truth around our loins. Our coat of mail is to be integrity. Our feet are to be shod so that we shall not backslide, and those shoes are to be of the stability of the gospel of peace. Our shield is faith, and in it we are to stop all the fire-tipped darts which the evil one will hurl upon us. Upon our heads is to be the shining helmet of His salvation, and in our hands the flashing sword of the Spirit, the invincible word of God. Here is equipment for the battle, and with it we shall gloriously win. There is one place, however, for which there is no preparation—the back. Here is armor for all the body but the back. There is to be but one direction for the soldier of the cross, and that is forward. The moment he turns his back upon the enemy he is gone; the fire-tipped darts of the devil will pierce him through the back to the heart, and he will fall in defeat and ruin.

We should also note that, in preparing the soldier for the conflict, a weapon is given to him. In the American army, it was in my day the new model Springfield. And what a terrible weapon it was. If one did not understand how to use it, he might kill himself or his comrades rather than the enemy. A finer gun was never made than the Springfield. In the Christian army we have a sword, a glittering, two-edged sword, more terrible than all the weapons forged in the armories of earth or heaven. The writer of the Hebrew letter describes it vividly: "For the word of

God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart'' (Heb. 4:12). In the hands of an expert swordsman this is the most formidable weapon ever known. On Pentecost, Peter drew it forth; it flashed in the sunlight of that natal day of the church, and then it was red with the blood of three thousand who in agony of soul cried aloud for salvation. It is a weapon of offense. The Lord did not give it merely as a weapon of defense. Too long have we taken that attitude. Ours is an offensive battle, and we are to carry the war into the enemy's country.

*2. After being equipped, the new recruit is placed in an awkward squad where he is taught the uses of the weapon and by drill how to work with his buddies.*

The awkward squad is the place where the fellow next to you comes down on your toe with the butt of his rifle. It is the place where you get punched in the eye with the bayonet on the gun next to you. It is the place where, by making mistakes, the new recruit learns to be a soldier. There is no other way. The old Christian who has been through the valley of the shadow, who has borne the brunt of the battle throughout the long years, will testify to this fact. We build upon the dead remains of the mistakes we have made until at last we attain heights.

The attitude of veterans toward those of the awkward squad is always the same, no matter where the army may be. It is the attitude of sympathy and helpfulness. It is the desire of all who have gone the way before us that those of us whose feet for the first time

are pressing the Christian road shall become real soldiers of the Lord. Though we stumble and make mistakes along the way, these are ready with cheering word and sustaining hand to assist us till we come at last to the place where as strong men in Christ Jesus we are able to walk alone.

3. *The new recruit becomes a good Christian soldier by attending drill.*

How tiresome at times drill becomes! It is the same old thing over and over again and it becomes monotonous, but there is no possibility of one ever becoming a good soldier without it. There are two things which every soldier must learn. He must learn to work and fight together with the other soldiers, and he must learn how to use his weapon with effectiveness. This very need is met in drill. Every Lord's Day morning we have a Bible school where the members of the church are divided into squads or classes under a drill sergeant or teacher, and taught to work together and to use the terrible weapon of offense, the two-edged sword of the Spirit. And how much more efficient in killing men for the Lord has the church become since the establishment of this drill period, the Bible school. Every member of the church should be enrolled in the school and placed in some squad where the needed instruction may be received. After the Bible-school hour, the army then meets as a regiment for regimental drill. Here it learns to move as a unit under the leadership of the great Commander-in-chief and the pastor or colonel. Further instruction, also, is given in the use of the weapon and in the methods of bringing men to surrender their lives to the conquering Lord.

*4. The new recruit also becomes a good soldier by eating the right kind of food.*

No soldier can become truly great by eating pie and cake and goodies all the time. He must be fed on the kind of food which produces muscle and bone and strength. He must have vigor, and there is but one way for him to get it, and that is by eating the proper food. Too many Christians are being fed on the wrong diet. We can not eat the cheap things of the world and be strong. We must be fed on the strong meat of the Word. We must dine at the table of the great Commander, for His food will give us the power we need in our wrestling against the unseen forces of the evil one.

*5. The new recruit becomes a good soldier by studying the field of action.*

This should not be left to the officers only, but it should be a part of the military education of every soldier in the Christian army. We ought to know about the great mission fields where the battle is being fought so gloriously by our comrades. For this reason, we have missionary societies and circles where we may meet together and study the fields to be taken for the King. When a soldier knows something about the field, he will be ready to advance with greater zeal to the fray.

#### IV. WHAT IS THE PROSPECT OF SUCCESS?

This is a legitimate question. Every man would like to know, before he enlists, as to the possible outcome of the war. Are we going to succeed? Is this battle to be in vain? Are we to believe that the church is a failure, that all that has been done in the

past has been in vain? Is it true that Christianity as it is exhibited in the New Testament has been a delusion and mistake from the very beginning? Frankly, my brethren, I grow very weary of the defeatist attitude these days. How utterly blind are many writers to the facts. It is really remarkable how easy it is for men to write learnedly about things of which they have no knowledge at all. Such a question forming the title of a book, "Can the Church Survive the Changing Order?" is a type of many being asked to-day. "What is the matter with the church?" "Has Christianity failed?" It is astounding how those who ask such questions in all seriousness can calmly close their eyes and go right on with their criticisms. The easiest thing in the world is to criticize the church. And it is a popular thing. Were I anxious to make a world-round name for myself, I would write a book in which I would belabor the church from the preface to the conclusion. But what are the facts? Happily, we have abundant material with which to evaluate the progress of the church. And these facts are telling us, for one thing, that never in the history of Christianity have men been flocking to the church as they are to-day. Never have there been such Bible schools. I can remember the time when if we had three hundred in a Bible school we were filled with joy and thanksgiving. Then, as the years went by, we worked in some of our schools for the amazing total of one thousand in attendance. I can remember the time in my own short life when it was heralded from coast to coast that we have a Bible school of that size. The other day, in your own city of Long Beach, I attended a class in which there were three thousand

men. Last Easter Lord's Day there were scores of Bible schools in this land of ours in which there were more than two thousand present. I can also remember the time when, if we had a hundred additions to the church in an evangelistic campaign, we were happy. In these days we frequently have that many in one day. And then, in the matter of giving, what do the facts tell us? Why, one church gives as much for missions to-day as a whole brotherhood did a hundred years ago. Last year one communion went into a campaign for more than a hundred million dollars. In three years, in the United States and Canada, one great religious body added more than a million members to its rolls. These are a few of the facts: do they seem to spell defeat? Oh, brethren, what we need to-day is a little less of the gloomy doctrine of pessimism and more of the doctrine of hope and confidence and love. With all her mistakes, the church is still the most live, the most virile organization in the world at this hour. What is the prospect of success? How foolish is the question! There is just one thing ahead of the church of Christ, and that thing, victory. The mighty army of the Lord of hosts is sweeping, like an irresistible mass, up the slopes of the hill upon which the enemy is intrenched; and the flag of the King will float proudly from the summit.

But sometimes we are discouraged. The work is hard and men are often unresponsive to our plea. When these times come, then it is that we need to follow the admonition of Paul, "Be strong." I am thinking, just here, of a true story which illustrates so well what our attitude should be when we are compassed about with discouragement. In southern En-

gland, one day, there met together a little Endeavor society. So few were they that grim discouragement settled like a pall upon the meeting. It had been so hard to get the young people to attend, and some of them had labored so earnestly. And yet they had not been able to dent the indifference which everywhere surrounded them. One of the young men arose and in a gloomy tone said: "I think we should disband our society. We are not doing a thing for God. It is all a drag and not worth the effort. Let us quit." In glum silence he sat down, and there seemed not to be energy enough in the attendants to reply. Finally, however, a young man arose who, with flashing eyes, said: "I believe my friend is wrong. We are doing something for God. This thing has meant much to me. I am sure I am a better man for having attended these meetings Lord's Day after Lord's Day. And then, perhaps, we have not tried as faithfully as we might. There are near us every day opportunities which we do not see. Right in our city there is a regiment of our own English soldiers. Why not go down to them to-morrow and take them some copies of our little song-books and some New Testaments?" "Why, they would laugh at you," was the reply from one of the boys. "Who ever heard of taking Bibles to soldiers?" "Well, they can not do more than throw them away; and it will do us good to go, anyway. Let us take them the books to-morrow." After awhile the boy prevailed, and the next day the Endeavorers journeyed to the barracks, carrying with them the little song-books and the copies of the New Testament, and to each soldier they met they presented both a song-book and a Testament. The soldiers received the

