

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. LXV September / October, 1982 No. 5

Christians Chastened and Scourged

"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth evens son whom He receiveth." - Heb. 12:6.

CARELESS WRITERS may pile up words without any addition to the thought; but those who wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit were not so wasteful.. (Prov. 18:9.) There are, however, in the Scriptures many passages which upon a surface examination might lead us to suppose the writers had thus erred. The text under consideration is one of this kind. Many, interpreting it, make no difference between the two clauses, which teach two distinct and important truths. This difference is indicated both in the words "chasten" and "scourge," and in the words "loveth" and "receiveth." Chastening and scourging do *feel* much alike, but, according to the Greek words as well as the English, the cause and intent are quite different. Scourging indicates wrong-doing for which punishment is being meted out; chastening is educational, and implies need, not necessarily wrong-doing. The synonyms of the Standard College Dictionary make this distinction regarding the English. Having defined "scourge" as "to punish," it continues: "*Punish is* distinctly retributive in sense; *chasten, wholly* corrective and merciful in intent and result." "Chasten" is defined as "1. To discipline by pain or trial. 2. To moderate; soften. 3. To refine, purify. 4. (archaic) To chastise." "Discipline" is defined: "1. To train to obedience or subjection. 2. To drill, educate. 3. To punish or chastise." It is understood that words are used in their first meaning by discerning writers unless they place something in the context to indicate otherwise. On examination of the Greek words we find the definitions given above are good translations of the original.

George Ricker Berry defines (1) *paideuo* (translated in the King James Version, chasten) "To train a child; hence, (1) to instruct, (2) to correct, to chasten." Strong's definition is: "To train up a child, i.e., educate, or (by implication) discipline (by punishment)." Thayer gives the following: "(1) As in classic Greek properly to train children. Passive, to be instructed or taught, to learn: followed by an infinitive; to cause one to learn. (2) To chastise or castigate with words, to correct. To chastise with blows, to "scourge." As an illustration excusing this last definition, "to scourge," which would fit no where else in the New Testament nor in Classic literature, Thayer cites the passage which we are considering and Luke 23:16, 22, where Pilate said, "I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him,

and again, "I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go." In these verses Thayer evidently overlooked the fact that Pilate has just said, "I have found no fault in this man." The reason for Pilate's choosing the mild word which has no thought of punishment in it in classic Greek -- and in the New Testament so far as we have been able to discover -- is manifest. The classic definition as given by Liddell and Scott, is:

(1) To bring up, rear a child; (2) to train and teach, educate . . . (3) To chasten, discipline. **In** this entire passage (Heb. 12:5-7) Young in his "Concise Critical Comments on the Bible" uses the word "instruct" and its derivatives instead of "chastise," etc.

For the other word, *mastigoo*, we find the following definitions: Berry: "To scourge." Strong: "To flog." Thayer: "To scourge. Metaphorically, of God as a father chastising and training men as children by afflictions." Liddell and Scott: "To whip, to flog."

The difference in the intent of the rest *of* the two clauses in which we find these words, chasten and scourge, is just as apparent. "Whom the Lord loveth He rears as children," includes all His creatures from the Logos down through the ranks of the angelic host and the lowliest of the human family; but the other clause, "and scourgeth every son *whom He receiveth*," has one very important omission. The Logos was His only begotten Son, therefore not "received" as were we of a later begetting, selected for that purpose from an alien family. Nor did He ever deserve any scourging. When Jesus came to John the Baptist to receive immersion at his hands, His cousin, not knowing of any baptism other than for the remission of sins, and knowing that Jesus was righteous, would have turned Him away had not Jesus insisted. (Matt. 3:13-15.) His insistence was not because He had any sins of which to repent, but because He did always those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29); His meat, was to do the will of Him that sent Him. - John 4:34.

As to the other word, *paidewo*, though He had far less to-learn than we, yet, strange as it sounds to us, *Jesus "learned* obedience [Thayer gives as the "proper and primary significance *listening*"] *by* the things which He suffered." (Heb. 5:8.) Under the difficult conditions of this earthly existence, He learned to listen for the heavenly Father's voice when every circumstance was contrary to all the conditions of the many millenniums of His previous existence, and as He never could have learned in the sacred courts of heaven. When He was thus "completed" (literal Greek, ver. 9), "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Through our frequent waywardness we learn what it is to have earthly clouds come between us and the Father's face. He who knew no sin, obedient unto death, even the death of the lowest of sinners, through the fulfilment of Psalm 22:1, completed His lessons in "attentive hearkening" (Strong's). (Phil. 2:8.) The sad story of one man's disobedience by which we were all made sinners, is at last" on the cross counterbalanced by the complete obedience of One through whom the many shall be constituted righteous. - Rom. 5:19, Diaglott.

Jesus came down from heaven, "not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him" into conditions under which He could be tested (and trained) in all points. (John 6:38; 5:30.) In the verses following this statement is recorded His assurance that it is the Father's will that of all which He had given Him He should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. Evidently they, too, must have a faith that will manifest itself in obedience (verse 40): "For this is My Father's will, that every one who *fixes his gaze* on the Son of God and believes in Him (literal: into Him) shall have the life of the Ages, and I will raise him to life on the last day." (Weymouth.) Thus the requirement for the Church is the same as for her Lord -- they, too, must learn attentive hearkening by the things which they suffer; they must be "strangers and pilgrims," must conduct themselves honestly, honorably, as true citizens of the heavenly Kingdom, though their walk is among heathen (1 Pet. 2:12) whose heathenish schemes and practices are a continual test of their faithfulness to the laws of the heavenly government. Here criticizing, judging, hating, jealousies, backbitings, slander, and all the rest of the evil progeny of Satan are made easy, and only in the power of His might can their onslaughts be defeated, and devoted to the purpose for which our all wise Instructor has permitted

them -- for our training, the chastisement of Hebrews 12:6. The resultant character will, be chaste and beautiful, not because of the size or quality of the individual's brain; but because of the skill of our Teacher, and of our having faithfully kept ourselves in submission to His instructions, gratefully accepting His corrections.

Our Lord set us an example of cheerful, patient submission to God's will. We are to walk in His footsteps. And we have the example of the Apostles, when trials and difficulties and persecutions came upon them; and the example of other saints all down the Age.

"It should ever be borne in mind that perfection of being and perfection of character are two different things. Perfection of being is the work of God, while perfection of character is the work of the intelligent creature, wrought out in obedience to divine law and under the divine direction and supervision. Adam was a perfect being, innocent, free and glorious in his pristine beauty; but in the work of character building he soon failed, and hence lost his perfection. Character cannot be developed wholly without trial. It is like a plant: at first it is very tender; it needs an abundance of the sunshine of God's love; frequent watering with the showers of His grace; much cultivating through the applied, knowledge of His character as a good foundation for faith and inspiration to obedience; and then, when thus developed under these favorable conditions, it is ready for the pruning hand of discipline, and is also able to endure some hardness. And, little by little, as strength of character is developed, the tests applied to it serve only to develop more strength, beauty and grace until it is finally fixed, developed, established, perfected -- through suffering.

