

400 Questions and Answers

H. B. Coder

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COMPILED FROM "HELP and FOOD" by H B CODER

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."

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FOREWORD

This volume consists of questions and answers, which have already appeared in *Help and Food*. The compiler has only to express his growing sense of the inestimable value of this question and answer method of instruction, and cannot refrain from declaring that the "Answers to Correspondents," treating of a great variety of subjects of a scriptural character, have for more than forty years served as both an incentive and a key to the study of many precious themes in the Word of God.

We live in a day of multitudes of "helps" in Bible study, and it is often a temptation to try to take the digested food of a help, and so more quickly to appropriate its truths. The best helps are those which continually send the student right back to the Bible to test the truth of their statements. May it be yours, reader, to test all by the Word of the living God, be established in the truth, and thus find true profit.

We trust that this method of grouping related questions and answers will be found an interesting and convenient arrangement which will greatly facilitate efforts to find out what statements have been made by men of God concerning particular subjects.

In the hope that this volume may be by grace helpful to all who would keep Christ's Word and not deny His name, it is sent forth with prayer that the Lord's blessing may accompany it.

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Abomination of Desolation

Ques. —

(1) What is meant by “The abomination of desolation?”

(2) Do you understand that it will be set up before the coming of Christ, or after He has taken His people away?

Ans. —

(1) In Matt.24:15 where this is mentioned, the Lord refers to Daniel 12:11; and as Daniel is wholly taken up with the Jewish people, the “daily sacrifice” would be what was offered in the temple at Jerusalem. A wicked ruler, referred to in 2 Thess.2, during the seven years of judgments on the earth will take away the “daily sacrifice” from the restored Jewish temple, and set up instead the image and worship of a man, “the Beast.” This is called the abomination, which will bring desolation upon the Jews. In a spiritual way, Higher Criticism, Unitarianism and other agencies antagonistic to God's revealed truth cause desolation among Christians.

(2) God's dealings with the Jews take place after the Church is transplanted to heaven. The Church may see the preliminaries of them in judgments upon the nations and involving the Jews; but when they come to their fulness, the Church will have been [removed](#) to heaven.

(Vol.33, p.223).

Abraham and Resurrection

Ques. — It is said that Abraham by his purchase of the cave of Machpelah, and his solicitude about burying his wife there, showed not only his faith that his descendants would inherit the land some day, but also expressed thereby his belief in the resurrection. Kindly explain this latter point which seems to be inference from his whole career rather than from this act.

Ans. — The significance of the act of burial seems clearly to point to resurrection. Abraham was not done with his body. He would have it laid carefully away until it was needed, not in a borrowed tomb, but in that purchased by silver, redemption money, and connected with a field, also purchased — fruitfulness already assured, but only in resurrection.

No doubt this refers typically to Israel's resurrection — “life from the dead” (Rom.11:15) — in the last days. For Abraham himself we know there was a better than an earthly portion, “for he looked for the city that hath foundations,” the heavenly Jerusalem.

(Vol.15, p.196).

Abraham as Father

Ques. – Why is Abraham called the father (Rom.4:16) of present-day believers? Why not men of faith before him, such as Noah, Enoch, etc.? (Heb.11:5,7).

Ans. – Because in Abraham was conspicuously manifested the faith which is in all true children of God. Death and resurrection, the hopelessness of his circumstances, yet an unflinching confidence in God for the issues, mark him above any other. It is with matters beyond all human possibilities that Christian faith is likewise engaged; therefore we are children of Abraham. Other men of faith before Abraham were not tested to the extent, nor in the way, which made Abraham the leader in the great family of God.

(Vol.34, p.84).

Note: It is important to see that Abraham, unlike any saints of earlier days, was called to leave the providential order of things God had established in the world. Abraham is taken up on ground independent of the common responsibility of man – the world remained under it, sin was there, and judgment to come. In this grace is acting, calling Abraham apart from law or condition, or requirement of righteousness, and he is made the depository of positive revealed blessing. Thus he is made the head of a race, a spiritual race, a wholly new thing on earth, in connection with which the blessing of God is called “the blessing of Abraham,” and “then are ye (that is those of faith) Abraham's seed.” To this family belong all who are of faith whether living before or after his day, but he is called “father,” because in connection with him God first revealed His thought and purpose as to the position and blessing of faith.

Abraham's Wives

Ques. – In Rom.4:19 it says that Abraham's body was dead, and through God's power Isaac was born. In Gen.25:1 he marries Keturah, and has six sons, long after Isaac. How is this explained?

Ans. – Abraham's taking Keturah to wife, while mentioned only after Sarah is dead, may have taken place long before. Polygamy was prevalent everywhere then. Yet in the light of the circumstances which circle about Hagar and Ishmael, we incline to the thought that Sarah was the only wife during her lifetime, and that Abraham took Keturah after her death. The renewal of his strength for the fulfilment of God's promise in the birth of Isaac was continued. It was as easy for God to continue it as to impart it at all. And, indeed, it was necessary for the fulfilment of God's purposes. In Abraham's three families is seen the range of God's blessing. Ishmael, the bondwoman's son, represents the people of God linked with the Jerusalem on earth; Isaac, the free woman's, represents those linked with the Jerusalem above; the sons of Keturah represent the saved nations of the Gentiles blessed through the millennial reign of Christ.

(Vol.25, p.111).

Note: Gen. 25: 6 speaks of concubines that Abraham had, and 1 Chron.1:32 calls Keturah, “Abraham's concubine.” It may be that her sons were born before Abraham lost procreative power, and that upon the death of Sarah (who only had the station of wife during her lifetime) Abraham elevated Keturah, his concubine, to this place of higher standing.

Achan's Sin

Ques. – What was there in Achan's sin so evil that brought upon him such severe judgment?

Ans. – He appropriated what had been consecrated to the Lord (Josh.6:19). He was no ordinary thief therefore. Judas, later on, was of the same kind, and ended miserably too. Josh.7:11 characterizes Achan's sin quite fully. It is spoken of in that passage as the sin of all Israel, for that sin probably pointed to a general condition in Israel in keeping with it; and beside, God holds responsible the whole corporate unity among whom sin is committed. The “fellowship of saints” is the sweetest thing on earth, but it has corresponding responsibilities.