gifts courteously; but after the Endeavorers had returned to their homes, they wondered if, after all, they had really accomplished anything. One of the soldier boys, after the young people had gone, as he sat upon the edge of his bunk, turned the leaves of the song-book idly. Suddenly a number caught his eye. Number 125: "When the mists have rolled in splendor from the summit of the hills." When had he heard that song? Then he knew. As he closed his eyes there came to him the vision of that little cottage in the glen; white it was, and with the vine climbing round the door. Back of it frowned old Ben Nevis, with the white mists from off the sea wreathing his awesome brow. And from the cottage, he in his childish play had often heard a sweet, girlish voice singing softly the words of that song, "When the mists have rolled in splendor from the summit of the hills." It was the voice of his mother. Well could he remember the day when, broken-hearted, he had stood beside the little grave, and as his tears had poured upon it had promised her that he would be true. There came again the scene of his Sabbath days, when the long line of his people in Scottish Highland custom, with the old grandfather leading the way, and the wee laddie at the end of the line, had marched in single file to the old kirk. And one hymn which they sang was this one which had brought such a flood of memories into his soul. Again he turned the leaves of the little book. Number 185 caught his eye: "Nearer, my God, to Thee." Then in shame there came upon him the realization of all that his wild life in the army meant to him, of how far away he had strayed from those wonderful teachings which had made his own life and

that of his own beloved Scotland. He leaned his face in his hands and sat there a long time thinking. The tears were flowing when he said: "I have not been true. But I will turn. I will find those young people who brought me this book to-day, and I will once more place myself under the influences which were so powerful in my childhood." That evening, therefore, when the bells were ringing, a soldier boy came quietly into the building and seated himself near the door. The preacher, that night, seemed to the boy to be inspired, for every word of the message was directed at him. They went through him again and again. When at last the invitation was given, the boy arose, and, hesitating a moment, walked down the aisle and gave his hand to the pastor and that day confessed his faith in the Christ. The service over, a great exaltation filled the heart of the new soldier of the King. But he was afraid to return to the barracks. One man whom more than others he feared was a tall corporal, Jim Ainsworth, the bully of the barracks, a wild, godless fellow who would surely persecute him for the stand he had taken. But as he drew nearer the place his heart grew stronger with a strange new courage, and, as he entered the room, he summoned the fellows to him and said: "Men, I went to the church to-night and gave my heart to God. I am going to be a Christian from this time on. To-morrow night I am going to be baptized, and I want you all to be there." A loud laugh greeted his invitation, and the bully replied: "Yes, we will be there, every one of us. Men, I want you all to be in the gallery, and, when he is baptized, I will stand and give the signal, and I want you to give one loud hiss. We will be there to help

him get the proper start in this Christian life, as he calls it.”

The next evening came, and with it a house packed to the doors, and, in the gallery, hundreds of men in the uniform of British soldiers. The sermon was finished, and the pastor led the boy down into the waters, and as his hand was raised the words of that solemn formula rang out clear and strong: “Upon the confession of your faith in Jesus the Christ and by His authority, I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” As the boy was being lowered into the watery grave a tall form arose in the gallery, and as Corporal Jim Ainsworth faced the crowd of soldiers, these words were hissed through his teeth: “The man who speaks or moves will settle with me in the barracks after this is over.” The service was over and the great audience filed silently out into the night.

Another day of service dawned bright and clear, and another soldier boy came quietly into the back of the church. Another heart-searching message, another invitation, and another boy walked down the aisle and gave his hand to the minister. Once more the good confession was made, and then the tall Corporal Jim Ainsworth turned to the audience, and, with the permission of the minister, said: “I wronged a friend last week, and now his courage and faith have brought me to decision. I am a soldier of Britain; but I want also to be a soldier of God.” From this beginning fifty men from the barracks became Christians. A little Endeavor society was organized, and night after night the men would come together and sing the songs from the little book and pray and give their testimony

about the love of God in their hearts. And the two favorite songs were 125, "When the mists have rolled in splendor from the summit of the hills," and 185, "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

But one day the soldiers were forced to say good-by to their young friends whose love had made possible their new life, for the regiment was ordered to South Africa. If there is an Englishman here to-day who went through the rigors of the campaign, he knows what the troops of Britain suffered for their motherland. One evening, as the little Endeavor society was meeting together, there came a messenger from the commander asking for volunteers for a very hazardous undertaking. It was necessary to locate a certain battery which had been causing havoc all day. Four men were needed. Who would go? Corporal Jim Ainsworth arose at once and quietly said: "I will gladly go if others will go with me." Immediately a dozen men sprang to their feet. Three others were chosen and then it was good-by. Anglo-Saxons are the same the world over, whether it be in America or Britain or Canada or Australia; they do not believe much in grandstanding. So but few words were spoken as the men left the light of the fire. But to them out there in the darkness there came a soft call: "One hundred and twenty-five, Corporal." And like an echo came back the answer: "Aye! Aye! When the mists have rolled in splendor from the summit of the hills." Then again came a word: "One hundred and eighty-five, men." "Yes, 185, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee,'" and they were gone.

The morning dawned. It was the morning of Land's Neck, when from the hills came the sullen

boom of guns. In every direction the mists heavy and damp covered the African veldt. Suddenly to the expectant troops came a curt order, and forward through the mists of the morning, and upward toward the muttering guns on the hilltop, the men of old England, as only Anglo-Saxons can, charged their way to victory. A short, sharp fight, and the union jack waved proudly from the hill and the day was won. A soldier from the Endeavor society, with bayonet fixed and eyes flashing with the battle light, came suddenly around a great rock. Then at the sight which greeted him he threw his gun away and stopped beside a dying comrade. Kneeling, he tenderly lifted the head into his lap and leaned close that he might catch the last words from the whitening lips of his friend, Corporal Jim Ainsworth. In a whisper they came, "When the mists have rolled in splendor from the summit of the hills," and as the soldier boy looked the mists of the morning were rising from the veldt and the glorious sun was smiling through. Then, like a tired sigh came one final word, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and on the mists of the morning the soul of Corporal Jim Ainsworth, a soldier of England and soldier of God, was lifted in triumph out of the poor, tortured body into the everlasting peace of the ivory palaces of God.

Nineteen men of that Endeavor society survived the war. Two of them to-day are Y. M. C. A. secretaries in Canada, one is a successful minister of the gospel. All who live are faithful. Did it pay for that discouraged band of young people to go to the soldiers with the song-books and Testaments? How rich was their reward, and yet with what fear did they

approach their task! There is no doubt about the result. How can there be with such a leader as Jesus our Savior? Let us press on with confidence and joy and with singing!

“Sound the battle-cry! see! the foe is nigh;  
Raise the standard high for the Lord;  
Gird your armor on, stand firm, every one;  
Rest your cause upon His holy word.

“Rouse, then, soldiers, rally round the banner;  
Ready, steady, pass the word along;  
Onward, forward, shout aloud Hosanna!  
Christ is Captain of the mighty throng.”

## XIII.

### WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY

TEXT.—“And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.”—Acts 26: 28, 29.

**E**VERY man should be able to give a reason for the position he occupies religiously. It is not sufficient to say that one belongs to a certain religious body simply because his father or mother belonged there. A man should be able to give a reason which is really in every sense a reason. There must be convictions of a real and vital nature if we are to be great Christians. The Restoration movement has a very definite reason for its existence. In the degree that men have understood this reason they have been great in their efforts to extend the kingdom of God upon the earth. A great plea has always been necessary to the making of great Christians. The powerful doctrine of justification by faith made Luther great in his work; the wonderful thought of the sovereignty of God gave vigor to the life of Calvin; the necessity of holiness in life made Wesley what he was in the religious world. Our own people have been great in proportion as they have realized the magnificence and splendor of our mission. Some there are who have seen but a part of it, and their work has meant but little,

while others have realized the whole beautiful and magnificent plan. In this message I want to give my personal reasons for being identified with those who call themselves "Christians only."

**I. I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY BECAUSE OF MY LOVE AND REVERENCE FOR THE BIBLE AS THE VERY WORD OF GOD.**

Our people, wherever they have accomplished the work that God has given them to do, have always been a Bible people. The Bible is accepted as the word of God. The minister is bound by the Book, and that alone. He can be as broad as the Word is broad and as narrow as the Word is narrow. The very possibility of accomplishing the thing that, as a people, we have started out to do—namely, to restore the church of Christ—rests upon a restoration of the word of God to the position of absolute authority in all questions of doctrine, life and discipline. There can be no quibbling here. If a man is to be a Christian only, he must accept the Bible as the very word of God. The statement of Thomas Campbell still holds good to-day: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak, and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." Our position, if we are to do our work, must be, "No book but the Bible." The ringing declaration of Paul is as meaningful to-day as the day when first it was written: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

## II. I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY BECAUSE AS SUCH I CAN CLEARLY AND FEARLESSLY PROCLAIM THE SCRIPTURAL LAW OF PARDON.

I can tell a man what Jesus and the apostles said he must do in order to be saved from his sins. And how simple and easy to comprehend is that law. All one needs to do is to tell it. We are not to philosophize or theorize about it, but simply to tell what the Lord said. The old, nonsensical views of conversion are rigidly tested by the Scriptures, and if they are found to be without Scriptural foundation they are cast aside. The Restoration preachers have also been absolutely scientific in their method of interpreting the law of pardon. It is the scientific method because it is the inductive plan. All the cases of conversion, as recorded in the book of conversions, the Book of Acts, are brought together and examined. From what was done in each case the general laws of conversion are drawn, and are found to be in absolute accordance with the positive commands as given by the Lord Himself. It is also found that not only is this general law of pardon—as drawn from the cases which are recorded—in accordance with the commands of Christ, but it is also psychologically sound. The church of Christ is the only religious body to-day which really teaches a law of pardon with a sound psychological basis. As Christians only we can preach to men the Word which alone is able to save their souls, telling them, as Paul told the Romans, that when they have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching whereunto they are delivered, then they are made free from sin and become servants of righteousness.