"In the case of our Lord, this valuable plant of character, perfect in its infancy, maintained its perfection through all the tests applied to it, until it was finally made perfect in completeness, being established, strengthened, settled.... 'And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation *unto all them that obey Him.*'" - R5879, R1806, R1807; April 1, 1916; May 1, 1895.

Inspired by the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies listed in the eleventh chapter of this Epistle, "We must put away our own grossness, as athletes rid themselves by severe training of all superfluous flesh. Then we must also put away from us the sin that surrounds us, that quite besets us, on all sides, whether in the world or in the Church, as runners must have the course cleared and the crowd of onlookers that press around removed far enough to give them the sense of breathing freely and running unimpeded in a large space." (Expositor's Bible.) Faith alone will deliver us from the overwhelming pressure of the world's sin. Ours is a "furlong race," with the Judge in sight at the end of the course. On Him the contestant must fix his gaze that his course may be a straight one, for He is our goal. We must not only win to gain the crown, but must be worthy to wear it. when He bestows it. There can be no winning if the race is run uncertainly (1 Cor. 9:26); no worthiness if anything less than His. perfection is our goal. "Wherefore lift up your listless hands, strengthen your feeble knees; make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather healed." - Heb. 12:13, Centenary Translation.

"O blows that smite, O wounds that pierce
This shrinking heart of mine!
What are ye but the Master's tools,
Performing work Divine!
How blest that all these seeming ills
That draw my heart to Thee
Are each a proof that Thou hast set
Thy seal of love on me!"

- P. E. Thomson.

The Plan of God -- in Brief

*"According to a Plan of the Ages, which He formed for the Anointed Jesus Our Lord."
- Eph. 3:11 (Diaglott).*

STUDY 8 -- Natures Separate and Distinct

Failing to see that the plan of God for mankind in general contemplates a restoration to their former estate -- the human perfection lost in Eden -- and that the Christian Church, as an exception to this general plan, is to have a change of nature from human to spiritual, Christian people generally have supposed that none will be saved except those who reach the spiritual nature. The Scriptures, however, while holding out promises of life and blessing and restoration to all the families of the earth, offer and promise the change to spiritual nature only to the Church selected during the Gospel age; and not a single passage can be found which sustains such hopes for any others.

If the masses of mankind are saved from all the degradation, weakness, pain, misery and death which result from sin, and are restored to the condition of human perfection enjoyed before the fall, they are as really and completely saved from that fall as those who, under the special "high-calling" of the Gospel age, become "partakers of the divine nature."

The failure to understand rightly what constitutes a perfect man, the misapprehension of the terms mortal and immortal, and wrong ideas of justice, have together tended to this error, and mystified many Scriptures otherwise easily understood. It is a common view, though unsupported by a single text of Scripture, that a perfect man has never been on earth; that all that is seen of man on earth is only the partially developed man, and that to reach perfection he must become spiritual. This view makes confusion of the Scriptures instead of developing that harmony and beauty which result from "rightly dividing the word of truth."

The Scriptures teach that there have been two, and only two, perfect men -- Adam and Jesus. Adam was created in the image of God: that is, with the similar mental powers of reason, memory, judgment and will, and the moral qualities of justice, benevolence, love, etc. "Of the earth, earthy," he was an earthly image of a spiritual being, possessing qualities of the same kind, though differing widely in degree, range and scope. To such an extent is man an image of God that God can say even to the fallen man, "Come, let us reason together."

As Jehovah is ruler over all things, so man was made a ruler over all earthly things -- After our likeness, let him have dominion over the beasts, fowl, fish, etc. (Genesis 1:26). Moses tells us (Genesis 1:31) that God recognized the man whom He had made -- not merely commenced to make, but completed -- and God considered His creature "very good," that is, perfect; for in God's sight nothing short of perfection is very good, in His intelligent creatures.

There is a wonderful contrast between man as we now see him, degraded by sin, and the perfect man that God made in His image. Sin has gradually changed his features, as well as his character. Multiplied generations, by ignorance, licentiousness and general depravity, have so blurred and marred humanity that in the large majority of the race the likeness of God is almost obliterated. The moral and intellectual qualities are dwarfed; and the animal instincts, unduly developed, are no longer balanced by the higher.

But though defiled and degraded by sin and its penalty, death, working in him, man is to be restored to his original perfection of mind and body, and to glory, honor and dominion, during and by the Millennial reign of Christ. The things to be restored by and through Christ are those things which were lost through Adam's transgression. (Romans 5:18, 19). Man did not lose a heavenly but an earthly paradise. Under the death penalty, he did not lose a spiritual but a human existence; and all that was lost was purchased back by his Redeemer, who declared that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. -- Luke 19:10.

In addition to the above, we have proof that the perfect man is not a spiritual being. We are told that our Lord, before He left His glory to become a man, was "in a form of God" -- a spiritual form, a spirit being; but since to be a ransom for mankind He had to be a man, of the same nature as the sinner whose substitute in death he was to become, it was necessary that His nature be changed. And Paul tells us that He took not the nature of angels, one step lower than His own, but that He came down two steps and took the nature of men -- He became a man; He was "made flesh." -- Hebrews 2:16; Philippians 2:7, 8; John 1:14.

Notice that this teaches not only that angelic nature is not the only order of spirit being, but that it is a lower nature than that of our Lord before He became a man; and He was not then so high as He is now, for "God hath highly exalted Him," because of His obedience in becoming man's willing ransom. (Philippians 2:8, 9). He is now of the highest order of spirit being, a partaker of the divine (Jehovah's) nature.

But not only do we find proof that the divine, angelic and human natures are separate and distinct, but this proves that to be a perfect man is not to be an angel, any more than the perfection of angelic nature implies that angels are divine and equal with Jehovah; for Jesus took not the nature of angels, but a different nature -- the nature of men; not the imperfect human nature as we now possess it, but the perfect human nature. He became a man; not a depraved and nearly dead being such as men are now, but a man in the full vigor of perfection.

Again, Jesus must have been a perfect man else He could not have kept a perfect law, which is the full measure of a perfect man's ability. And He must have been a perfect man else He could not have given a ransom (a corresponding price -- 1 Timothy 2:6) for the forfeited life of the perfect man Adam; "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (1 Corinthians 15:21). Had He been in the least degree imperfect, it would have proved that He was under condemnation, and therefore He could not have been an acceptable sacrifice; neither could He have kept perfectly the law of God. A perfect man was tried, and failed, and was condemned; and only a perfect man could pay the corresponding price as the Redeemer.

Now we have the question fairly before us in another form, viz.: If Jesus in the flesh was a perfect man, as the Scriptures show, does it not prove that a perfect man is a human, fleshly being -- not an angel, but a little lower than the angels? The logical conclusion is unmistakable; and in addition we have the inspired statement of the Psalmist (Psalm 8:5-8) and Paul's reference to it in Hebrews 2:7, 9.

Neither was Jesus a combination of the two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of two natures produces neither the one nor the other, but an imperfect, hybrid thing, which is obnoxious to the divine arrangement. When Jesus was in the flesh he was a perfect human being; previous to that time He was a perfect spiritual being; and since His resurrection he is a perfect spiritual being of the highest or divine order. It was not until the time of His consecration even unto death, as typified in His baptism -- at thirty years of age (manhood, according to the Law, and therefore the right time to consecrate Himself as a man) --

that He received the earnest of His inheritance of the divine nature. (Matthew 3:16, 17). The human nature had to be consecrated to death before He could receive even the pledge of the divine nature. And not until that consecration was actually carried out and He had actually sacrificed the human nature, even unto death, did our Lord Jesus become a full partaker of the divine nature. After becoming a man He became obedient unto death, wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him to the divine nature. (Philippians 2:8, 9). If this Scripture is true, it follows that He was not exalted to the divine nature until the human nature was actually sacrificed -- dead.