We would take occasion to add that whenever an open sin is committed among a Christian community it should produce, first of all, a general humiliation in keeping with the gravity of the sin, for it may illustrate more or less the moral condition of that community, and this does not come to an end by judgment against the offender, though that be an inevitable part of true repentance. Thus in Achan's case the whole nation is searched tribe by tribe, and family by family, till the guilty one is found and judged.

The Lord Jesus, who has redeemed us at great cost, has claims upon us. May we not rob Him of the least of them to appear broad-minded and liberal before men, for if we do we shall surely find that He trifles no more in this day of grace than in the day of law.

(Vol.33, p.280).

Acts and Exodus

Ques. – In what respect does Acts correspond with Exodus?

Ans. – In general, Exodus is the book of salvation of Israel from Egypt (answering to the significance of its number – 2). Acts is the history of the actual salvation of the people from Judaism and the law to Christianity. While the death and resurrection of our Lord, prefigured by the opening of the waters of the Red Sea, are not recorded in this book, their effects and benefits form the theme of the whole; beginning with the descent of the Holy Ghost, answering to the pillar of cloud and fire, who is the Guide and Power of the true Israel of God. The power of Judaism has become a world-power, and, linked with the Gentiles, forms a bondage of which Pharaoh's sway was a fitting illustration. It is not meant that every portion of the book will have an exact correspondence in the other, but that in general the themes are similar. No doubt, too, careful study will bring out more exact resemblances as Paul's conversion and ministry answering to the tabernacle and its service, while the deliverance from law for the Gentile Christians, in the fifteenth chapter, would be rather a contrast to Israel's deliberate acceptance of law at Sinai.

(Vol.11, p.56).

Adam Perfect

Ques. – Was Adam perfect as he came fresh from God's hand?

Ans. – Surely; perfect in the sphere for which God made him – “upright,” innocent: holiness could not be when as yet there was not the knowledge of evil.

(Vol.8, p.139).

Adoption and Birth

Fragment. – Adoption is putting into a place.

Birth makes us children: adoption makes us sons.

John always speaks of children: Paul uses both words, “sons” and “children.”

Eph.1:5 is son-putting, or adoption.

Adoption is taking you into His house. The spirit of sonship gives you the place, and the spirit to fill the place. – F. W. G.

(Vol.5, p.169).

Adversary, Judge, Officer

Ques. – In Luke 12:58 who is the adversary? And who is the magistrate, and the judge, and the officer?

Ans. – In the similar passage in Matthew 5:25 the “magistrate” is not mentioned, and I do not know that in this verse he differs necessarily from the judge, unless it be a more general term. The subject here is Israel, to whom the times should have indicated that judgment was impending. The “adversary,” – the law, “even Moses in whom ye trust” – was bringing them to the Ruler or Judge – God, the Judge of His people. John the Baptist, and our Lord Himself, had been preaching as the adversary or legal accuser of the people, showing them their sins and calling them to repentance. But while this was the case Israel was only “on the way to the magistrate;” there was yet time to be “reconciled” by repentance and acceptance of Christ as Messiah. This they refused to do, rejecting our Lord and delivering Him over to be put to death by the Gentiles. So the prediction of the Lord has been fulfilled: they have been delivered to the Judge – judicially dealt with by God, who has handed them over to the “officer,” or executor of His will – any instrument He may see fit to use; in this case, the Gentiles, by whom the Jews have been oppressed ever since. They will continue in “prison” – under the judicial dealings of God – till they have passed through the full measure of retributive judgment under the earthly government of God, culminating in “[the great tribulation](#),” after which God will speak comfortably to Jerusalem for she will have “received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.”

(Vol.9, p.112).

All Things to All

Ques. – Please explain 1 Cor.9:19-22. How far could we carry out this principle today, especially verse 20? How would this affect our position towards all denominations? Did not the apostle act by the Holy Spirit?

Ans. – The apostle surely is giving an inspired description of a God-given ministry, in contrast, throughout the chapter, with the spirit of ease, pride, and self-exaltation of false ministers. It is this which makes him speak so solemnly at the close of the chapter, that a man might be a preacher of the gospel and yet be a castaway. As to himself, he had not used his apostolic prerogatives, but had been content to be the servant of all, that he might win some. Therefore he took his place, so far as he could, with those to whom he ministered. He was “all things to all men” in a godly way, bearing with their weakness or their ignorance – not raising questions until God had raised them in the consciences of the people. So to the Jews he was as a Jew and as under law, in order that he might minister Christ to them.

For this reason he circumcised Timothy, the son of a Jewish mother. But when Judaism had arrayed itself against the truth of God – when it was a question of the gospel and of the honor of the Lord, he gave no place to the “weak and beggarly elements.”

As to the application of this principle at the present day, the greatest care would be needed, for the conditions are different. The errors of Christendom, while frequently Judaistic, are not Judaism: for that had been originally given of God, and He led His people very gently out of it into the pasture of Christianity (John 10). But a lapse back into error is another thing. Again, regard must always be had for the effect our subsequent testimony will have upon Christians in denominations. If they receive us to preach the gospel among them – in their churches – ignorant of our testimony against much that is done among them, may they not say when these things do come out, that we deceived them? Of course we cannot lay down rules for one another, and the Spirit of God is competent to guide in each case, but we think that in the main it is best to let persons know our position before accepting invitations to go into their churches. On the other hand care should be taken not to antagonize needlessly, but to use all grace and gentleness – in the truth. As we said, the Lord alone can guide in each case, and He will.

(Vol.14, p.222).

Altar (Golden)

Ques. – Why is it that the golden altar is not mentioned in Heb.9? Is it because, being typical of Christ in His glorified character and thus ascended up on high, it could not represent Him down here in the outer sanctuary? Has the rent veil anything to do with it?

Ans. – The omission of the golden altar is very significant in the enumeration of the articles of furniture in the outer sanctuary. It will be remembered also that, in the appointments for the furniture of the holy place, the altar of incense was not provided for until after the directions for the induction of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood. An altar requires a priest to minister at it. But we know, also, that these priests themselves were but shadows, and that not of the heavenly order; our blessed Lord had to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and open the way into the inner sanctuary of the presence of God, where true worship alone can be offered. Without doubt the rent veil is the explanation here. There is now really no outer sanctuary. The veil rent has done away with the distinction. Faith rejoices to be in the presence of God; and the Holy Spirit (typified in the candlestick) and communion with our blessed Lord (as in the table of showbread, together with the service of the golden altar) are enjoyed in the immediate presence of God.