III. I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY BECAUSE THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE THE ONLY ONES WHICH EMPHASIZE THE SYMBOLIC AND COMMEMORATIVE BEAUTY OF THE ORDINANCES OF OUR LORD.

The churches of Christ have always emphasized the symbolic beauty of baptism. Baptism has a real and a vital meaning to one who is a Christian only. To one who really understands, there is nothing so disgusting and abhorrent as the statement that baptism is a non-essential. No one can clearly understand the relation existing between baptism and the great facts of the gospel, and even think of such a thing. Paul, in that wonderful statement to the Corinthian brethren, tells us that the facts of the gospel are three when he says: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast to the word which I preached unto you, except ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The three great facts of our religion are that Christ died, that He was buried, and that He was raised from the dead by the power of God. Now, when a man who is prepared in mind and heart to be baptized, who is a penitent believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, comes to the waters of baptism, we see acted out, in symbol, these very facts which give to our religion its power. Every conversion is a recapitulation of the events of Calvary. Every man who

comes to the Father by Christ comes by the path of the cross. He dies as Christ died; as Christ died for sin the sinner now dies to sin. But when one dies, we bury him as Christ was buried after His death upon the cross. In baptism we see that burial; and as the Lord arose triumphant, so the believer rises from the watery tomb into a new life in the Master. Baptism will always be tremendously essential because it is connected in a vital manner with the cross of Christ. It is in this moment of obedience that we come to the application of the cleansing blood of the Redeemer. There is no other people in the world who bring out the true meaning of baptism. The very heart of this act is its symbolism, and those who are called Christians only are the only ones whose practice shows it forth.

The commemorative beauty of the Lord's Supper is also emphasized by the churches of Christ. Not only is this true, but, as is the case concerning their position on the question of baptism, they are the only ones who do so emphasize its true significance. The Lord's Supper was observed on the Lord's Day, and on every Lord's Day, by the Lord's people. The day on which He rose from the grave, the day forever made sacred by this sublime fact, is made even more so by the observance of that feast which more than anything else in the world commemorates His death and suffering. There is nothing which can so stir men to noble deeds and holy lives as the memory of noble deeds that have been done for them, and noble lives that have been lived that they might have enduring blessings. We need the constant reminder of the suffering of Jesus for us in order that we may be constantly

stirred to greater efforts for Him. There is but one place where I may find the table of the Lord spread every week, and that is in the church of Christ, among those who wear His name, and that alone. For this reason, then, I am a Christian only.

#### IV. I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY BECAUSE OF THE BEAUTY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAMES WHICH THEY WEAR.

They are "disciples" of Christ, but they are more than disciples. I am sure that we have made a sad error in our brotherhood by making this term "disciple" the prominent name. A man may be a disciple of the Lord and never be a Christian at all. A disciple is a "learner," but a Christian is an obedient disciple; a Christian is a learner or disciple who puts into practice the things which he learns. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of the Lord, but, as far as we know, he never became an obedient disciple, or a Christian. Nicodemus was a disciple of Christ, but he never had the courage to put into practice the things that he had learned—he never became a Christian. There is but one true position, and that is the one plainly taught by the New Testament, that, as an organization, the church should be called the "church of God," the "church of the living God" or "churches of Christ," and as individuals the proper name should be "Christians." And how beautifully expressive is it of the relationship existing between the members of the body of Christ and the Lord Himself. Christ is our King, our Lawgiver, our Judge, our Redeemer, our Savior; He is all in all. Paul tells us in the Galatian letter:

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). If one is baptized into Christ, he becomes a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N. He becomes one of the great soul-saving system which is Christ. This is the only name in all the word of God of which the significant word *chrematizo* in the Greek is used, meaning “divinely called or given.”

No other name was given by the Father Himself. It is the only name that Paul would have Agrippa to wear when, after the semi-ironical statement of the king, “With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian,” he said, “I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds” (Acts 26:28, 29). What was Paul? You answer, “A Christian.” What kind of a Christian? Just a Christian, plus nothing, minus nothing, a Christian only. The name “Christian” is the only name directly sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. Speaking through the apostle Peter, He says: “But if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (1 Pet. 4:16). This is the name, brethren, and there is not a shadow of doubt about it. I belong to the church of Christ and am a Christian only.

#### V. I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY BECAUSE OF THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE PLEA OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST FOR CHRISTIAN UNION.

The proportions of this plea are vast and magnificent. To gather together all the scattered forces of Christendom into the one body of the Lord! Where is there a plea in all the world to compare with it? It is

greater than that of a Luther, a Calvin or a Wesley. It is a big plea and has appealed to really big men throughout the years. And the basis upon which it is to be accomplished is indisputably right. If this basis is not right, then there is no right foundation for union. We are to be one in Christ as the Master planned when He said in His great intercessory prayer: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given unto me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me" (John 17:20-24). To be one in Christ means to be one on His word, for only through His word and the word of His apostles can we know of Him and believe on Him.

One of the greatest of these apostles tells of the basis of union when, in writing to the Ephesians, he said: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4:1-7).

If we are to unite upon this ground, and we can unite upon no other, we can see the irresistible con-

clusion that we must cast aside all human names and all human creeds and all human church governments and all human substitutions for the commands of the Lord. These things must go, for they have divided the church for these hundreds of years, and as long as they remain they will continue as barriers of division. There never was a time in the history of the divided church when men were as anxious to hear this wonderful position as they are now. Christian union is not as near as many of the most optimistic of our brethren think, but it is coming. It will come, however, only if those now who are qualified to speak for the church will unhesitatingly and fearlessly proclaim these truths of the Word. While the World War was on, many of our preachers preached on topics allied to the great conflict because men's minds were turned in that direction; and now, while the religious world is thinking as it has never thought before, on the subject of the reunion of the people of God, is the time when every minister of the churches of Christ, from Atlantic to Pacific, should preach the Scriptural basis upon which alone can come the union which we all so ardently desire. Let us not lose our nerve and be afraid that people will be hurt by the truth, but preach it, brethren, in love and with all the enthusiasm at your command. What a wonderful influence our mighty people could have if, all over the country just now, this basis of union were being preached in every revival meeting, and even frequently in the regular services by the local minister. It is right, and it is God's plan. Shun not, brethren, to declare the whole counsel of God.

VI. I AM A CHRISTIAN ONLY BECAUSE THE POSITION  
THESE PEOPLE OCCUPY IS UNDENOMINA-  
TIONAL AND NON-SECTARIAN.

I know that there are some among our ministers who honestly believe that we are a denomination protesting against denominationalism. Brethren, you are mistaken. A denomination has certain well-defined and easily recognizable earmarks which our people do not possess. If a man obeys the Scriptures, and those alone, without any human creed by which they are interpreted, he will become to-day what men became in the days of the apostolic church, a Christian, and a Christian only. Obedience to the commands of Christ in that day made a man a member of the church of the Lord, and even though there were those then who were imperfect Christians, yet a man could not become a denominationalist because Christianity was not organized along denominational lines. But if the same commands are obeyed to-day and the same pattern is followed in organizing a New Testament church now as was followed then, the resulting organization will not be a denomination, nor the members of that organization denominationalists. Obedience to the commands of Christ will make a man just a Christian, plus nothing, minus nothing, for it takes acceptance of something more than that which Jesus commanded to make a man a denominationalist or a sectarian. Subscription to a human creed, even though it be outgrown and scarcely ever read, yet makes one a denominationalist because its very existence creates a barrier which divides the one subscribing to it from all others. The wearing of a human name constitutes one a denom-

inationalist, because it, like the creed, helps to keep alive division. A spirit which desires only the growth or extension of a party, whether the cause of the Lord prospers or not, makes one a sectarian.

In my own ministry I have sometimes been called sectarian because I preached simply those things which the New Testament teaches. One, however, will have no fear of being a denominationalist if he will abide by the teachings of the Scriptures, and proclaim them fearlessly day by day. The churches of Christ occupy the great universal ground, the ground upon which all people are agreed in belief now, and for this reason they can not be, as long as they hold to it, a denominational people. They have a universal or catholic creed, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." They have a universal name, the name "Christian," and the universal baptism, the immersion of a penitent believer into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is the only undenominational and non-sectarian ground in the religious world.

VII. I AM IDENTIFIED WITH THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS ONLY BECAUSE THEY ARE AN INTENSELY EVANGELISTIC PEOPLE.

The strength of the Restoration movement has been in the intensity of its evangelism. Like the early Christians, they have gone everywhere preaching the Word. If we continue to grow and lead men to the Christ in large numbers, we must keep alive this spirit of evangelism. Every preacher must be an evangelist. At least one sermon every Lord's Day should be filled with evangelistic fire and enthusiasm. Whenever we,

as a people, become non-evangelistic, we shall die. I have held in the past three years six meetings in abandoned stone buildings in the West, buildings that have been abandoned by a once powerful people who to-day are dying—dying because they have ceased to be a soul-saving people. In early times the divinely inspired messengers of the great evangel went out two by two taking the gospel to a hungry world. Let us keep up this great practice.