So we see that in Jesus there was no mixture of natures, but that twice He experienced a change of nature; first, from spiritual to human; afterward, from human to the highest order of spiritual nature, the divine; and in each case the one was given up for the other.

In this grand example of perfect humanity, which stood unblemished before the world until sacrificed for the world's redemption, we see the perfection from which our race fell in Adam, and to which it is to be restored. In becoming man's ransom, our Lord Jesus gave the equivalent for that which man lost; and therefore all mankind may receive again, through faith in Christ, and obedience to His requirements, not a spiritual, but a glorious, perfect human nature -- "that which was lost."

While Jesus as a man was an illustration of perfect human nature, to which the mass of mankind will be restored, yet since His resurrection He is the illustration of the glorious divine nature which the overcoming Church will, at resurrection, share with Him.

Because the present age is devoted mainly to the development of this class which is offered a change of nature, and because the apostolic epistles are devoted to the instruction of this "little flock," it should not be inferred that God's plans end with the completion of this chosen company. Nor, on the other hand, should we go to the opposite extreme, and suppose that the special promises of the divine nature, spiritual bodies, etc., made to these, are God's design for all mankind. To these are the "exceeding great and precious promises," over and above the other precious promises made to all mankind. To rightly divide the word of truth, we should observe that the Scriptures recognize the perfection of the divine nature in the "little flock," and the perfection of the human nature in the restored world, as two separate things.

We have no record of any being, either spiritual or human, ever having been changed from one nature to another, except the Son of God; and this was an exceptional case, for an exceptional purpose. When God made angels He doubtless intended them to remain angels forever, and so with men, each being perfect on his own plane. At least the Scriptures give no intimation of any different purpose. As in the inanimate creation there is a pleasing and almost endless variety, so in the living and intelligent creation the same variety in perfection is possible. Every creature in its perfection is glorious; but, as Paul says, the glory of the celestial (heavenly) is one kind of glory, and the glory of the terrestrial (earthly) is another and a different glory.

Mortality and Immortality

We shall find their true significance in exact harmony with what we have learned from our comparison of Bible statements concerning human and spiritual beings, and earthly and heavenly promises. These words are usually given very uncertain meanings, and wrong ideas of their meanings produce erroneous views of subjects with which they stand connected, in general and in Scripture usage.

"Mortality" signifies a state or condition of liability to death; not a condition of death, but a condition in which death is a possibility.

"Immortality" signifies a state or condition not liable to death; not merely a condition of freedom from death, but a condition in which death is an impossibility.

The common but erroneous idea of mortality is, a state or condition in which death is unavoidable, while the common idea of the significance of immortality is more nearly correct.

The word immortal signifies not mortal; hence the very construction of the words indicates their true definitions. It is because of the prevalence of a wrong idea of the word mortal that so many are confused when trying to determine whether Adam was mortal or immortal before his transgression. They reason that if he had been immortal God would not have said, "In the day that you eat thereof you will surely die;" because it is impossible for an immortal being to die. This is a logical conclusion. On the other hand, say they, Had he been mortal, wherein could have consisted the threat or penalty of the statement, "You shall surely die"; since if mortal (according to their erroneous definition) he could not have avoided death anyhow?

The difficulty, it will be perceived, is in the false meaning given to the word mortality. Apply the correct definition, and all is clear. Adam was mortal -- that is, in a condition in which death was a possibility. He had life in full and perfect measure, yet not inherent life. His was a life sustained by "every tree of the garden" save the one tree forbidden; and so long as he continued in obedience to and in harmony with his Maker, his life was secure -- the sustaining elements would not be denied. So seen, Adam had life; and death was entirely avoidable, yet he was in such a condition that death was possible -- he was mortal.

The question arises, then, If Adam was mortal and on trial, was he on trial for immortality? The general answer would be, Yes. We answer, No. His trial was to see whether he was worthy or unworthy of a continuance of the life and blessings already possessed. Since it was nowhere promised that if obedient he would become immortal, we are bound to leave all such speculations out of the question. He was promised a continuance of the blessings then enjoyed so long as obedient, and threatened with the loss of all -- death -- if disobedient. It is the false idea of the meaning of the word mortal that leads people in general to conclude that all beings who do not die are immortal. In this class they therefore include our Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus, the angels and all mankind. This, however, is an error: the great mass of mankind saved from the fall, as well as the angels of heaven, will always be mortal; though in a condition of perfection and bliss, they will always be of that mortal nature which could suffer death, the wages of sin, if they would commit sin. The security of their existence will be conditioned, as it was with Adam, upon obedience to the all-wise God, whose justice, love and wisdom, and whose power to cause all things to work together for good to those who love and serve Him, will have been fully demonstrated by His dealings with sin in the present time.

Nowhere in the Scriptures is it stated that angels are immortal, nor that mankind restored will be immortal. On the contrary, immortality is ascribed only to the divine nature -- originally to Jehovah only; subsequently to our Lord Jesus in His present highly exalted condition; and finally by promise to the Church, the body of Christ, when glorified with Him. -- 1 Timothy 6:16; John 5:26; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54.

The proper recognition of the meaning of the terms mortal and immortal, and of their use in the Scriptures, destroys the very foundation of the doctrine of eternal torment. It is based upon the unscriptural theory that God created man immortal, that he cannot cease to exist, and that God

cannot destroy him; hence the argument is that the incorrigible must live on somewhere and somehow, and the conclusion is that since they are out of harmony with God their eternity must be one of misery. But God's Word assures us that He has provided against such a perpetuation of sin and sinners: that man is mortal, and that the full penalty of willful sin against full light and knowledge will not be a life in torment, but a second death. "The soul that sins, it shall die."

The human race are God's children by creation -- the work of His hands -- and His plan with reference to them is clearly revealed in His Word. Paul says that the first man (who was a sample of what the race will be when perfect) was of the earth, earthy; and his posterity, with the exception of the Gospel Church, will in the resurrection still be earthy, human, adapted to the earth. (1 Corinthians 15:38, 44). David declares that man was made only a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory, honor, dominion, etc. (Psalm 8:4-8).

And Peter, our Lord, and all the prophets since the world began, declare that the human race is to be restored to that glorious perfection, and is again to have dominion over earth, as its representative, Adam, had. -- Acts 3:19-21.

It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay -- not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when they realize the resurrection work complete. -- Revelation 21:4.

And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was "made to be inhabited" by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them, as represented in the Edenic paradise, in which the representative man was at first placed. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briars, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but "the earth shall [easily and naturally] yield her increase." "The desert shall blossom as the rose"; the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing and obedient servants; nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in Him.

- C. T. Russell

(to be continued)

New Horizons

"With unflagging energy, in ardor of spirit, serve the Lord." - Romans 12:11, N.E.B.