We have also an interesting suggestion of this in the same passage, not only in the omission of the altar of incense from the articles of furniture in the holy place, but in the addition of the golden censer in the holiest of all. The censer, of course, was carried in by the high priest on the day of atonement when he brought in the blood and sprinkled it on the mercy-seat. It was, as we might say, a portable golden altar, and emphasizes the very truth we have been considering. Worship must ever be on the basis of accomplished redemption and in the immediate presence of God.

(Vol.21, p.112).

Altar (We have an)

Ques. – Please explain Heb.13:10; “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Does it apply to those who are in system?

Ans. – The Epistle to the Hebrews, as its name would suggest, shows the contrast between Judaism and

Christianity. A glance at the various subjects will show this. Prophets, angels, Moses, Aaronic priesthood, carnal sacrifices, the law, are all contrasted with, only to give way to, the Lord Jesus Christ, who through His death and ascension to the right hand of God has displaced the worldly sanctuary and a worldly religion, to introduce His people into the presence of God in the joy and liberty of a spiritual worship, and to make them strangers and pilgrims here. The whole epistle shows that Judaism and Christianity are mutually exclusive. This is what the verse in question teaches. The altar is put for the whole system of Christianity founded upon the sacrificial work of Christ. Those who are united with Judaism—an earthly, anticipative thing—have no right to claim any link with the spiritual heavenly fulfilment. The principle may, of course, be applied to any worldly system of religion which is but a feeble copy of Judaism. Care must be taken, however, not to press this in a harsh way, and to remember that the Lord has many who while outwardly linked with such systems are in heart separated from them, but lack knowledge and faith to “go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.”

(Vol.12, p.195).

Angels

Ques. – Are the principalities and powers, in Eph.3:10, the chief of the elect [angels](#)?

Ans. – The term seems to include all, both evil and good potentates. It would seem that as Satan has not yet been cast out of heaven, he has still his rank. Thus Michael the archangel does not rail against him (Jude 9).

(Vol.17, p.56).

Angels in Jude 6

Ques. – What is the meaning of Jude 6? “Angels... reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Peter speaks of angels being cast down to hell, and also of spirits in prison. Did the Lord Jesus preach to these when His holy body lay in the grave? Will both men and angels be judged at the [Great White Throne](#)?

Ans. – Jude teaches that a certain part of the fallen angels are reserved in chains. We know from the Gospels that another part were allowed to range the earth; and Ephesians speaks of “wicked spirits in heavenly places.” Without doubt, at least two classes of fallen spirits are suggested here, those who are in bondage and those who are free. Cannot divine wisdom be seen in this, as though God would show that neither repression nor liberty have changed their moral character?

The passage in 2 Peter 2:4 seems to refer to the [class of angels](#) who are kept in chains under darkness; but “the spirits in prison” evidently refer to the disembodied spirits of the sinners before the flood who, rejecting the preaching of Noah, perished then, and their spirits are now in prison.

Note: For a fuller discussion of this subject, see “Spirits in Prison.”

It was by the Holy Spirit in Noah that the Lord Jesus went and preached to these, and not during the time when His body lay in the grave. He, blessed be His name, was enjoying the Father's presence during that time, as He committed His spirit into His Father's hands.

As to angels being judged at the [Great White Throne](#), Scripture is silent, and so we must be content with

the general statement of Jude; they will be judged at the great day. The apostle Paul in 1 Cor.6, tells us that we shall judge angels in association with Christ.

(Vol.21, p.167).

Angels (Because of)

Ques. – What is the meaning of “because of the angels” in 1 Cor.11:10?

Ans. – The apostle says in 1 Cor.4:9, “We are made a spectacle to the world – both to angels and to men.” In Eph.3:10 we learn that by means of the Church, God is now making known His manifold wisdom to the hosts in heaven. As Adam was a figure of Christ (Rom.5:14) so was Eve, his bride, a [figure of the Church](#); and “as the Church is subject to Christ,” the woman is to exemplify this in the Church to the observing angels. In view of this, disregarding or distorting God's order is of the devil.

If the truth of these things is understood and submitted to – as every child of God should gladly do – various details will regulate themselves. But if Paul is called “a woman-hater bachelor,” and that what he taught on this subject “need not hold us,” it shows ignorance as to what actuated this most faithful servant of Christ, on the one hand, and on the other, it is a beginning of rebellion against the Word of God as he said, on a similar occasion: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor.14:37). Let any one guilty of this consider the seriousness of it.

Satan's special attacks in these days are upon the Word of God. He begins cautiously, as at the beginning in Eden – “Yea, hath God said?” and in a little, God's Word is boldly contradicted. Let us watch, therefore, against these beginnings, for they soon increase to more impiety (2 Tim.2:16).

(Vol.41, p.163).

Angels (Their)

Ques. – Please explain Matt.18:10. To what does the expression, “their angels,” refer?

Ans. – The first fourteen verses of this chapter are devoted to showing wherein true greatness consists. Again and again did the spirit of emulation show itself among the disciples, and notably so in connection with the prophecy of our Lord's sufferings, as in the passage before us, taken in connection with Mark 9:30-37. More painful yet, this was manifested at the last Supper, when, we would think, all selfish ambition would be checked by the sorrow pressing upon them; but such are our hearts.

In answer to their inquiry, who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, our Lord placed a little child in their midst, and said that only those with the childlike, humble spirit could have any place in the kingdom. Such little ones were not to be offended – better far to be drowned, to lose an eye, a foot, or a hand, than to be occasion of stumbling. Nor were these little ones, insignificant as they might be in men's eyes, to be despised. On earth they were thrust aside, forbidden to approach the Lord; but how different in heaven! There they had the place of closest access into the immediate presence of God. This brings us to the expression “their angels.” The meaning of the whole passage being clear, we have only to ask what construction of the words in question is most scriptural. Does “their angels” mean guardian angels, those who are appointed to care for the little ones? In support of this view, Dan.10:13,20,21 is cited, to show that there were special angelic princes over nations, as Grecia, Persia, and Israel. Hebrews 1:14, it is claimed, would show the same guardianship in the case of individuals. Of course, it is perfectly clear that angels do minister to the people of God, more especially in the preceding [dispensation](#), as now we have the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. But is the thought of individual guardianship a

scriptural one? Does it not rather savor of Rome? National oversight is something different, and hinted at in the mention of "principalities and powers;" but, then, do individuals have evil guardians as well as holy? No other Scripture has a hint of such a thing.