VIII. LAST OF ALL, I AM IDENTIFIED WITH THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS ONLY BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT IN ALL THINGS THEIR SUPREME EFFORT IS TO EXALT JESUS CHRIST.

They honor Him by their reverence for His word. They believe that in this Word He has revealed His will toward men. They exalt Him as the only creed of the church. They honor Him in the great confession which they always make before men before they are baptized into Him. He is honored in the act of baptism, for it is a proclamation of His death for sins, His burial and His resurrection. By wearing the name "Christian" they honor Him who is the founder and head of the church. They show by this very name that they are His, and His alone. As a people, therefore, brethren, we are not exalting baptism or the Lord's Supper or the name "Christian," but Jesus Christ the Lord. Whenever we exalt any of these things as of first importance we immediately become denominationalists and sectarian in spirit, but when we exalt Him we are Christians, and Christians only. May we, by our thoughts and words and deeds, let the world know that to us Christ is all in all.

## XIV.

### THE FOUR BIGGEST FOOLS

TEXT.—“But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee, and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?”—Luke 12: 20.

#### INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE word of God is absolutely unsparing in its treatment of sin. Its terminology is merciless. The man who lies is a liar; the man who steals, whether it be a large amount or small, is a thief; the man who kills is a murderer, and the man who commits adultery is an adulterer and displeasing to God. It does not hide the sins of men. Even those who are men after God's own heart are fiercely condemned when they transgress His law. When David sinned and fell short of the glory of God he was called an adulterer and murderer, and it was made clear to him in language unmistakable that his sin had displeased Jehovah. If one lives a life of folly, true to this unswerving attitude toward sin, the Bible calls him a fool. It is a harsh term, this, but it is the only one which can describe the actions of certain men.

Those who shall be mentioned in this message are but types of men and women of our own day. Civilizations change as the centuries go by, but the hearts of men are about the same throughout the ages. The fools of yesterday have their representatives in the

world of to-day. Let us realize, therefore, that we are looking at ourselves as we gaze into the pictures of these men of the past. The Bible is wonderful in that any man who desires can find his own life's story in the sacred pages, for this book above all things else, is a story of life—of the religious life of men upon the earth.

## DISCUSSION.

### I. ABNER, THE DAREDEVIL FOOL.

In the war between Saul and David, Abner, the son of Ner, had treacherously slain Asahel, the brother of Joab. Realizing that Joab, as the avenger of blood, had the right to slay him in expiation of his sin, Abner flees with all celerity to Hebron, a city of refuge. Successfully attaining the city, he rejoiced in safety, for beyond the walls of that city Joab dared not go. But Abner was a restless spirit, and, the confinement of the city soon becoming irksome to him, he longed for the freedom without the walls. Day followed day, and with the passage of the days the longing for freedom grew within him. At last it became intolerable. He would go to the gate, at least. But Joab was waiting for him, and apparently in a friendly mood, for he invited him to the middle of the gate that he might speak to him privately. With the trusting simplicity of a child, Abner accepts the invitation. No sooner has the middle of the gate been reached than there is the quick flash of a deadly weapon, a smothered and astonished cry, and Abner lies in his own blood. When the king heard of the death of his servant, great was his mourning and bitter was his cry of sorrow: "Should Abner die as the fool dieth?" The anguished

question of the king was answered by the folly of his servant, for the death of Abner was the death of a fool.

1. The death of Abner was the death of a fool because he unwittingly placed himself in the hands of his enemy. He knew well that Joab, as the avenger of blood, had the right to take his life. He should have known that Joab would not soon forget or forgive him for the murder of his brother. How utterly foolish, therefore, that he should trustingly accept the invitation of his mortal enemy for a conference just outside the safety-line. Any man, who thus places himself in that position where the enemy can strike him to death, is a fool, and his death is the death of a fool.

How like the lives of some Christians of to-day is the action of this man of old. The enemy of the soul is ever alert and ready, watching always that he may find the right chance to do us to death. Are we placing ourselves in his hands? How many of us are following the injunction of our Master to "watch and pray"? The grave warning of the apostle to the Gentiles is one which comes to us now with solemn force: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). I have been asked frequently by young Christian friends: "Brother Kellems, what about this questionable thing, or that? How near to the dead-line can I get and be safe?" The question is not how near can I get to the dead-line and be safe, but how far away can I get from that dead-line. There is but one position when a question as to the right or propriety of a thing comes to our minds, and that position is summed up in those virile words: "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22).

It is the only safe way. Whenever we begin to flirt with the devil we are in grave danger, whenever we trifle with temptation we are placing ourselves in his power. I once knew a man who had had a long and terrible battle against the thirst for strong drink. He was growing stronger day by day, and as long as he remained away from all the places where he was in danger of being tempted he was safe. But one day there came upon him the desire to test his strength. He was no longer afraid; he would show the world how strong he was. With boldness, therefore, he went down to the old haunts of the life that he had given up. For a time he gloried in his strength, although the very smell of the vile stuff started a million little demons racing madly through his blood. He would take one glass to show that even the taste for the ruinous liquid had been conquered by his years of abstinence. One drink, and his courage began to fail. One called for another and yet another. You know the rest of the sad, sordid story. He was pulled onward by a power not his own, until, with the fire of the stuff in his brain, he had lost all control, and the years of valiant effort were lost. The old enemy was subtle and alert to catch him in his weak place. And is it not always true that it has been some little unguarded, weak place in our lives that means the fall? Montcalm, on the heights of Quebec, gloried in the frowning ramparts which reared their proud heads between him and the white-winged ships of England waiting expectantly in the broad river far below him. Why should he be afraid? The honor of France was safe, for no troops could scale those dizzy walls of rock. But there was one little path unguarded. A

dozen soldiers could have held it against all comers. In the darkness of the night, while the French general was complacently thinking of his security, the soldiers of England were toiling silently up that path until, when the morning dawned, Montcalm was stunned as he looked out upon the long, red lines of royal Americans as they stood in battle array upon the Plains of Abraham. One little, unguarded path spelled the defeat of France upon the American continent. And how often has it been that one little, unguarded weakness in the life, one little, apparently harmless indiscretion, has meant the wreck and ruin of an otherwise beautiful soul. Remain in the city of refuge, in the purity and power of God's love and service, if you would be safe and strong.

2. Abner died as a fool, because he perished right at the gate of salvation. Hebron was a city of refuge, and yet he died in its gates. To me it has always been a sad thing when men, who have had but scant opportunity to obey the Lord, go out into the darkness of eternity. But I know something infinitely sadder. The man who has had the chance; the man who has heard the gospel of redeeming love from his babyhood; the one whom God has blessed with a Christian mother and father, a Christian wife and Christian children—for a man like that to allow the sable walls of eternal night to close around him without obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, certainly this is the saddest of all. And what folly it is! To leave the eternal rewards of service and decision for a mess of pottage. Such folly is wickedness indescribable. And there are those whose ears hear these words, and whose hearts are sadly accusing them this day, who are drifting unheedingly

on toward that eternal darkness. It is far more terrible for one who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to perish, than for that one upon whose ears the gospel story has fallen but infrequently.

## II. HEROD, THE EGOTISTICAL FOOL.

Herod was a king, and a king whose greatest delight in life was to receive the praise of the people. To be popular was the chief aim of his wicked heart. Seeing that it pleased the Jews, he killed the apostle James with the sword, and imprisoned Peter. And then later, upon a certain day, he arrayed himself in royal apparel and made a pompous oration to the people. Dazzled by his glittering jewels and brilliant robes, the people cried aloud with awe-stricken voice: "The voice of God, and not of a man" (Acts 12:23). How flattered was the blasphemous scoundrel who sat upon the throne. But as a thunder-bolt is hurled from the courts of indignant Heaven, so there came upon him swift punishment. An angel of the Lord smote him and he fell down in horrible anguish, his pride and ambition humbled before the very ones from whom so lately he had received such shouts of acclaim, and, in the terse, stern words of the writer of Acts of Apostles, "he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost." And the reason for it was given also in that same calm record: "He gave not God the glory" (Acts 12:22).

And was not this king of old a type of some of our day, and of the very church which Jesus loved? Is it not true that the guiding motive of the service of some Christians is that they may be seen and heard of men, and that they may receive as their reward the plaudits

of men? Have you not seen some give in a public manner, and with flourish, in order that their gifts might form the subject of conversation of the community? Have you not known those who would give of their money in a public manner so that their business might be advertised? I once knew a doctor who would always do things if he could do them so that his name could be mentioned publicly, in order that his profession might be advertised. God pity us, we have prostituted the church of our Lord, His own bride, for business. We have given to ourselves that glory which to God alone belongeth. In my boyhood I knew a woman who was a member of my own home church. She was always just ten minutes late to each service. She had a reason for being late, for her entrance into the house of the Lord was timed to the minute. Promptly ten minutes after the service began she would enter the door, and with great display and pomp she would be ushered to her seat. I sat with the crowd of somewhat irreverent youngsters who had given to her a nickname. We did not need to turn our heads to know that she had come. We could hear her; we could instinctively feel her presence. The name given to her, therefore, was "Old Sister Grand Entry," for her greatest ambition was to make a big show of her entrance in the meeting-house. She had one favorite passage of Scripture, "Study to show *thyself*." She never finished the verse, for her constant endeavor was to show herself.