ONE of the interesting paradoxes in the New Testament is found in Jesus' words to Mary, as found in John 20:17, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

What makes these words paradoxical is that on that same day, the morning of His resurrection from the dead, we find others who "came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him" (Matt. 28:9) with no remonstrance for touching him.

In both instances we find the request to "go tell my brethren" the news. It is this which makes it evident that the words to Mary were not meant to keep her from actually touching Him, but to show the priority of her task, "go to my brethren," over the worshipful adoration which she naturally enough wanted to pay him.

Some translations more correctly put it, "Don't hold on to me!" After the traumatic experiences of the preceding three days it was natural enough that they seek to cling to Him. They had not really been prepared for the death of Jesus. True, they had been told of His death and their own scattering, but it had not fully penetrated their minds that it would really happen.

One of His followers phrased it well on the way to Emmaus when he said, "We thought it was He, *but* .. " (Luke 24:21). The "buts" and doubts were very real, and very depressing, so that it is little wonder that, seeing He was indeed alive, they would clutch him with possessive hands. And thus He admonished them, "Touch me not."

During the next forty days they would go through a series of troubling experiences with the resurrected Christ appearing in new forms and manners which they had never anticipated.

The purpose of these post resurrection appearances is given in Acts 1:3, "To whom also He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

For three and a half years He had spoken of "things pertaining to the kingdom of God." What was there that He must impart in these forty days that had not been adequately told in the preceding three and a half years?

The fact that all was not revealed during His earthly ministry is indicated by his words in John 16:12, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." It was these things that He was now going to reveal during this sequence of perhaps as many as 11 post resurrection appearances. These were new horizons. The disciples were to be introduced to a new Christ. He was the same Jesus, but he was appearing in new relationships, opening up new depths to their perception of his person and his ministry. Let us note four basic contrasts which these appearances highlighted for them.

PHYSICAL VS. SPIRITUAL

In 2 Cor. 5:16, Paul says, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him so no more." They had been used to a physical Christ. They walked with Him. They talked with Him. They knew His personality and his habits. Notice how His simple manner of breaking bread revealed his identity to the two at Emmaus. (Luke 24:30, 31).

Now they were going to have to learn to deal with Him as a spiritual entity -- always present, yet so difficult to perceive. Before, when they had a question, they simply asked Him for the answer. Now they would have to learn to deal with it in prayer, and think it through themselves. Before, if they had problems, He was there to talk it over; now they would have to think it over and arrive at their own conclusion of what would Jesus do.

In Jesus' last talk with them as recorded in John 14 to 16, he seeks to prepare them for this by assuring them that he would send the Comforter. Yet it is easy to imagine them saying, "Don't send us another comforter, we like the one we have. You stay with us." But, as Jesus said, it was "expedient for them" that it be otherwise. (John 16:7).

Why was His departure and the sending of the Comforter expedient for them? Because up to now they had learned to perceive Him with five senses; now they would develop a sixth sense, a spiritual sense, the sense of faith.

PAST VS. FUTURE

Throughout the three and a half years of His earthly ministry his teaching was largely oriented to the past, to their relationship with the Jewish law. In the sermon on the mount He set the keynote, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Their past orientation was further illustrated when, after His death and resurrection, we see them returning to their former occupations and Jesus needed to call them a second time from the fishing trade. (John 21:15-17).

Their identification with their Master had been in his mighty works, his healings, his feedings of the multitudes and his other miracles. But, in preparing them for this new horizon, He predicted in John 14:12 that they would not only duplicate his works, but "greater works than these shall ye do; because I go to my Father."

In a sense these "greater works" look forward to their joint-participation with Jesus in the kingdom work of restitution when the miracles and healings will then be greater in scope, then to all people, and in time, then for eternity. But, in a very real sense, He was talking of the greater works that they would do ("because I go to my Father") in the interim between his first and second advents.

These "greater works" are the spiritual, as compared with the natural. He opened natural eyes; they would, through the Gospel, open the eyes of the spiritually blind. He caused the deaf to hear. They would bring hearing to the sin-deaf. He caused the lame to walk. They would have a message that would heal the morally lame. And then there was the work of organizing the Christian church, a work that He assisted with the gifts of pastors and teachers. (Eph. 4:8-11).

ADORATION VS. ACTION

For years his disciples had adored the lowly Galilean. They had shown their appreciation of Him by following him wherever he went. They had given up secular occupations to be His closest friends. But now, no longer could they show that dotting affection on the leader with whom they identified.

Hitherto Christ had been "with" them, now he was going to be "in" them and work "through" them. Their worship would be by their actions. No longer would He direct their course by telling them what to do, but they would have to find that direction by considering his life and words and reason out for themselves the proper course of action to follow.

They would now learn that life, just like nature, has its rhythms. As a season of rest and refreshment is followed by a season of growing, so their lives would find that each step of knowledge must be followed by a step of grace or application. Their devotion would now be shown by their dedication.

LOCAL VS. UNIVERSAL

The Jesus they knew so well had a narrow sphere of operation. He himself had told them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:5, 6). But now, on His last post resurrection appearance, he was to say, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

This would be difficult. It would cause many problems in the early Christian church. Paul's mission to the Gentiles and the Council of Jerusalem well emphasize their difficulties in facing this new horizon, this enlarged scope of activity. (Romans 11:13; Acts 15.)

LESSONS FOR US

How about us? How do we identify with Jesus? Do we see the Jesus of the three and a half years or the resurrected Christ?

Do we know a physical or a spiritual Christ? Do we know Jesus or just know about Jesus? We must get to know Him on a personal basis or who he is and not merely what he was.

Is our orientation to the past or the future? Like the disciples, we, too, have a glorious heritage of truth at this point in time. But this heritage is not just to be gloried in, but to be built upon. We are not to live in memory of the past one hundred years or so, but look eagerly forward to the bright new challenges of the future.

As we consider the contrast of adoration vs. action, we think of the contrast between doctrine and application. Doctrine is an essential framework to our Christian life, but it is not the end -- it is the means to the end. Do we apply what we are learning in our study of the Lord's word?

Finally, are we locally oriented or universally oriented? Is our attention focused more on self than our relationship to our congregation? Or, perhaps we have become so wrapped up in our local congregation we have lost interest in the Lord's work in other associated congregations. Even this can be local, or we must recognize the Lord's work wherever it may be; with, fellow Bible

students or the unknown "seven thousand others who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (Rom. 11:4.)

And so, as we look at the life of Christ, let us appreciate his purity, his ideals and his example. As we consider His death, let us be ever more thankful for that ransom sacrifice. As we note His resurrection, let us rejoice in the justification and the advocacy which it affords. But as we look at His post resurrection appearance, let us become a part of the new horizons he opens up with our personal involvement in the work which he has given us to do.

- *C. Hagensick*

NOT NOW, MY CHILD

"Father, I long to spread Thy blessed Truth o'er land and sea!"
I listen, and there comes to me
His answer, tender, loving mild,
"Not now, My child."

"Father, my heart is sad, I fain would leave this wilderness,
Go forth, earth's groaning ones to bless!"
I hear again His answer mild,
"Not now, My child."

"Father, I yearn to break these fleshly fetters and be free,
As pants the hart, I pant for Thee!"
His voice, how sweet, how tender, mild,
"Not now, My child."