Nor is such a thought suggested in the passage we are considering; indeed, it would do violence to the context. On earth little ones may be despised; in heaven their angels behold the face of God. "Their angels," then, simply means the little ones themselves, but in spirit, not in body. We have this use of the word angel for the disembodied spirit in Acts 12:15. Peter had been shut up in prison under threat of death. The saints had come together to pray for his deliverance; and while so engaged, Peter, set free by the angel of the Lord, came and knocked at the gate where the saints were. On being assured that it was Peter himself, they said, "It is his angel;" that is, he has been slain, and this is his spirit.

A similar, though symbolic, use we have of the word angel in the epistles to the seven churches (Rev.1-3). Here the angel is the star or light of the Church, the spiritual part, we might say, represented at the close of each epistle by the words, "He that hath an ear."

We would say, then, that Scripture does not warrant the thought of special guardian angels. They are all ministering spirits, engaged, unseen by human eye, in errands of providential care and mercy for the heirs of salvation. They are not prominently brought forward in the New Testament, doubtless for the simple reason that Scripture, foreseeing the misuse by men of this ministry, putting it in the place of Christ and the Holy Ghost, has kept them in the background. Christ, the Sun, has eclipsed the other lights which in darker days might come more prominently into view.

(Vol.12, p.250).

Angels (Word Spoken by)

Ques. – Please explain Heb.2:2 – "The word spoken by angels."

Ans. – The phrase means the law, which was given through angelic instrumentality (Acts 7:53; Gal.3:19). In Ps.68:17 we are told they were present at Sinai. They were God's ministers to execute His judgments, and were therefore fittingly present at the giving of the law. In the first chapter of Hebrews we see the place occupied by them – a place of exalted privilege, but infinitely below Him who is the object of their worship, verse 6. The "word spoken by angels" is contrasted with the "great salvation" spoken by the Lord and His apostles, and confirmed by the Holy Ghost. The thought is, If disobedience of the law was most surely punished, how much more will a neglect of salvation through grace result in destruction.

(Vol.12, p.224).

Ananias and Sapphirah

Ques. – Were Ananias and Sapphira, of Acts 5, only professors, or were they real Christians under God's government for their evil ways?

Ans. – We sincerely hope it was the latter, for it is far better to be under God's government in time, no matter how severe that may be, than to be forever "in the outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth" – the state of mere professors in eternity, as well as of outbreaking sinners.

(Vol.32, p.164).

Note: As to additional thoughts on this, see the subject, "Lying to the Holy Spirit" and "Sind

unto Death".

Annihilation

Ques. – Please give a few scriptures showing the difference between endless being and [eternal life](#), to refute [annihilationists](#).

Ans. – “God... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (Gen.2:7). The life here is God-given, and has never been taken back – never will, for a punishment that is everlasting must be for those only who live everlastingly. Endless being, then, is what all men have in contrast with the “beasts that perish.” Death, as spoken of in Scripture, never affects this endless being, but refers either to the body, the “mortal body” of Rom. 6:12, or to the moral state, as in Eph. 2:1. If those dead in trespasses and sins are yet alive, so those in the lake of fire – the second death – are also alive, for “their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.” Existence is then not the question when life or death are spoken of in the Scriptures. This is the first thing to note with regard to the expression, “[eternal life](#).” It does not mean endless existence, though, of course, it includes that thought. [Eternal life](#) is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ – or in Him. It is characterized by knowledge of the “true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent” (John 17:3). It begins at regeneration, and may generally be described as the opposite of that moral death, the condition of all the unsaved. As possessors of [eternal life](#) we are “partakers of the divine nature,” we are children of God. Of course, along with this go the related truths that we are justified and accepted in the Beloved. Endless being, then, is the common lot of all; [eternal life](#), of those only who believe in Jesus.

(Vol.9, p.308).

Note: For an exhaustive examination and refutation, by the light of Scripture, of Universalism, Restorationism, and Annihilationism, the reader should study carefully “[Facts and Theories as to a Future State](#),” by FW Grant; or “Man and the Future State” (an abridgment of the former work), by John Bloore. “It is the united judgment of many leaders of Christian thought, not merely those who might be thought to be favorably disposed, that in ‘Facts and Theories’ the Spirit of God has provided a wealth of truth with which to meet error. We would earnestly exhort the saints to arm themselves with the weapons found here” (S. R.).

Antichrist

Ques. – In a certain magazine I read the following: “There is not one passage of Scripture which says or teaches that the [Antichrist](#) demands worship for himself.” Is this not opposed to what has been taught and received among us as truth?

Ans. – Yes, it is opposed to what has been taught among us. Yet it is to Scripture we must turn as to the ground of our faith. In 1 John 2:22 we read that the Antichrist shall “deny the Father and the Son,” i.e., denies God as revealed in Christianity – he shall be a complete apostate. Compare this with what is said of “the man of sin” in 2 Thess.2:3,4. He is called “the son of perdition” (like Judas). He exalts himself in the place of Deity (denies the Father and the Son) and sits as God in God's temple (at Jerusalem). Is not this a demand for worship? Thus, can there be any reasonable doubt that the Antichrist of 1 John 2 and “the man of sin,” “the son of perdition” of 2 Thess.2 are one and the same person? – “the Wicked one” to be revealed in his time. (See also Daniel 11:36; Rev.13:11; John 5:43 as to this same person, and his end in Rev.19:20).

(Vol.38, p.107).

Note: See also "Man of Sin."

Apocrypha

Ques. – Please explain why the "Apocrypha" is left out of our Bibles now. What right have they to leave it out?

Ans. – For good and substantial reasons, as follows:

1. They never were in the Hebrew Scriptures – the Old Testament. They were written in Greek, mostly in Alexandria, long after the Old Testament was completed, and none of them pretend to have God's authority, and never say, "Thus saith Jehovah."
2. The writers themselves admit possible error, or not having done well, as 2 Macc.15:38,39, "Here will I make an end. And if I have done well, and is fitting the story, it is that which I desired: but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto." Others make statements to the same effect. Some of them have value as history, the same as Josephus, but nothing more.
3. Parts of the "Apocrypha" were first put in with the Scriptures by order of the Pope, when Jerome translated the Scriptures into Latin, called the "Vulgate." Jerome protested against it, but the Pope prevailed, and some of the Apocrypha in consequence were put at the end, and separate from the Bible books. They were afterwards incorporated in the Roman Catholic Bibles by the Council of Trent in 1563.
4. The English Church, under Henry VIII, though rejecting the authority of the Pope and making the King head of the Church, retained the Apocrypha as introduced by the Romish church. They appeared in the Protestant translations until 1826, when, after much controversy, they were left out from English Protestant Bibles.