2. Herod, the egotistical fool, was also like some to-day who are outside the church. He thought he was self-sufficient. He could do without God. He did not need the Lord. How often have we met those who

feel that in their own strength alone they are sufficient for this world and the one which is to come. They do not need the kingdom of God, nor are they concerned about a Savior, for they do not need salvation. Another personal experience will be pardoned just here. In the southern part of my own State, several years ago, a young friend of mine, one of the finest of gospel preachers whom the Pacific coast has ever produced, and I were engaged in an evangelistic meeting. Great interest had been aroused in the proclamation of the message, and large crowds were attending. One evening an elder of the church came to me and said: "Brother Kellems, there is a man in your congregation who has the reputation of being a preacher-eater. Now, that doesn't mean that he feeds the preachers, but that he is one who loves to dine on their theology. He will invite you to his home, and will show you how little you know about the Bible, and the things pertaining to religion in general." Now, I knew quite well that he would have no great difficulty in doing just that thing, for I was young and inexperienced, and the things I did not know were far more numerous than those I knew. It was with a great deal of trepidation, therefore, that I saw the gentleman referred to approaching me, one evening. He came up in a pompous manner and said: "Brother Kellems, you will dine with me to-morrow." Notice he did not say, "Will you dine with me to-morrow?" but, "you will." I stammered a reply: "Y-y-yes, sir, I—will." The next day we repaired to his home. Knowing that soon the slaughter was to begin, and feeling somewhat like a lamb which was to be the subject, I determined to do justice to the occasion in one

way at least. I have always been blessed with a real appetite, and on this day it was in first-class order, so I ate everything in sight. Suddenly, at the close of the meal, he turned to me and started to speak. I said to myself: "The time has come, and the preacher-eating is about to commence." To my astonishment, however, he said: "Brother Kellems, do you know that in this revival meeting that you are holding you are not going to git me? These people have been after me for twenty years; they want my influence, they need my money, but they ain't going to git it." Can you imagine my amazement? I had expected a tirade about the mistakes of Moses, perhaps one on the impossibility of the deity of Jesus, and then to hear such a bald-faced expression of egotism as that. Being young and impetuous, and of Irish blood, anyway, before I thought, I had answered: "Well, as far as I am personally concerned, I don't give the snap of my finger whether I git you or not." Think of it! a man believing that his entrance into the church of God was the only power that would keep it alive. In a word, that, by his coming, he was conferring a benefit or favor on the Lord. I can remember to this day the indignation which surged through me at his words, and with considerable heat I went on: "Let me tell you, my brother, that the church of my Lord is bigger than any one man in it or out of it. When you are dead and gone, and the flowers have ceased to grow over your forgotten grave, the church of Jesus Christ in this community will be going on with its work of saving the souls of men. We do not need you, but, more than any other need in the world, you need us and you need our Savior. Until you can come saying,

'I am poor and weak and blind, and I need Thee every hour,' do not come at all. Until you can feel that way, for God's sake don't come down the aisle." And to you who, to-day, think that in your own strength you are sufficient, to you would we bring the same message: you need our Lord, and without Him you are impotent. Don't follow in the footsteps of the egotistical fool.

### III. ANANIAS, THE HYPOCRITICAL FOOL (Acts 5:3).

The church of God had decided to have all things common and do the work of the Lord from this common fund. Ananias, however, after selling his possession, came in pompous hypocrisy and gave but a part of it to the apostles. Imagine the conversation between him and his wife Sapphira: "My dear, you know that I am a good business man, and that I would not be so foolish as to give all that I have to the church. You know, my love, that I have salted part of it down for the certain rainy day which is coming. I would not leave myself destitute by foolishly giving it all away." I can almost see the look of fond affection which she then bestowed upon him as she made reply: "Yes, my lord, I know that you are a man who believes in providing for his own, and I know that you would not make such a foolish blunder as to give it all away." And then came the fatal day when he came, with all the attitude of great piety, before the apostles and made the gift of a part of the money, claiming that he had given it all. How swift and terrible was the result of his lie to the Holy Spirit! How tersely and yet fully does the divine writer tell the story: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the

Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it, then, that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it. And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him" (Acts 5:3-7).

1. Ananias was a fool because he tried to play the double game. How many have tried this and failed, for the man who tries to hold to the hand of God, and at the same time serve the devil, will always fail. There is no game so indicative of absolute folly as the double game. So many are playing it to-day. If there was ever an age when men were living double lives, certainly that age is now. "Be sure your sin will find you out." There is an eye ever seeing, and though we may for a time be successful in hiding our wickedness from the eyes of men, that all-seeing eye is watching us; and the finger that ever writes down the deeds of men will be recording it for the opening of the books on the last day. To the hypocrite there is no verse in the Bible more terrible than the statement of the writer of the Hebrew letter: "And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). God sees and knows, and not only will you be found out here, but you are already found out in His sight.

2. Ananias was a fool also because he tried to lie to God. He tried to cheat the Lord. And are there

not those who hear this message to-day, who perhaps have been blameless in other regards, who are as guilty as this hypocrite of old? You say that the possessions which you hold are your own; that you have by your own labor made them, or that, because of the labor of your fathers, they are yours to-day? Ah! but are they yours? Is it not true that you are but the trustee of them, the steward? They are the possession of God, and you are His if you have been purchased by the blood of the Lord. You can not, you dare not, say that you may do as you please with that which belongs to Him. If I were to be untrue to the gospel commands of the King, and were to say that this church would receive men and women into its membership without baptism, there would be many who would immediately demand that I resign my work because I would be a heretic of the worst type. But there are some in every congregation who are heretics to the great world program of the Lord, and feel themselves to be in the right path. Remember that money is but coined life, and, if you withhold it from His service, you are withholding just that much life. The man who steals from God is as much a criminal as the one who steals from men.

#### IV. THE AVARICIOUS FOOL OF THE TEXT.

He was a rich man. He was prosperous, for his crops had been bounteous and his barns were running over with goods. What should he do, for he had not where to bestow all his grain and his fruits? At last there came the answer, and in the words of Jesus Himself, as He tells the story to His wondering audience, he said: "This will I do: I will pull down my barns,

and I will build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, be merry" (Luke 12:18, 19). What a picture of materialism we have here! A man who thinks only in terms of the here and now, who has not a thought for the future.

1. Notice that he was not a fool because he was rich. Money makes fools out of some, but not out of all. I have no patience with the man who thinks that because a man is rich he necessarily is a knave and a fool. I believe it is a man's Christian duty to make all the money he can, but not to can all the money he makes. Paul teaches us that it is right to be diligent in business. It is right for a man to be rich, if he is right in the use of those riches. How much more powerful one can be if he is wealthy. If his philosophy of money is correct, if he realizes that he is a servant of the Lord and that he must use his Lord's money in the Lord's way, what a blessing he can be to the world! No, this man was not a fool because he was rich.

2. He was not a fool because his ground was productive. This showed his wisdom, because he was a worker. He had cultivated his soil, and his broad acres burdened with grain, his beautiful orchards groaning under the weight of ripe, luscious fruit, were proud testimonials to his energy and providence. He was a vigorous, successful man of the world. He had done the work, and God had given him the harvest. The fact that his barns had to be rebuilt was a sign of his wonderful ability and foresight.

3. He was a fool, first of all, because of the statement to his soul: "Take thine ease; eat, drink, be merry." He wanted to feed his soul on the things of the here and now. He was of the earth, earthy. His whole thought was centered upon temporal things. He wanted to feed his soul on wheat and oats, houses and lands, automobiles, cotton, fine horses. He had no time for anything or any one; he was self-centered, thinking only of the present.

4. He was a fool because he was selfish. "What shall I do with my goods?" A little child might be starving and because he had been careless. A man near him had lost his home, and with broken spirit and heart had become a beggar. What cared he? A nation across the sea was afflicted with famine. It was none of his business. "What shall I do with my goods? Ah! this will I do; I will tear down my barns, and I will build greater, and *there* will I bestow all my grain and my fruits. I will keep it for myself."

5. He was a fool because he prepared for this life, and made no preparation for the future. He had no time for the future, because all his time was taken with the cares and the duties of the present. He did not even think about it until the terrible voice from heaven rang its imperious call in his ears: "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" And then note the comment that Jesus makes upon His own parable: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20, 21). What is he, Lord and Master? A fool. It is harsh language, but how true!

## XV.

### THE DIVINE NAME

TEXTS.—“But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name.”—1 Pet. 4: 16.

“Do not they blaspheme the honorable name by which ye are called?”—Jas. 2: 7.

**I**N this sermon on the divine name there is no intention on the part of the author to make an attack on any individual or communion; and although, in the discussion, the names of some religious bodies may be used to a certain extent, the spirit in which they are employed is meant to be at all times courteous and charitable. One must, however, be lucid in every statement in order that the truth may be clearly set forth before all.