"Father, Thy will be done, I humbly leave it *all* with Thee,
Thou knowest what is best for me! I hear His voice, so low, so mild,
"Come now, My child."

Communicating With The Lord

(Excerpts from a Discourse by the Late Brother J. Richardson.)

OUR text is taken from Matthew 6:6, which reads: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Prayer belongs to the personal and spiritual side of our life. It is of its own nature so free from restriction that among the minute regulations of the Mosaic law, there occur no instructions either for public or private petitioners. Yet the Old Testament furnishes evidence that religious life found abundant expression in unrestrained petitions.

In the earlier periods no time was set for private prayer nor at a particular place except the national sanctuary. One of the Psalms (*Psalms 55:17*) speaks of praying in the evening, in the morning, and at noon. Yet there are no restrictions. By the time of the long captivity the habit of private prayer was three times a day at stated hours. Synagogue worship which started soon after the return from Babylon provided a convenient place for retirement. It served to confirm the custom of prayers in public which in the Rabbinical schools was at length worked into a system. This resulted in hypocrisy which was subsequently condemned by the Lord.

The words of Christ already quoted refer to personal and private prayer. To the pious Jew, custom necessitated repetition of certain forms of prayer at least three times a day. Modesty and true devotion would have suggested these prayers in the privacy of the home. However, the Pharisees deliberately left their homes for the sake of being seen publicly in the synagogue. Publicity usually encourages hypocrisy and consequently such outward devotion became overdone, resulting only in admiration by the beholders. The words were meaningless, because designed to impress the ignorant, and not designed to communicate with God.

According to the Lord's direction, we should endeavor to make our prayers, both public and private, brief and to the point, yet simple and showing the love of our Lord in our hearts. Prayer should be regarded as a spontaneous child-like utterance of dependence upon God.

True prayer is a petition of the soul to God and is of its own nature a very private thing. Its value lies in being heard by God. We are not here to impress one another. We are present and pray so as to have God hear us. If we have nothing to say, then we should not try to say it in so many words. So long as we pray only when we desire to communicate with the Father we cannot help but tell him what it is that we need. Prayer continues to be an affair between a petitioner and the Giver of every good and precious gift. It is an act of communicating from our heart to God.

When we pray, our Father, who sees in secret, desires to be the one privileged instrument of each heart among his children. He wants to be close to us as individuals and this is the way he can be if we let him. The Lord's preference for us as individuals, is trustfulness which dares to tell him everything. It is this irrepressible child-likeness which makes one cry out to an unseen and loving Father. The reason and philosophy of the world tries to hinder us; tries in different ways to show us that this is something that is not quite necessary and not for the strong man. But on the contrary, it is for the strong man, because the strongest among us needs to talk with God! We need to be heard, we need to explain our position to him. He wants to hear it! And when he does, in this our Heavenly Father delights, because the Lord has said, "your Father which seeth in secret shall reward you openly."

LESSONS FROM OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATIONS

There are several Old Testament illustrations of personal prayer that may prove helpful to benefit us in our Christian progress. In 'the 32nd Chapter of Genesis we have the incident of Jacob wrestling with the angel for God's blessing, and persisting until the break of day when he finally obtained it.

The story of Jacob at this point in his career concerns his return home after 40 years of absence, an experience that taught him to have confidence in God and a lack of confidence in man. He was rich in flocks and herds. With his wives and sons he began a long journey trusting in the promises of God, although somewhat uneasy over the reception he might receive from his brother Esau.

A journey of some 450 miles today means little. We can fly that distance in less than an hour. But Jacob was taking everything he owned and walking this distance with his herds and flocks, which was quite a long journey! The weather was extremely hot and at times the country was very rough. All during this journey he was concerned as to the reception his brother would give him.

In Genesis 32:9-12 we find the first recorded prayer in the Bible. It is beautiful in its simplicity and humility, and in its trust in God. Genesis 32:9-12 reads: "Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country , and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou halt showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

Having acknowledged the great blessings already received from God, Jacob in child-like simplicity comes to God. Is this not the true attitude of the soul in all the experiences of life? While we cannot minimize the trials confronting us, nor look for a miraculous deliverance, we should approach them in confidence that as a child of God we can claim his protection. We can claim His watchful care over us and we can look to his overruling of these things in our behalf if he so desires. In answer to Jacob, God sent his angel to comfort and direct him.

Jacob, however, sought more than comfort. He sought direction in his temporal affairs. All night he pleaded with the angel. He wanted special evidence of divine favor. While the angel had a blessing to give him, he delayed bestowing it until the morning dawn, that Jacob might have the opportunity of displaying the strength of his desires and appreciation of divine favor. Is this not the method of the Father's dealing with all of his children even now? We should not just drift along in divine favor. Rather there must be an earnest desire from our hearts that we must have it, and then we must watch carefully so that we shall recognize it when the blessing comes upon us. We must look for it, yes, we must be ready to receive it. In Jacob's case there was the added physical affliction but this did not weaken his determination to obtain the blessing.

This reminds us of St. Paul's affliction-the thorn in the flesh sent to buffet him, yet out of which he gave some of the deepest expressions of divine truth. Paul is mentioned more often than others who have left a record of experiences to help us to walk with God alone. By seeking His presence we are privileged to see some of the hidden things of his truth and kingdom.

Jacob received the blessing together with the change of name from Jacob to Israel, which means "prince of God," and he was satisfied. Yet one thing more he wanted to know, the name of his benefactor the angel, that he might remember him in lasting and grateful remembrance. However, the angel would not give him his name because he wanted Jacob to remember only the blessing as received from God. This was the important thing; the angel was doing God's will and his own name was not important. This truth is the same whenever you and I are in a position to help one of our brethren or anybody for that matter. Our name is not necessary -- we do not need to carry our name as a nametag or sticker on the blessing. The blessing of God must be remembered and not the individual who did the bestowing.

In this illustration we are taught the value of simplicity, the appreciation of divine promises, together with the virtue of persevering in prayer and in watchfulness for the answer. We must never give up, brethren! We may wish for the answer to be "right now." But we must wait for God's due time for his blessing. He knows when we deserve the blessing, when we need it, and whether or not we shall benefit by it.

We need to wait for the Kingdom and to wait patiently. We can pray: "Thy Kingdom come," for it will! Are we going to be ready to accept it when God grants it to us? We must be ready in the manner in which He gives it to us. We should try to see beyond the simple experiences which the Lord intends to teach us. We should see that we are not engulfed by the difficulties that are around us, that we are not misled by these things, and that we must not become discouraged. God intends to teach us a lesson and we must be ready to accept this lesson, and must not get tired of waiting or become impatient.

Another illustration for study is found in 2 Kings 19:14-19. The Assyrian king, Sennacherib, had invaded the Ten Tribe Kingdom and had carried its people into captivity. Also, he had placed people of other nationalities in their land and now determined an invasion of the Kingdom of Judah. Already, one after another, the Assyrians had conquered various nations and Judah lay between them and Egypt where the king wanted to go. He decided upon mastery over Judah rather than upon destruction. While laying siege to some of the intermediary countries the king sent letters and subsequently a general with an armed host to Jerusalem, demanding full surrender of their kingdom that the people might be deported to other lands as he had done with the people of the other ten tribes.