(Vol.29, p.167).

Apostles

Ques. – Please explain Acts 14:14 where Barnabas is called an "apostle." Were there more than the twelve, and the apostle Paul?

Ans. – The word "apostle" means sent. As sent by the Father, our Lord is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession" (Heb.3:1). "The twelve" were preeminently called "the apostles" – chosen by the Lord to be with Him throughout His ministry (Mark 3:14,15), as the appointed witnesses to Israel's twelve tribes of Christ's teachings, works of power, and resurrection – Judas' place being filled by another according to prophecy (Acts 1:20-26).

Paul's apostleship is unique, being called and appointed by Christ in glory, and sent to the Church as His minister with authority (Gal.1:1; 1 Cor.3:10; 2 Cor.13:10). In an inferior sense, ministers of Christ and even pretenders are mentioned as "apostles" (Acts 14:14; 2 Cor.11:13), so also messengers of assemblies (2 Cor.8:23, where the Greek has "apostles").

(Vol.41, p.135).

Ques. – Did the apostles, in writing the New Testament, understand all they wrote? Or did the Holy

Spirit, in inspiring them, lead them to write beyond their understanding?

Ans. – Had you asked this concerning the Old Testament writers, we would have said: “No; the writers had not the full understanding of all they wrote, and this on the ground of 1 Peter 1:10-12.” Concerning the New Testament writers, however, it is different, as 1 Cor.2:10-16 shows. Christ had come, unlocking by the cross all the great purposes of God. In consequence, the Holy Spirit had come and taken up His abode in the saints to give them the full intelligence of these purposes. It seems evident that, in unfolding them, the writers themselves understood fully all they wrote. Nevertheless, the perfection of what the Spirit gave by their means is a matter that neither they nor we have fathomed. Many things too in the simple narrative of the Gospels, the Acts, in Rev.1-3, etc., have such marvelous connections and [dispensational](#) application that it is hardly possible that the instrument used in writing could possibly have apprehended.

(Vol.28, p.110).

Apparent Discrepancies

Ques. – How do you account for the apparent discrepancy between 1 Kings 16:6-8 and 2 Chron16:1, as to the time of Baasha's reign?

Ans. – The text of Chronicles is here apparently incorrect, the letters “l” (30) and “i” (10), which are somewhat similar in the ancient Hebrew characters, having been interchanged by some copyist. It should be “the sixteenth year.” In the same way the “forty-two” in chapter 22:2 is a mistake for “twenty-two” (Keil).

(Vol.6, p.82).

Ques. – In 1 Sam.17:12-14 we find David was the eighth son, but in 1 Chron2:15, he is the seventh: why is this?

Ans. – Keil supposes that one of Jesse's sons may have died without posterity, and so be omitted from the list in the latter place. I have nothing better to offer.

(Vol.6, p.83).

Ques. – In Daniel 17:7 it says: “These great beasts, which are four, are four Kings which shall arise out of the earth.” He uses the future, “Shall arise,” but the first, the Babylonian, had already arisen, for the vision was in the first year of Belshazzar, when the Babylonian Empire had been in existence fifty years, and was already tottering to its fall. How can this be reconciled?

Ans. – The prophet is not here giving details concerning the fulfilment of the vision, but simply uttering the fact that four great empires were to arise and devour among men before the empire of the Son of Man should be set up, when Daniel's people (the Jews) would be associated with Him in its rule and glory.

Knowing, as you do, that one of the empires of the vision had already arisen, place yourself with the prophet, and, speaking only to make the vision known, as he does, try if you could tell it in better form than he has done. You will find you can properly use no other than some form of the future.

(Vol.33, p.222).

Ques. – How can we reconcile the command in Deut.23:3 with the free reception of Ruth the Moabitess in Israel when she came with Naomi? And her reception seems pleasing to God, who even gives her a

place in the genealogy of Christ (Matt.1:5).

Ruth 1:16,17 clears away the difficulty. Her separation from Moab was complete; she says to Naomi, who had just been testing her two daughters-in-law in the fullest way: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

She was no longer a Moabitess; she was an Israelite, and there was discernment enough in Israel to recognize this in her character and ways. Besides this, God who reads men through and through, saw in her a devoted soul, truly won to Him from her idols and her people, and He gave her a place of special honor.

(Vol.34, p.26).

Ques. – In several texts it is declared that Christ's reign will be forever. In 1 Cor.15:24-28 His reign is limited by a specified event, and in Rev. 20:4 it seems to be limited to one thousand years. How do you explain this apparent discrepancy?

Ans. – "For ever" is used as that which has no end, or that which does not pass away to another. Christ's earthly kingdom will not be succeeded by any other, and His heavenly kingdom is eternal.

(Vol.43, p.147).

Note: Many questions on "discrepancies" and "contradictions" have been asked and faithfully answered in the various volumes of *Help and Food*. On account of space, only a few have been entered here. The following is taken from the reply to a certain question in Vol.31: "You are quite right in believing that no contradictions can possibly exist in Scripture. If they could, they would prove that the Scriptures are not the Word of God – as infidels are ever busying themselves to do to their invariable defeat, and worse, to their eternal ruin. We may find difficulties in some of the statements of the Bible, and that chiefly because we have not apprehended the subject of which the Spirit treats. But these difficulties, if carried to God in prayer, will prove the very means of our progress in divine learning."

Appearing

Ques. – Is Acts 1:11 the Lord's coming for His saints, or with them?

Ans. – It is not the Christian hope here, but still the Jewish, and therefore not the [rapture](#), but the [appearing](#).

(Vol.26, p.279).

Archangel

Ques. – It has been suggested that Michael the archangel was the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this right?

Ans. – If so, it would place our Lord in a strange position, as seen in the ninth verse of Jude. Though

chief among angels, Michael, according to this verse, is a creature, and we see how he keeps the creature's place. It would be a serious error to put our Lord in that place. But often such suggestions are made without much thought, and with far from evil intent. It is, however, only by having the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly that we avoid errors, great or small.