Now, as the church of Christ is a divine institution, founded by the Son of God and upon the granite truth of the deity of that Son, we would expect to find that the name by which it is to be differentiated from all other institutions would be a divine name. We would also expect that the individual members who constitute the church would be called by a name, divine, different and infinitely transcending all earthly names in that it would be bestowed by the Father Himself. In our text James refers to “that worthy name by which ye are called,” and it is our purpose here to find out just what that name was, for if the

same conditions which were binding upon the people to whom James writes are binding to-day upon us, then we also should be called by the same name which was worn by them.

#### ARGUMENT.

### I. SOME OBJECTIONS TO HUMAN NAMES, AS NOW WORN BY FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

The almost innumerable human names which are worn by those who profess to be God's people are open to many serious objections, some of which we want to consider briefly before we proceed to the discussion of "that worthy name."

1. In the first place, human names are wrong and directly antagonistic to the very spirit of the teaching of Christ, because they are divisive in character. Christ prayed that His people might remain one people (John 17). Paul teaches that if we are divided, we are "carnal and walk as men" (1 Cor. 1:10-24). Anything which erects itself as "a wall of partition," no matter how revered or deeply imbedded in the memory of a people it may be, is diametrically opposed to the desire of the Master and His apostles, that God's people should ever be one. And human names do divide. The Methodist refuses to be called a Baptist, or the Presbyterian, a Congregationalist. Each wears his own denominational name and clings to it with a tenacity born of a prejudice built up by years of denominational wrangling. Let all party names be forgotten, and one of the greatest barriers to the consummation of a glorious union of God's children will be broken down.

2. Again, human names are objectionable because they honor the wrong person, ordinance or institution. To call God's people "Campbellites" means that the honor for founding a church is conferred on Mr. Campbell, even though he firmly denied that he possessed any authority to organize a church or that he had ever even thought of founding one. Such names as "Wesleyan" and "Lutheran" are other illustrations of the attempt to crown with honor men to whose humble Christian piety such honor was little less than repugnant, because they so clearly recognized that they were not in any way worthy of it, and because they knew well to whom that honor belonged. Why honor them thus? Were they founders of the church of God? Who said, "Upon this rock I will build my church"? (Matt. 16:18). Who was it who said, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also," or, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."? Did Luther, Wesley or Campbell die for our sins? Is it through them that we are promised a home eternal? If Christ is the founder, the head, the Savior, should we not honor Him by wearing His name? Let us give honor to whom honor is due. When we wear, as a church name, the name of one of the great religious leaders, we are honoring the wrong person as the chief one in the church.

If we exalt an ordinance, such as the ordinance of Christian baptism, into the prominent position of a church name, we are again guilty of wrongfully bestowing honor. It is not baptism nor our belief in baptism which we should exalt, neither our belief in the spiritual oversight of the elders, nor of con-

gregational government, but the founder, the builder, the head of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. A third objection to the interminable maze of human names is that it acts as a stumbling-block to the sinner. Each name represents a distinct people, or church, and as the sinful man, desirous of being as near right as possible, wanders from place to place, his hope of finding the right path becomes deep despair, and he cries aloud: "Oh, what shall I do? Where shall I go? What name shall I wear?" Many a sin-sick one has been lost simply because he could not find the path of God in the maze of humanisms constructed through centuries by man.

## II. WHAT NAME DID CHRIST'S DISCIPLES WEAR AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST?

1. The first place in which we find the divine name used is in the cosmopolitan city of Antioch. In Acts 11:26, Luke says that "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." But at once the questions are asked: "Who gave them the name? Is it not a fact that the name was given to them in derision or as a title of reproach? Was it not a term employed by the pagan enemies of Christianity to express their contempt of the followers of Christ?" Many of our modern denominations have received their names in precisely this manner. In derision or as a nickname the term "Methodist" was used first by Oxford students concerning the Holy Club of the university, formed for purposes of prayer and religious meditation by John and Charles Wesley. From this Methodical club the Methodist societies were

named, and afterwards the great Methodist Episcopal Church. Now, did not the disciples receive their name "Christian" in much the same manner as a nickname, or title of ridicule?

About the most accurate, and perhaps the only correct, method of determining the answer to this very widely misunderstood question is to find out the exact meaning of the original Greek verb translated in our English versions "were called." The verb is *chrematizo*, from the noun *chrematismos*, which means "an oracle." The verb, therefore, means "to speak as an oracle, to be divinely warned, to be called or named from a divine source." Always when this word is used it is in the sense of a divine call, warning or command. Whenever the words "to be warned" or "to be called" are used in a human sense alone the Greek verbs employed are either *kaleo* (Matt. 10:13; Gal. 5:8; Luke 1:31; Matt. 10:25) or *upodeiknumi* (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7; 6:47; 12:5; Acts 9:16; 20:35). Never in the New Testament are these verbs used in the sense of a warning or a command or a calling, in the form of the bestowal of a name, except as emanating from human sources. When the Divine is mentioned as the source of such warnings or commands, the verb *chrematizo* is always used.

Nine times in the New Testament the verb *chrematizo* is translated with this divine sense clearly indicated. And if Acts 11:26 were correctly translated, it would be given there also. For purposes of comparison the places where *chrematizo* is used are here listed. The version referred to is the American Standard Revised.

Matt. 2:12: "And being warned of God in a dream [*chrematisthentes*] that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

Matt. 2:22: "But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned of God in a dream [*chrematitheis*], he withdrew into the parts of Galilee."

Luke 2:26: "And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit [*kechrematismenon*] that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

Acts 10:22: "And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man, and one that feareth God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews, was warned of God by a holy angel [*echrematisthe*] to send for thee into his house, and to hear words from thee."

Rom. 7:3: "So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called [*chrematisei*] an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man." The sense here in which the woman should be called an adulteress is clearly the divine sense, in that the law concerning this case first originates with God.

Rom. 11:4: "But what saith the answer of God unto him? [*Chrematismos*] I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal." In this passage *chrematismos* is used in almost identically the same sense as if it were an oracle speaking.

Heb. 8:4, 5: "Now if he were on earth he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law, who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God [*Kechrematisai*] when he is about to make the tabernacle; for, see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount."

Heb. 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned of God [*chrematistheis*] concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

Heb. 12:25: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turned away from him that warneth from heaven" (*chrematizonta*).

Acts 11:26: "And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called [*chrematisai*] Christians first in Antioch."

In all of these passages the indisputable meaning of the word *chrematizo* is "divinely called," or "called of God." In Acts 11:26, however, the meaning is not made as clear in our English versions as it might be. If the sentence had been translated just exactly as it reads, there would have been no doubt about the matter at all. The part of the verse, "*Chrematisai te protos en Antiocheia tous mathetas Christianous,*" would then have been, "and the disciples were divinely called

Christians first at Antioch.” Such a rendering as this would then have corresponded with the translations given the word *chrematizo* in the other passages in which it is used. If this correct rendering had been given, all the questions and disputes as to whether or not the name was given in derision would obviously have been impossible.

Meyer’s Commentary on Acts, which as an authority in this realm has but few peers, concerning Acts 11:26 makes this statement: “There is nothing to support the view that the term (Christian) was first used as a title of ridicule” (p. 223).

Dr. John Straub, dean of the College of Literature, Science and Arts, and for forty-five years head of the department of Greek at the University of Oregon, and easily one of the most eminent authorities on Greek in the United States, a Presbyterian in belief, in referring to this verse says: “There is no good reason why any one should think that the disciples were called Christians in derision. The very meaning of the noun *chrematismos*, from which the verb *chrematizo* is derived, precludes any such idea.”

There is, therefore, not one iota of doubt from the original meaning of the word, and from the position occupied by the scholarship of the world, that the disciples were “divinely called” Christians, or “called of God,” first at Antioch.

And why first at Antioch? Why should the Lord choose this place as the one where, for the first time, the gift of the new name should be bestowed upon His people? The religion of the Christ was to be a universal religion, world-wide, cosmopolitan, a gospel preached “to every creature.” All social and racial

barriers were to be leveled, and there was to be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but all were to be one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

The Jerusalem church was not a cosmopolitan church, because its membership was made up entirely of Jews. It was not, therefore, representative of the world-wide character of the new religion. Its members clung fiercely to many of the Jewish customs, not realizing that the gospel message was to be proclaimed to the whole world. The new name could not, therefore, be properly given to them until they became world-wide in their conception of the divine message. No church could be truly Christian until all party spirit had been destroyed and until the eyes of its membership had been anointed with the glorious missionary vision. The Antiochian church was the first one under the new dispensation to number among its constituency both Jews and Gentiles. It could properly have been said of them that they were neither Jew nor Greek, but that they were all one in Christ Jesus. Racial distinctions were forgotten; social walls, if not entirely destroyed, were far less frequently emphasized. This church was also the first one to realize the world-wide missionary obligation, and from its doors were sent forth Barnabas and Saul, the first missionary ambassadors of the King from the first missionary church to take to the world, regardless of race or previous religious affiliations, the joyous evangel of the cross. Antioch was the first place where the meaning of Christ's statement, "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," first became clearly

apparent to His disciples. How befitting, then, that at Antioch, a city itself the meeting-place for all nations, the birthplace of the first church truly representative of the new religion in that in its worship for the first time Jew and Gentile disciples mingled on the common plane of brotherhood in Christ, the place from which were sent forth the first missionaries to all men, that here the wonderful new name should first be divinely given.