In the letters they recognized that Jehovah was the God of Judah, but declared that the Assyrians were sent by Jehovah, for the very purpose of overthrowing the kingdom, and taking the people captive. They claimed Judah's trust in Jehovah was in vain because nations they had already conquered had also trusted in the various gods; that all had failed, and that Judah's God was powerless to do anything to save his people.

King Hezekiah's first move was to placate his adversary, to become his vassal, by appeasing him and paying annual tribute. As the first step in this direction Hezekiah sent a great deal of gold, silver, ivory couches, etc. to the Assyrian king. He even stripped some things out of the temple and sent them along also. Taking the things from the temple and sending them to the king was an error in judgment. It would appear that as a consequence of this act the Lord God permitted the Assyrians to destroy several of the outlying cities and to besiege Jerusalem, the capital city.

You cannot buy off one who is trying to do you harm, as Satan desires to do us harm. We cannot buy him off by giving in to him. Hezekiah's first move was to give in. He gave up things and tried to buy off his enemy. The result was that Hezekiah found himself in deeper trouble.

But in his extremity, Hezekiah's faith in the Lord increased in proportion to the power manifested by the Assyrians. When he saw how strong they were, his faith grew and he had a fuller understanding of God. It was then that he did what he should have done at first. He and Isaiah the prophet, joined together in prayer in the temple. Laying before the Lord the letters which he had received from the haughty king, Hezekiah asked the Lord for his mercy upon himself and his people who were covenanted to God, because they were trying to serve and please him. Hezekiah prayed that the Lord grant them deliverance from their enemies for there seemed to be no hope from any quarter. Obviously Hezekiah had gone a long way down the wrong path before he had turned to God. But there was a lesson that he had to learn and did. How beautiful is this action in laying before the Lord the letters he had received, asking the Lord to open His eyes as if the Lord's eyes were closed, and to open His ears to hear these things. Of course the Lord was well aware of these things but nevertheless this now was the simple child-like attitude that Hezekiah was properly using. He wanted the Lord to look and see and to help of his own accord.

Brethren, in our own experiences, trying as they are, have we ever presented our difficulties in this way? Have we ever gone to the throne of grace and laid out everything before our Lord, not holding back any little point here and there, but really laying it before the Lord and asking for his help? Have we assured Him of our earnest desire to continue serving him and pleasing him? In the consecrated petition of prayer have we sought His grace in our need? Have we gone to Him in this manner, saying: "Heavenly Father, I need your help because of this and that" -- have we done this? We should!

Another lesson for us is, if at any time on our part we become aware that we have lost sight of the Lord's power in our behalf, then with proper faith must we look up to God to see him as he is, and to ask for his help in all things. Relying upon His promises, we should seek his aid rather than strive to purchase deliverance from the great adversary by any compromise. There are many disposed to do as Hezekiah did, to purchase peace with things consecrated to the Lord, to compromise the Truth if threatened by disfavor from our friends or neighbors, employers or relatives. How many of us are willing to give in and to conciliate such adversaries by a more worldly course, by subtracting from our consecration vow to the Lord a considerable portion of our time and means, to be given in worldly services. We must be very careful that we do not get caught in the trap of selling the Truth for nothing, because, as surely as the Lord's consecrated people do this, we may expect that the Lord will permit to come upon us the very difficulties which we dread and seek to avert by unholy compromise. If we are trying to avoid something and are going to sell the Truth and give up consecrated time, we shall get more than we had bargained for. The very things that we are trying to avoid will be heaped upon us in one manner or another. The Lord will chasten individuals so as to keep them from making such compromises which tend to lead them further and further away from the trust and faith that they have in him. This we must guard against!

OTHER ASPECTS TO PRAYER LIFE

There is another aspect to the prayer life. This is the recognition that all we can render unto the Lord is that which he has already bestowed upon us. We have nothing of our own. When we symbolized our consecration we went down into the grave, symbolically speaking. When we came up from the grave, everything we had from that point on had been given to us by the Lord to be used in his service. What are we going to do with it? This is pictured in the grand prayer of David, recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:13-17. David at this time had accomplished nearly all of his early mission, had extended his dominion, thoroughly organized it, and had greatly energized and revived the religious zeal of the people. He found powerful enemies on every side, had finally subdued them, led the nation to a condition of peace and prosperity. Also, he laid the foundation

of a more permanent establishment of the service of God in his preparation for the building of the temple which God had promised that Solomon would build. David was able to gain through his experiences with the Lord.

However, the true spirit of prayer is primarily that of adoration and praise to God. It is praise which spontaneously ascends to Him out of our appreciation of his goodness and greatness. If we approach God in prayer simply to obtain favors for ourselves, not many of the favors will be granted.

When God said to Israel "thou shalt have no other gods before me," it was not because he selfishly wanted the praise that they might give to other gods. He knew the great loss that would be suffered by the Israelites if they put their trust in any heathen gods. God's jealousy was for his people; not for himself but for the ones that he loved and had said would be his people. He wanted them to have nothing but the very best and this is borne out by his assurance that his people cannot safely worship any other god than himself and his Son.

Look at John 5:23, "All should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Again, Hebrews 1:6, Jehovah ordered the angels also to worship his Son and the heavenly Father knows that his Son is to be trusted. So we have two that we can worship!

Jesus learned absolute obedience through the things that he suffered. This obedience is not the obedience we impress upon our children, that they must be obedient because we were obedient. If we had been obedient we would by now have obtained the crown. We do not yet have that crown -- it is there -- it has been laid aside for us, if we can earn it. But we must learn true obedience, and our Savior demonstrated under the most severe conditions that he was completely one with the Father. If we have the proper viewpoint we would never ask God for blessings that he has not indicated a willingness to give. When we put God first in our prayers we will realize that he is so great and so wise that he knows what we need before we ask him. However, He desires to see in us the proper disposition of a child-like faith and simplicity; that we come to him and make these requests known to him until in his due time they will be given for our encouragement and our benefit.

If our praise of God in song and prayer is truly sincere we shall want others to know of these praiseworthy prayer attributes, that they may join us in this Hallelujah chorus. By recognizing His glory, we want to be like him who is always giving of his bounties for the joy of others. He has provided a Kingdom which the Church will share with Jesus in dispensing the divine blessing of life to all mankind. To show our appreciation for what He has given us, we must not only pray for the Kingdom to come, but we must pray for all mankind, and devote all of our time and energies in working for it.

May the Lord add his blessing.

PRAYER

If, when I kneel to pray
With eager lips I say:
"Lord, give me *all the things* that I desire, --
Health, wealth, fame, friends, religious fire,
The power to sway my fellow men at will,
And strength for mighty works to banish ills," --
In such a prayer as this
The blessing I must miss.

Or if I only dare
To raise this fainting prayer:
"Thou seest, Lord, that I am poor and weak,
And cannot tell what things I ought to seek;
I therefore do not ask at all, but still
I trust thy bounty *all my wants* to fill," --
My lips shall thus grow dumb,
The blessing shall not come.

But if I lowly fall,
And thus in faith I call:
"Through Christ, O Lord, I pray thee give to me
Not what I would, but what seems best to thee
Of life, of health, of service, and of strength,
Until to thy full joy I come at length," --
My prayer shall then avail,
The blessing shall not fail.