(Vol.33, p.112).

Ascend. . . Descend

Ques. – Would you kindly give a word on Rom.10:6,7, “Who shall ascend into heaven? Who shall descend into the deep?”

Ans. – It is a quotation from Deut.30:11-14. In reading the previous verses of that chapter you will easily see that it is a prophecy concerning Israel, when “the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee... and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed,” etc.

This return will not be through their law-keeping, but through God's grace – the grace by which we too are saved now, and which came by Jesus Christ. Moses leaves this still a secret, in Deuteronomy, but Paul reveals the secret in Romans. It is through grace, by Jesus Christ, who went down into the deep and has ascended up into heaven.

But grace is not something for which we have to go far off and reach after. Christ went down into the depths and has gone into the heights whence grace comes, so that to us, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

(Vol.29,p. 168).

Assembly of God

Ques. – What is the “assembly of God” in a town or city?

Ans. – “The assembly of God” in a city embraces all “them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus” in that place (1 Cor.1:2), that is, all there who are born of God. But Christendom has become a “great house” with clean and unclean vessels therein; and the obedient children of God are bidden to “follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart,” and must be in separation from the unclean vessels, as Scripture in many places commands. (See 2 Tim. 2:20-22; 2 Cor. 6:14-18, etc.).

(Vol.40,p. 22).

Assembly Meetings

Ques. – Is a “business meeting” connected with an assembly, an assembly meeting?

Ans. – It altogether depends on the circumstances. It may be only an investigation in a matter of discipline, or a counselling together in any matter for the welfare of the assembly, in which case only those recognized as most wisely interested in the affairs of the Lord's house will generally be found together. They are not the assembly surely, though occupied with its interests. But when some action or

decision is required of the assembly as such, proper announcement of the fact should be made, and then those who come together are truly the assembly. Even then consideration will not be wanting for such as may be unwillingly absent.

(Vol.22, p.84).

Ques. – Is there scripture for women to take part in meetings in the way of asking questions and giving out thoughts (outside of the morning meeting for breaking of bread), and is the meeting together to break bread the only assembly meeting?

Ans. – 1 Tim.2:11,12; 1 Cor.14:34,35, are plain and decisive answers to your double question. Both plainly forbid woman's voice being heard in the assembly; and the latter is not a meeting for the breaking of bread, but for mutual edification. "At home," as v.35 enjoins, is evidently the God - appointed sphere for women, both to ask questions and to minister. See Acts 18:26. This is a sphere large and inviting, not only for godly women, but also for godly men. Would to God there were more to occupy it.

(Vol.22, p.196).

Note: For further study of this subject, the reader is referred to the answer given under "Woman's Place."

Atonement

Ques. – Please explain in *Help and Food* Isaiah 53:5 – the last clause, "By His stripes we are healed," as I often hear faith-healers use it, and I would like to get light on it.

Ans. – This verse plainly says it was "for our transgressions" the Saviour was "wounded," and "bruised for our iniquities;" thus His "bruise" (margin) is our spiritual healing. There is not one word about bodily ailments in this verse, which speaks of atonement for sin. "Griefs" and "sorrows" – earthly trials – are the subjects of verse 4. "Touched with the feelings of our infirmities," our sympathizing Lord identified Himself with the afflicted, delivering them from their afflictions during His ministry of love here, as Matt.8:16,17 tells us. But this was not atonement; it was the sympathy of love. Atonement was when "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet.2:24) – there, on the cross, it was Divine Righteousness that smote our Substitute.

(Vol.42, p.134).

Atonement (The Day of)

Ques. – Did the blood, carried into the holiest on the day of atonement, atone in type for the sins of the people for the year that had passed only, or was it an annual remembrance before God of all their sins? Is there a sense in which it would speak for the year then future?

Ans. – The redemption from transgressions in Israel, under the law was not once for all – eternal, but once for a year. Hence they came into remembrance every year. A temporary removal of sins is good only for the time for which they are removed. When that passed, the question of their removal came up again. Thus the yearly recurrence of the question showed that their sacrifices did not put away sins actually. Only the sacrifice of Christ does that. It was not simply that Israel needed the removal of the sins of the year in which an atonement was made: they needed the removal of all their sins, but they

never got anything but a temporary removal. Thus they were taught to expect the sacrifice of which theirs was a type – the sacrifice that procures eternal redemption.

(Vol.24, p.139).

Balaam

Ques. – Was Balaam a prophet of God, or only a diviner? Would he answer to a fortune-teller of today? Of what people was he?

Ans. – Numbers 22:5 states he lived in Pethor, a city near the river Euphrates, where his people dwelt. This would be near the parts where Abraham lived when God called him.

As to what he was, the New Testament amply interprets it for us: 1 Peter 2 describes the “false teachers” which were to rise up among Christians by the “false prophets” of the Old Testament; and, as prominent among these “false prophets,” he names Balaam (v.15-16). Again, Jude, in warning Christians about the awful condition of things, and the character of some in Christendom preceding the return of our Lord, mentions Balaam alongside with Cain and Core (v.11). Once more he is mentioned in Rev.2:14.

After such revelations concerning Balaam, it is not difficult to conclude that he is no mere diviner or fortuneteller, but a man who professes to be a prophet of God, though at heart but an ambitious hireling who, for selfish ends, is ready to curse the people of God, or to ensnare them out of the path which belongs to them. How prominent the Cain and Balaam characters have become in Christendom, and how rapidly the Core character is developing, only shows how near we have Come to the time of which Jude writes: “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (v.14,15).

(Vol.24, p.224).

Baptism (John's)

Ques. – What was the purpose of John's [baptism](#)?

Ans. – John has been calling the multitude to his [baptism](#) of repentance, baptizing them in Jordan for the remission of sins. Jordan is death, as we all know well; and John's baptism is a baptism to death (Rom.6:4). They (and we) have merited death: it is appointed unto men once to die: the wages of sin is death. They come out to him owning this place as theirs; they are all baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

Then the Lord comes also. Having no personal need, as a baptism of repentance it has necessarily no significance for Him; but if death is the due of these sinners, and yet they are to have remission of sins, He must come into death for them, Jordan, for Him the type of that greater baptism with which He was to be baptized. He offers Himself without spot to God. And without spot is He owned. It is there the Father's voice breaks out in the words which at once own the relationship of the Man Christ Jesus (which is, according to Heb.5, the call to priesthood), and the Lamb without blemish for the sacrifice, “Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.”