But suppose, for argument's sake, it should be granted that the name "Christian" was given to Christ's disciples by pagan or heathen peoples as a term of reproach or ridicule, could a name more expressive of the spirit of the new religion or of the redeemed's relation to the Redeemer be given, even by the Father Himself? The whole system is Christ-filled. It is founded upon Christ; it is headed by Christ. Men are to believe in and be obedient to Christ in order to be saved from sin. Christ is Alpha and Omega, beginning and end; He is Lord of all! Redeemer, Savior, Sacrifice and Judge. The whole system is Christ. How glorious, then, that the saved, the redeemed, the obedient man should be named a Christ-i-an one! How wonderfully expressive is the term "Christ-i-an" or "Christ-one," of that marvelously beautiful relation existing between the saved and the Savior! Paul states this relationship when he says: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). "Buried with him through baptism," we become a part of the worldwide soul-saving system which is Christ. We become "one of Christ" or a "Christ-one."

Thus, even were it possible to establish the position that the disciples were called Christians first in derision, yet we would be forced to conclude that in their choice of a derisive term those pagan or heathen peoples by whom it was first used in Antioch were guided by the Father Himself.

2. The second use of the term "Christian" recorded in the New Testament is in Acts 26:28. King Agrippa had been listening with intense interest and eyes wide with wonder to that masterpiece of pleas made by Paul in defense of his Lord and in the attempt to persuade the king to follow also the teachings of the Nazarene. All of Paul's great exhortations were with the view to persuasion, and on this occasion, which he recognized as one of life's opportunities, every natural endowment, emphasized by his pure Spirit-filled soul, glowed in his every word and gesture as he threw his best self into the effort to bring the love of Christ into the heart of the dissolute Agrippa. And the king, in semi-ironical vein, almost laughingly replies: "Paul, with but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Then Paul, completely disclosing the purpose of his masterful plea, as he holds up his hands bound with the great prisoner's chain, speaks the generous answer of a noble soul: "I would to God that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, were such as I am except these bonds" (Acts 26:29).

3. The third and last time that the name "Christian" is used in the New Testament is found in Peter's first Epistle (4:16): "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify

God [*en to onomati touto*] in this name.” Peter was here writing by the inspiration of the Spirit. If he was inspired by the Spirit, then he must be giving the message of the Spirit. If this is the message of the Spirit, then the words, “Let him glorify God in this name,” must of a truth be the very words of the Spirit. If, then, even were it true that the disciples were called Christians in derision, the Holy Spirit sanctions the term, and not only sanctions it, but tells us to “glorify God in this name.”

But some one objects, saying: “I am a Christian and I do wear the name, but I am a Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian Christian. If I am a Christian, even though I am wearing another name, am I not glorifying God?” Acknowledging, my brother, that your intention is good, still to the thinking man, even though you be a Christian, the very fact that before the world you wear, for instance, the name “Methodist,” shows that you are glorifying a nickname rather than God through the name which is itself a glorification of His Son. Or if before men you wear the name “Baptist,” you are glorifying the ordinance of baptism rather than the One who commanded baptism. If you wear the name “Congregationalist,” you glorify or exalt a form of church polity rather than the One who was the author of that form. The one who wears the name “Presbyterian” is glorifying the form of church government by the presbytery or elders rather than the Father through the divinely appointed name. We are commanded to glorify, to exalt and to magnify the Father in the name “Christian.” We are to be known before the world as Christians, and in any and every way that we can advance the kingdom of God

we are to do so, wearing this wonderful name. Oh, glorious name! oh, wonderful name so proudly worn by Paul and Barnabas, Peter and John, given by the Father as a name of honor, sanctioned by the Holy Spirit as a name of glory and power!

But now, what shall we do with the name "disciple"? Are we not disciples of Christ, and, if so, why not wear that name? To-day we read in many of our papers about the "Disciples of Christ" and invariably the word "disciples" is capitalized. The name "Disciple," when so capitalized, is as denominational, and therefore as divisive in character, as any of those denominational or sectarian names which some of these very brethren who use the term so ardently oppose. Let us be consistent. Let us shun sectarianism as though it were a plague. Let us not condemn others for doing that of which we may be guilty ourselves. We are disciples, but we are more. We are obedient disciples. We are redeemed disciples. A disciple is a *mathetes*—a learner. A man may be a *mathetes* (or learner) of Christ, and never be a Christian at all. A Christian is not only a disciple, or learner, but he is an obedient disciple; he puts into practice what he learns. Nicodemus was a disciple, or learner, but, as far as we know, he never became a "Christ-one," an obedient follower of Christ. Joseph of Arimathæa was a disciple, but he did not possess the courage to become a Christian. The name "Christian" means so much more than disciple! It comprehends all of the meaning of disciple, and more. After the Antioch church is established and God's people receive for the first time the vision of a world-wide conquest for the King, the disciples are the recipients of a new name,

and the Holy Spirit, using Peter merely as the transmitting agency, exhorts us to "glorify God in that name."

Because the people of the great Restoration movement have contended so firmly and uncompromisingly for those names by which the members of the apostolic church were called, and because they have preached that the church, as a body, should wear the names that were worn by it in the beginning, they have frequently been accused of arrogating to themselves a monopoly on these very names. The question has many times been asked of them: "Are you the only Christians? Do you not consider it selfish to wear this name? Do you not, by wearing it, unchristianize others?" Like the Yankee, we would ask our interrogators the question, "Are you the only Baptists?" We believe in baptism, and practice it. Every man who baptizes is a baptist. Are you the only Congregationalists? We use the congregational form of church polity. Do you not consider it selfish to wear the name? Do you not uncongregationalize us if you are Congregationalists? Are you the only Methodists? We are methodical in our work for the Master. Are you not selfish in wearing the name? Are you the only Presbyterians? We believe in the spiritual supervision or oversight of the bishops or elders. Do you not selfishly unpresbyterianize us by wearing the name?

We have never claimed that we are the only Christians, but that we are Christians only, and that claim is the very opposite of selfishness; it is indeed the very essence of unselfishness. Every obedient believer in Christ is a "Christ-one," and is so recognized by us, and just as long as he glorifies God in that name

he is unselfish because it is the name which all true followers of Christ love. It is a stumbling-block to none; all are willing to wear it, all are agreed that it is right, and it never acts as a factor of division. A man becomes selfish only when he adds to that name another of human origin, for he thus erects a denominational or sectional wall between himself and his brother. He becomes narrow because he refuses fellowship to him who may already be a Christian, unless that one also upholds the barrier by himself wearing a denominational or unscriptural name. To wear the name "Christian" is the glorious privilege of all of God's children, and because I realize it and appropriate the blessing, am I any the less thoughtful of you? or, because I enjoy it, am I thereby wronging you? No! no! If you are slighting your God-given privilege, the blame must attach to yourself, for it is due to your own neglect and not to any desire to be selfish on our part. We could not deprive you of it, and, if we could do so, we would not. It is yours; take it, wear it and in it glorify your God.

"Well," inquires one, "what's in a name, anyway? I don't think the name makes any difference." It is, however, very noticeable that those who ask this question as a rule flatly refuse to wear any so-called religious name other than the one which they already wear. People sometimes fight over their religious names. A Methodist refuses to be called a Baptist, or a Congregationalist, a Mormon. A name means something; indeed, every name worn by the great denominations emphasizes some doctrine peculiar to that particular people by which it is worn. And this is so beautifully true of the name "Christian." It ex-

alts a person—Christ; it glorifies the individual because it makes known to the world that he is a “Christ-one.”

Then, again, we will agree that most men usually love their own family names pretty well. Although your name may be good, and even famous, and although the sound of it may be rhythmically beautiful, like the musical name “Jones” or “Smith,” yet frankly I prefer the old Irish “Kellems” to either of the two mentioned. I would not exchange my name with George Washington or “Teddy” Roosevelt, or even, though the temptation might be strong, with William Jennings Bryan himself. I am satisfied with my own because it means something to me.

Suppose that some day your wife would come to you and say: “Now, I like your name pretty well; I think it is nice and I enjoy the sound of it, and all that, but I like the name Smith better; so hereafter I shall be known as Mrs. Smith.” In such a case as that, think you, would there be anything in a name? Or, again, suppose that your rich uncle should die, leaving a will in which he bequeaths to one John A. Jones the sum of one million dollars. If your name was John A. Jones, and there wasn’t another in the world, would there be anything in the name?

In God’s word a name is considered to be of value. Jesus says: “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46, 47). Christ surely considers a name here to be of importance. We are baptized into a name, and it certainly makes a difference what name it is. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing

them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:19, 20). Peter tells us that we are baptized in a name, as he speaks to the multitudes on the day of Pentecost: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). If I, to-day, were to immerse a man in the name of Martin Luther, John Wesley or Alexander Campbell, would it be a valid Christian baptism? Certainly not. It is made a baptism only when the seal of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is affixed. We are baptized only when we are immersed in and into a name.