- Charles F. Richardson

The Christian Duty of Discrimination

"Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." - 1 Thess. 5:20, 21.

SINCE the word discrimination has more than one meaning, we should state at the outset in what sense we are using it now. Like some other words, discrimination is used in both a good sense and a bad. In the latter usage it means to make an unfair distinction. Needless to say, that sort of discrimination is no part of Christian duty. The dictionary gives another definition of this word, namely, "distinguishing accurately," and it is in this sense that we use it in this article to distinguish accurately as the result of close, careful, competent scrutiny.

In the first verse of our text we have this admonition: "Despise not prophesyings [or prophecies]." To what prophecies does St. Paul refer here? Were they the prophecies of the Old Testament, or perhaps the things foretold by our Lord and his Apostles, which they spoke by inspiration? We think not, for the connection shows that the "prophesyings" of our text were to be critically examined and sifted, and only what was found to be "good" in them was to be received and retained.

PROPHECY IN THE CHURCH

We understand that by prophesyings the Apostle is referring to the utterances of those in the Church who were endowed with that special miraculous gift of "prophecy," which is one of the nine co-called "spiritual gifts" enumerated by Paul in the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians. These special gifts (bestowed through the spirit) called in the Greek "charismata," i.e., grace -- gifts, were a part of the heritage of the Apostolic Church, and passed away with it. But, you say, "Why was it necessary to prove or test these prophesyings, since the holy spirit could not inspire any one to speak anything but what was right and true and good?" The Apostle John (1 John 4:1) gives the answer to the question: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This warning was especially needed at that time, for if we infer correctly from what we read in 1 Corinthians 12, all the seemingly spirit-inspired utterances heard in the Christian assemblies were not of God, and one might even be heard shouting, "Jesus anathema."

The gift of prophecy was one of the most valuable to the Apostolic Church, but in view of what has just been said there were grave dangers connected with it. The Lord provided a safeguard for the Church in another of those spiritual gifts, called "the discerning of spirits." Those endowed with this special power were able to test the spirits and to discriminate what was really from God, and what was dross, or worse. This seems to the writer the true application of our text to the Church of the Apostolic Age. But we are far removed from that Age and its miraculous spiritual gifts. The gift of prophecy is no longer with us; the corresponding gift of discerning of spirits also has departed. Has our text, then, no application to our times, and to conditions now existing in the Church? We believe the Apostle's words are still important to us, a forceful reminder of our Christian duty of discrimination, and we shall attempt a present day application of them for the benefit of our readers.

The first exhortation "despise not prophesyings," or its lesson for us now, might be expressed thus: "Give those who minister the Word a respectful hearing." From ancient times "public teaching" was one of the meanings of the Greek word rendered "prophecy," and in that sense, of course, prophecy has always been practice in the Church. Though preached in human weakness, the Word of God has been powerful to accomplish the will and purpose of him who sent it forth.

(Isa 55:11; Acts 15:14.) There are reasons why we ought to give a respectful audience to our ministers of God's Word. The Lord himself instituted the ministry for the edification of his Church: "He gave some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:11, 12), and we must not "despise" (literally, set at nought) his provision. We know, too, that we are not yet perfected in knowledge, and therefore still have need of attending to teachers and can learn something of value from any who preach the Word in the spirit of its Author.

PROVE ALL THINGS

Now, the second admonition of all text: "But prove [or test] all things." Here the word "but" is inserted by most editors on good manuscript authority, and it connects up this statement with the preceding. The first exhortation told us to listen, but this one puts us to work, sifting and testing what we have heard. There are obvious reasons why it is necessary to test the teachings that are being promulgated. The Lord warned: "Take heed that no man deceive you," and added that many would be deceived. A second reason is that because of imperfect knowledge, or faulty judgment, many godly men, even outstanding teachers, have held and taught error, or have been mistaken in some of their reasonings and conclusions. The piety or position of a teacher is no guarantee that he is correct in everything that he teaches. The words of our text still apply: "Prove all things." This statement is to be taken in connection with the preceding. The "all things" do not, of course, include every line of teaching and every theory that may come to our attention. We are to prove those teachings (teachings) which commend themselves as worthy of our consideration and study, holding forth a promise of "good." The substance of these teachings may be "new," or it may be "old." - Matt. 13:52.

How are we to prove the teachings? The Apostle does not say. Our only infallible touchstone is the Bible; by it we must test every doctrine. While this might seem a rather simple matter, it is not always so in practice. It is true that often the Scriptures are so plain and definite that there is no room for two opinions. We could wish that it were always so. But it is evident that our Heavenly Father has not given us that kind of Bible. For it is true that sometimes teachings are based on *interpretations* of Scripture, rather than a simple "Thus saith the Lord." Now, an interpretation of a Scripture may be based on a number of things, for example, the meaning of a word where it may be taken in more than one sense. Or, it may rest upon a point of grammar, or the relation of the Scripture to its context, or perhaps to some other passage. The interpretation may rest on punctuation alone, for that is the simplest form of interpretation, as may be seen in Luke 23:43 (the position of a comma).

TESTING INTERPRETATIONS

Interpretations of Scripture are to be tested with reference to certain generally accepted sound principles of hermeneutics -the science of interpretation. First, the interpretation must be grammatical, not violating any rule of grammar or syntax. Second, the meaning assigned to words must be in harmony with their usage at the time the Scripture was written. Third, there must be a sound discrimination between literal and figurative or parabolic uses of language. Fourth, a Scripture must be explained in harmony with its context, or the general teaching of the Bible on the subject. In the main it is by these four rules or principles that we are to "test all things" presented -- not alone interpretations of Scripture, but sometimes translations of it also. Does this sound simple and easy? We think not. It is scarcely necessary to add that if two (or more) interpretations of a Scripture pass the tests, they must be considered equally possible.

It will be generally admitted that the most difficult things to prove or test are statements and arguments concerning the Scriptures in the original languages, which are (chiefly) Hebrew and

Greek. And how much of that sort of discussion there is in these days, when almost every writer who has a different thought to offer, appeals to the Greek or Hebrew text in support of it! Among such interpretations there may be something of value to the student, but if he lacks a working knowledge of the original languages, how shall he separate the wheat from the chaff? He may turn to a good concordance for help (*Strong's*, *Young's*, or *The Englishman's*) and there find sufficient information (in many cases) to enable him to intelligently test the argument under consideration. In other cases this source of help will fail to provide the answer, for often in determining the true meaning of the original text it is not enough to know *what* word is used; it is important to know *how* that word is used—such grammatical details as case or tense or mood. These latter things belong to grammar and syntax, and are beyond the scope of a concordance like *Dr. Strong's*. Knowledge of the numerous idioms found in the original Scriptures, which is sometimes indispensable to the student, is to be obtained not from the concordance, but from standard works on the Greek and Hebrew languages—the larger lexicons and grammars, which presuppose some knowledge of those languages on the part of the student. *"It is painful to reflect upon the slow progress which this qualification has made in public estimation. Judging from the conduct of many, they appear to deem it wholly unnecessary to aim at such an acquisition. And yet without it, they must acquiesce in received modes of interpretation or trite elucidation, without the ability to assign any reason except that they are held by a favorite commentator, or found in a certain system."* (Samuel Davidson, LL. D. in his *Sacred Hermeneutics*, page 18) The words quoted above were written over a hundred years ago, and since then the acquisition of a working knowledge of the sacred languages, has been made much less difficult by the abundance of excellent helps now available (particularly for beginners), and ignorance on the part of those who handle the Greek or Hebrew is less to be condoned.