(Vol.6, p.326).

Baptism of the Spirit

Ques. – Is there any baptism of the Spirit since Pentecost?

Ans. – Some have thought the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost was the only baptism of the Spirit. Unquestionably it was His only descent for that purpose, but 1 Cor.12:13 – “By one Spirit ye are all baptized into one Body” – would show that all believers are so baptized. That is, while the descent at Pentecost was the great outward act of forming the Church, by the baptism of the Spirit, yet as each one believes, he is baptized by the Spirit – united to Christ in glory, and thus introduced into the Church, the [Body of Christ](#).

(Vol.21, p.280).

Baptism (Water)

Ques. – Is the [baptism](#) in Gal.3:27 water or Spirit?

Ans. – It is water baptism – the external, official putting on of the name of the Lord. It should read unto Christ, not into.

(Vol.26, p.168).

Anabaptism

Ques. – If a person has been baptized, on the profession of faith, in the name of the triune God at the administration of the ordinance, is it necessary to be baptized again on any plea whatever? Is not being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Christian baptism?

Arts. – Assuredly it is, and Eph.4:5 affirms there is “One Lord, one faith, one [baptism](#).” To repeat it therefore is contrary to the Word, and the destruction of its meaning. Imagine a foreigner coming to this country, renouncing all allegiance to the Power he was under, and pledging solemn allegiance to the Power of this land, then after doing this asking to have it done over again. It could only cast ridicule upon the solemn ordinance.

(Vol.34, p.196).

Infant Baptism vs. Household Baptism

Ques. – Is infant [baptism](#) scriptural? I would be very much obliged if you would explain it, as in connection with the Kingdom of God.

Ans. – You are no doubt aware that your question involves what has caused some of the bitterest controversies in Christendom, even to the dividing of Christians into parties. Nor is the controversy ended among those who have in large measure returned in subjection to the Word of God. But, whatever be the differences, the passions and the pre-determined ideas on the subject, the Word of God has a voice over all, and is as able to settle this question as any other. Let us inquire there with subdued spirits, and the convictions formed in us in that way will lead to enlargement of heart and spiritual intelligence, with attendant blessing.

Scripture says nothing about infant baptism, but it says much about household baptism. The distinction is very important, for if I baptize an infant as an infant I still have in mind his individuality. If I baptize him as belonging to a Christian household I have the household in mind, which is the Scripture idea. The household is a divine institution, and God loves it and delights to impart blessing to it as such. As a proof of this, see 1 Cor.7:12-14. So pleasing is the Christian household to God that if but one of the pair (the husband or the wife) is a Christian, it constitutes the household as Christian, and the children “are holy,” that is, they form a part of it along with their parents. The whole household is sanctified – that is, is a community separated to God from the world. Accordingly in Acts 16 we read of two households being baptized. In 1 Cor.1 another is mentioned. Two or three witnesses suffice to establish convincing proof according to Scripture, and here are three plain cases. It has been objected by some who are against household baptism that in two cases there are believers in the household. This, even though every member of the household were a believer, does not change the principle a whit. They were baptized, not simply as individuals, but as forming part of a household which God had set apart for Himself – a household in which was found the Kingdom of God, that is, subjection to God.

(Vol.33, p.249).

Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins

Ques. – Please explain Acts 22:16, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.” Can anything but the blood of Jesus Christ wash away our sins?

Ans. – Nothing can really wash away sins – for eternity and before God – but the precious blood of Christ. But [baptism](#) is a figure of salvation through the death of Christ, and therefore the language of the verse can be used. Where there was real faith there was real forgiveness, otherwise there was the mere outward discipleship of which baptism was the badge. Christian baptism was not instituted until after Christ had risen from the dead, when it became the official mode of entrance into the Kingdom. (See Acts 2:41). Peter was the first one to use it together with the key of knowledge to the Jews, and in Acts 10 he uses it to the Gentiles. Now one reason why we find in the Acts of the Apostles that every believer was called upon to be baptized was, because no one had hitherto been baptized in (or to) the Name of the Trinity, or in (or to) the Name of Jesus; those who had been baptized prior to that had simply been baptized unto [John's baptism of repentance](#), but in Ephesus they had not heard whether the [Holy Ghost](#) that had been promised (see Matt.3) “had yet come” (Acts 19:2, Revised Ver.).

What does baptism of the believer typify? Let the Word tell us. In Rom. 6:3 we learn that Christians are baptized unto Christ Jesus (JND), consequently unto His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto His death, just as in the same figure we say that we died on the Cross, we rose again; or, to simplify it, our going under the water refers to His death and burial and our identification with Him in it, just as the grave shut Him out from the world, for the last the world saw of Him was when He was on the cross; so, as Christians when we became that, we were practically severed from the world – our old man, what we were in Adam, was, in God's mind, also buried out of sight, so that what linked us to the world and the first Adam has been annulled.

Baptism has absolutely nothing to do with the work of salvation, but is the confession of Christ's death as our own, just as His resurrection is the ground of our justification (Rom.4:25). The bread and the wine surely do not save us, but they speak to us of a Saviour that did. If baptism were a saving ordinance, then men could save themselves just whenever they chose – surely a false impression. No! His work and His alone did that (1 Pet.2:24).

Baptism, then, is my confession to all, of my faith in Christ who died for my sins, and typifies my

identification with Him in that death—just as I eat the bread and drink the wine to show His death. It is but a figure. Noah was saved by or through the water, i.e., the water that was judgment to the world was what bore him away in safety in the Ark, so we—for the water of baptism typifies death, or rather is to me the grave of Christ. Christ passed through death and is risen. We pass through death in baptism, in figure, but it was the Ark that rode the waters of judgment and bare Noah in it. So now Christ having passed through death has atoned for our sins, and we also passing through it in spirit (surely not literally) leave all our sins there (in death) just as Christ really did for us—as another has said, “We pass through death in spirit, and in figure by baptism.”

(Vol.18, p.154).

Note: For a thorough examination of this important theme, the reader is referred to the following:

“Has Water Baptism a Place in Christianity?” – Help and Food, Vol.16, pp.172-184.

“Shall I Disciple My Little Children?” – Help and Food, Vol.16, pp.214-224.