When Paul came to Ephesus in one of his later journeys, he found there certain disciples who had been baptized unto John’s baptism. After thoroughly questioning them about it, he said unto them: “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:4, 5). Their baptism under the new dispensation was invalid unless it wore the seal of the Lord Jesus.

Barnabas and Paul risked their lives again and again for a name. “It seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:25, 26). Paul tells

us that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess a name. "Therefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). Life and salvation are to be given in one name, and one only. "And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

If repentance, forgiveness, remission of sins, life and salvation are only important when preached in a name, then there must surely be something in that name.

During the last Presidential campaign there was an attitude taken by both of the great political parties in which I greatly rejoiced. It was an attitude which expressed itself in favor of clean-cut Americanism. If a man comes to this beautiful land of ours from England, he is no longer to be called an Anglo-American, but just an American. If he comes here from France to make this his home, he is not to be a Franco-American, but just an American. We want the people of our country to be Americans, and Americans only. It was an attitude against hyphenism. And why not apply this to our Christian experience? Why not cut out the hyphen and be no longer Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian Christians, but just plain Christians—Christians only? Brethren, cut out the hyphen.

The followers of Christ, even though they have worn human names, have nevertheless always con-

sidered that there was something in the divine name "Christian." It has ever been to them, and is to-day, a name by which to conjure. When they have wished to charm the world, they have invariably used "that worthy name."

When that young Congregational pastor, Francis E. Clark, at the close of a great revival in the church of which he was minister, saw that a society must be formed to hold the young people and give them a clearer conception of the opportunities of the Christ-life, he gave it the name "Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor." In honor of its founder it might have been called "Young People's Society of Congregational Endeavor," but when a name is wanted to lend enthusiasm to the movement, the name "Christian" must be employed. When an organization was formed to meet, in a practical way, the needs of young manhood along moral and spiritual lines—an organization in which, under the direction of spiritually minded men, young men might enjoy a man's sports in a man's way and at the same time receive wholesome, spiritual nurture—the name given to the organization was "The Young Men's Christian Association."

When among women an organized movement was launched against the legalized liquor traffic, that which gave it its first great impetus and caused it to sweep like an irresistible avalanche over the whole continent was the charming name which it bore, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union." Now, it might have been the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian or Congregational Union, but when a name was needed which would charm and win, that name was found in the sublime word "Christian."

When the denominational world wanted a name which would attract attention to the literature which they wished to send out, they found in "Christian" the name which would make it universally acceptable to all. The Methodist Church, with its great chain of *Advocates* stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, might have largely exalted the name "Methodist" by entitling their paper *Methodist Advocate*, but they wisely chose to honor and glorify the divine name; for upon every issue of their magnificent paper we read with delight the name *Christian Advocate*.

Presbyterianism might have emphasized the rule of the presbytery by applying the name "Presbyterian" to their official organ, but they decided far better when they gave to it a name which would not only bespeak for it a ready acceptance, but would more faithfully represent the spirit in which the paper was issued, *The Christian Observer*. When Methodism sent out to the world a magazine which should be as undenominational as possible, and which should act as a forum where all alike might express free opinion on religious questions, it wore the name *Christian Herald*.

Those great weeklies of the Restoration movement, so devoted as they are to glorifying God in the name "Christian," wear names which are highly significant of the plea of the people of whom they claim to be representative organs, *The Christian Standard*, *The Christian-Evangelist*, and *The Christian Century*. If those papers which bear upon their title-pages the name "Christian" were destroyed, 75 per cent. of the world's religious literature would perish. The great denominations have realized the peculiar power and charm of the divine name when used upon their re-

ligious literature, even though their individual members refuse to wear that name as the only one in which to glorify God. It is worse than foolish for any man to say that there is nothing in a name.

### III. FIVE REASONS WHY EVERY FOLLOWER OF CHRIST SHOULD WEAR THE NAME "CHRISTIAN," AND THAT ALONE.

1. The church is declared to be the bride of Christ, and the bride must always wear the husband's name. Paul most confidently affirms this when, in writing to the Corinthian brethren, he says: "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). If the church is the bride of Christ, then let her not wear the name of others, but let her be true to her husband and wear His name.

2. Simple and complete obedience to Christ makes a man a Christian, and a Christian only. When we are baptized into Christ, and by that action put on Christ, we become "Christ-ones," and any action beyond this by which another name is added is an action unauthorized by the King. The modern union revival often furnishes a striking example of this action by which a name other than "Christian" is added. After the revival is over and six or eight hundred conversions have been accomplished, if these converts have listened to the gospel and to the very best of their knowledge have become obedient to that gospel, what are they? Why, they are Christians, of course. True, they are Christians. Now, if they are permitted to remain as they are, what will they be? Without a doubt they would still be Christians. But if on the

last day of the revival the ministers representing the different denominations which have been so earnestly co-operating in the union effort to save men, arise, as they have so many times done, and call out to these newly made Christians, "All desiring to be Methodists come with me," or, "All wishing to be Baptists come with me," and so on until all have spoken, what process was it that made the converts Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists or Presbyterians? Was it their obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ? Assuredly not, for such obedience made them "Christ-ones." Well, then, what was the action? It was one over and beyond the law of the Teacher. In the union revival they united to make Christians; after it was over, they divided to make sectarians. When, by virtue of faith in Christ, and obedience to His law, men are made Christian, why not allow them to remain such?

3. A third obvious reason why every disciple should wear the divine name, and that alone, is that the truly great reformers and leaders of God's people have desired it and have earnestly entreated their followers to wear it. Luther, the majestic marshal of the forces of German reformation, exhorts his followers: "Do not call yourselves Lutherans, but call yourselves Christians. "

Wesley, brilliant, and still the humble, Spirit-guided Christian, cries out as he sees the impending evil of division: "I would to God all party names were forgotten."

Alexander Campbell, the gifted advocate of the unification of God's people, urges upon all true lovers of God, "Abandon all party names and take the name 'Christian.' "

Paul, veteran of a thousand battles for the name, deploras schism and contention: "Now this I mean, that some of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:12, 13). These and others of God's heroes, realizing that they were unworthy of the grand honor of having the church named after them, and knowing that such an action could only result in sectarianism and denominationalism among the people of God, have earnestly desired that their followers should wear the name divinely given first at Antioch.

Do we not, therefore, do them injury rather than honor when we, against their expressed wishes that we wear the divine name, call ourselves by their names?

4. The name "Christian" should also be worn by every disciple who loves Christ and desires the advancement of His Kingdom, because it is absolutely the only name upon which Christian unity can be consummated, when that time shall come that God's people, seeing the folly of a divided Christendom, will join their hands and hearts for the final conquest of the nations. Christian unity is coming. It must come. The forces of Christ are at last opening their eyes to the stern fact that unity will mean life and victory; disunion, ruin and death. When that unity comes, to it must be given a name, and surely that name will be the one upon which all of the denominations agree, and upon "Christian" they agree now. Concerning it, not one dissenting voice is heard. Every disciple redeemed will acknowledge himself to

be a Christian, although, before the world, he may wear a name human in origin and divisive in character. If, then, one desires to see the glorious unity of God's people brought to pass, let him divorce himself from everything which will in any way act as a barrier to the accomplishment of that desire. Human names are barriers to unity; the divine name is that under which it can and will be brought to pass.

5. The divine name is declared by Paul to be the great family name. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. 3:14, 15). Oh, how beautiful is the thought which he here expresses! "The whole, or every, family in heaven and on earth," is called by the wonderful family name. All those blood-washed throngs whose praises resound throughout their immortal homes—our fathers, our mothers, our brothers and sisters, our wives and our children, who have taken the journey before us—are members of that redeemed family of God, the wearers and sharers with us of "that worthy name." As members of that great family should we not be glad to wear that name? It should be to every son of God a delight unspeakable, a joy unending.

#### CONCLUSION.

How glorious is the name! "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." And have the heroes of God ever been ashamed of it, even though because of it the keenest, most excruciating sufferings that fiendish Roman cruelty could devise were heaped upon them? On the arena's red sands, with the howls of Rome's blood-lustful thousands thundering around

them, they fought, for that name, the half-starved beasts of Numidia's jungles, and as the last drop of Christian blood dyed the sands a deeper hue, took their journey home with a smile of Heaven's own giving upon their lips, and a joy eternal in their hearts. In vats of boiling oil they sang the glories and praise of the name, until by the hissing death their voices were forever stilled. With the flames of Cæsar's death-fires curling and licking around them, with the smoke of that fire filling their nostrils, even to the last choking breath, they glorified, they exalted, they magnified the name of their God. For a name, Peter and John were beaten; for a name, they heard the clang of prison bars and felt the pressure of the prisoner's chains. For a name, Paul could joyfully say, even though gloomy dungeon walls greeted every turn of his eye and with the prospect of an immediate, horrid death before him: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day, and not unto me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7, 8). Oh, what delight should be ours to be counted worthy to wear that name, the name made glorious by sweat and blood and millions of noble deaths! Withered be our tongues and cursed our lips if, knowing better, we shall attempt to glorify our God in any name other than the name "Christian."