AN EXAMPLE OF CRITICAL STUDY

Above we have pointed out the method to be followed in proving "prophesyings" which are based on particular applications of Greek and Hebrew words or phrases. It remains to illustrate it by an example. The Greek noun *Aion* (pronounced "I own") and its derivative adjective *Aionios* occur frequently in the New Testament, and are also of great importance from the standpoint of eschatology (doctrine of the last things). Moreover, there is found to be much difference of opinion even among prominent scholars and translators on the correct rendering of these Greek words into English. In the *Common Version* they are rendered mostly by such terms as "for ever," "eternal," and "everlasting." Some other translators (and writers) deny that *aion* and *aionios* can be properly so rendered. They assert that *aion* properly means "an age" and that the adjective derived from it can mean only "age-lasting" (not everlasting or eternal). Accordingly, Rotherham translates *aionios* "age-abiding," Young renders it "age-during," while the *Emphatic Diaglott* does not translate the word but merely transliterates it from the Greek. On the other hand several versions made in modern times (including the *Revised Standard Version*) retain "everlasting" or "eternal" and "for ever." Whom is the student to follow? Which school of Bible translators appears to have the soundest approach to this moot question?

Now, this writer realizes that any attempt on his part to answer these questions will appear presumptuous. More than once he himself has asked: "Where the best scholars cannot agree, what can the ordinary Bible student do?" Nevertheless, in what follows we shall endeavor to answer that question. At the outset we are impressed with two or three things. First, the scholars who disagreed regarding the proper rendering of *aion* and *aionios* all had before them the same information, the same important facts concerning the etymology of these words (so far as can be known), and their usage -- in the *New Testament*, in the *Septuagint*, and in classical Greek. Second, from the same facts the various translators drew their own conclusions, having used their best judgment in the matter. It is quite apparent that sometimes translators have found difficulty

in maintaining a truly objective attitude in their work; whether any of those whose work we are trying to judge were influenced in their decision by doctrinal prejudice, we cannot know. Third, we are impressed with the thought that the information regarding *aion* and *aionios* to which our translators had access, is in a substantial way available to us also, in the large Greek and Hebrew lexicons, in the *New Testament* and *Septuagint* Greek, and in the original Hebrew of the *Old Testament*.

Now let us summarize the information which these generally reliable sources yield, bearing on the question under consideration. (1) Lexicographers are not agreed as to the primary meaning of *aion*, many of them following Aristotle, who derived the word from *aei*, which means forever, while some believe it comes from a word meaning to breathe, and has in it the thought of life. (2) In the earliest of extant Greek writings, those of the poet Homer, *aion* does not denote an age or eternity, but the lifetime of a man. (3) In the classical period also the word is sometimes used of the duration of a human life, but it has taken on other, broader meanings as an indefinite period, an age, and eternity. (4) In the *Septuagint* (where it is used mostly as a translation of the Hebrew word *'olam*) *aion* has in general the same meanings as in the Greek writers, the context indicating which meaning is intended. The first occurrence of *aion* in that ancient version is in Genesis 3:22 for *'olam*. Here the Greek phrase is usually rendered "for ever"; for *l'olam*, *Rotherham* gives "to times age-abiding," and *Young* has "to the age." While such phrases are based on "age" as *one* of the meanings of *aion*, it is obvious that they are vague and raise questions in the mind of the reader, such as "To what age?" Since in Genesis 3:22 and its context there is no thought that eating of "the tree of life" would enable man to live only to some particular period or age, we are compelled to give *aion* in this passage its broadest significance: forever." And from a linguistic standpoint there can be no valid objection to that rendering, as we have shown above. That *aion* and *aionios* can denote everlasting or eternal (and often do) is proved beyond any question by their application to Jehovah and his attributes, for example, Genesis 21:33; Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 9:7; Psalm 119:142, etc. On the other hand, in many occurrences of these Greek words the context definitely limits their meaning to: the lifetime of a slave (Exod. 21:6), the duration of the Aaronic priesthood (Exod. 40:15), the keeping of the Passover (Exod. 12:14), etc. (5) The writers of the New Testament follow the usage of classical Greek and especially the *Septuagint*, using *aion* in a variety of phrases, often reduplicated for emphasis, as, "forever and ever."

IDIOMATIC PHRASES

A study of those various phrases in the original reveals the difficulty of translating them literally. For if we render *aion* by "age" (as some attempt to do in every instance) some of those phrases would literally be: "to the age" (1 Cor. 8:13), "to the ages" (Rom. 9:5), "to the ages of the ages" (Gal. 1:5), "to the age of the age" (Heb. 1:8), and "to a day of an age." (2 Pet. 3:18.) Most scholars agree that these and other similar phrases were not intended to be construed literally, but are idiomatic expressions—expressions peculiar to a language and having a meaning apart from their literal translation. It is evident, however, that in the New Testament *aion* is sometimes used of an age or dispensation (in many passages mistranslated "world"), for example, "this [Gospel] age" (Matt. 24:3), or "the age to come [Millennial]" (Matt. 12:32), and other ages to follow that one. (Eph. 2:7.) But this use of the word must be clearly distinguished from the idiomatic usage or confusion *will* result.

From the facts which our study has yielded, we form our conclusion concerning the true meaning of *aion* and *aionios*. *In Biblical as in secular Greek those words have more than one meaning, and in each occurrence the sense in which the word is there used must be determined from the connection, and usually this is possible.* The several diverse phrases with *aion*, which do not lend themselves to literal translations, are usually best rendered "forever" and "forever and ever," as in

our common English versions. The adjective at *onios* may denote "everlasting" or merely "lasting," according to the context. In that important and much-discussed text, Matthew 25:46, the parallelism between *aionios* life and *aionios* punishment, apart from the teaching of other Scriptures, favors the rendering "everlasting." The practice of some who instead of making an attempt at translating *aion* and *aionios*, merely transliterate them in the Greek or Latin spelling, would seem to have little to commend it. It may leave the reader with the erroneous impression that the Greek words are not translatable into English.

HOLDING FAST THE GOOD

The third exhortation of our text, "Hold fast that which is good," reminds us that in our hearing and sifting of teachings our interest is ever in the good they contain "that which is good to the use of edifying." (Eph. 4:29.) In this connection good is practically synonymous with truth, for it is only truth that edifies and sanctifies. - John 17:17, 19.

He who seeks to prove all things by the Word learns that the Bible itself has suffered at the hands of men, and not always at the hands of its enemies. That priceless Book has been "wounded in the house of its friends" -- by well-meaning but misguided Christians, who, due to doctrinal prejudices, have fallen into the error of "wresting the Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16) by mistranslating or misapplying them. The lesson of our text has been an important one for the Church even from its earliest days (2 Tim. 2:15-18), and is not less so now especially for those who as teachers occupy positions of greatest responsibility.

- *W. A. Eliason*

Entered Into Rest

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