“Correspondence on Baptism.” – Help and Food, Vol.16, pp.239-256.

“Reasons for My Faith as to Baptism.” – F W Grant.

“Baptism: What Saith the Scripture?” – H A Ironside.

“Baptism.” – F C Jennings.

“What Does the Bible Teach About Baptism?” – Russell Elliott.

Baptized for the Dead

Ques. – What is mean by the expression, “Baptized for the dead,” in 1 Cor.15:29, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?”

Ans. – The expression may be rendered: “Baptized in place of the dead.” The preposition translated “for” in both the Common and Revised Versions, is in 2 Cor.5:20 and Philemon v.13 translated “instead of,” although the Revised Version has corrected it to “in behalf of” in both places. But the meaning “instead of” is admitted in the lexicons.

It might also be, and has been by many, translated “over the dead,” according to the root idea of the preposition, without any change of meaning, perhaps even more vividly. For the thought in the mind of the apostle, as is evident by the whole passage, is of a battlefield, in which fresh combatants are taking the place of those removed by death. In those days, to become a Christian was to expose one's self to death; and why thus fill up the ranks decimated by so fierce a conflict if there be no resurrection? For then Christ is not risen, as he argues, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. “Over the dead” would be in this way vividly pictorial. But the meaning is, in any case, plain.

(Vol.6, p.54).

Begotten

Ques. – Preachers here say that we cannot be born of God; that we are only begotten, and they use

certain changes in the translation of the New Version to establish their teaching. Have they any ground for this?

Ans. – None whatever. You may trust without fear the common, or “King James” Version. It may not be very critical, but it conveys the mind of the original in such a faithful way as to produce in the reader a divinely- wrought faith, and that is better than all the hair-splitting of men whose knowledge is of the kind which puffs up rather than edifies. Satan has been active to muddle the truth as to the [New Birth](#), both to hide its importance and the greatness of the blessings linked with it. They who maintain in their souls the simplicity which is ever in Christ, will escape the contentions and perplexities of the would-be metaphysicians.

(Vol.33, p.112).

Binding

Ques. – Would you kindly give a word as to “binding” in Matt.18:15-18?

Ans. – “Binding” is fastening upon a brother a guilt which none can deny, which is plain to all, and of which he does not repent. Such guilt fastened upon him by the people of God upon earth is recognized in heaven, and fastened upon him there also. God, in His holy government, will not let him go until he has repented and confessed his sin. When he does this, his brethren forgive him – they loose him; so does God in heaven.

But we are aware that there are things in your mind which this may not fully satisfy, and so we go further. If the person be not really guilty, and yet be so declared by the assembly, is its action then bound in heaven? In answer to this we reply, How can it be “bound in heaven” when, instead of being “bound on earth” an injustice (a thing most obnoxious in heaven) has been done? “Binding” can only be when no question of being guilty can exist, and heaven therefore can bind it too. “Binding” is not an authority put into the hands of the assembly. It is a necessity the assembly is in to maintain holiness within herself. She is no court of law endowed with delegated powers, which must be obeyed whether they be rightly or wrongly used. To illustrate her powers by those of a court is false and mischievous. The moment she claims such powers, she has left her place of obedience and dependence on the Lord – she is fallen. She is responsible to keep herself clean in doctrine and in practice, and God in heaven puts His seal upon her righteous acts in the maintenance of that responsibility. Authority apart from this she has absolutely none. To seek to enforce an unrighteous act under the plea of authority to bind is but the work of pride – the root of popery. On the other hand, to refuse to be subject to righteous discipline is of the same pride; it is the root of anarchy. The Scotch Covenanters prayed that God would preserve them from clerisy and from prelacy. We need to pray to be preserved from popery and anarchy. They spring from the same source, and seek the same ends. God hates both.

(Vol.30, p.280).

Note (biblecentre): At the same time it would be inconsistent to recognise an assembly as gathered to the Lord's name and not to recognise its decisions in discipline (e.g. binding). If an assembly takes a wrong decision then others who become aware of this should take the matter up with that assembly (as opposed to simply ignoring its decision - which would simply be [independence](#)).

Blood

Ques. – Did Christ bear His own blood into the holiest, or only enter Himself?

Ans. – He entered by, not with His blood (Heb.9:12). I suppose no one contends for the latter literally.

(Vol.7, p.54).

Ques. – Did the Lord “take again” the life – “in the blood” – that was poured out on the cross?

Ans. – When He says, “I lay down My life that I may take it again,” it does not follow that it was life in the same condition as before, and indeed it was not. “The life of all flesh is in the blood” (Lev.17:11) applies, of course, only to the natural life of man which he shares with the beast. But “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor.15:50). Blood is the supply of the waste of the body, the means of change and repair – necessary only in this way. The Lord, in resurrection, speaks of Himself as having “flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39), not “flesh and blood.” In a body no longer subject to waste and renewal, the presence of blood would seem to have no meaning.

(Vol.7, p.54).

Ques. – Please explain the following: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Ans. – This passage does not mean that cleansing by the blood of Christ is a continuous thing. The believer is cleansed once for all by the blood of Christ, just as Christ shed His blood once for all, never again to be repeated. Heb.10:1-22 teaches us this most forcibly. Believers are “sanctified (set apart to God) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (v.10). They never need a second application of the blood of Christ, “For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (v.14).

We need Christ as Advocate (1 John 2:1) every time we, believers, sin; we need Him constantly as Priest (Heb.7:24-27), for in our life with God we are in incessant need – a need which He alone can supply; but as Saviour, the One who delivers us from the wrath to come, we meet Him thus once – “once for all.” All thought of Him as Saviour after that is remembrance – the sweetest, indeed, of all remembrances, for time and all eternity.

(Vol.28, p.227).

Body (The One)

Ques. – What is meant by the ground, or principle, of the one Body, and being gathered upon it?

Ans. – The Scriptures know but one Body (Eph.4:4), the Church, the [Body of Christ](#), which Christ loves, for which He gave Himself, and which the Holy Spirit is forming by the daily addition of newly-converted souls. Every true Christian belongs to that Body. But for Christians to assemble together as Baptists, or Methodists, or Calvinists, is one thing, and to assemble together as members of Christ's Body is quite another. The former is sectarian, the latter is Christian. The former is man-made, the latter is God-made. The former embraces but a few of God's people, the latter embraces them all. The former makes some doctrine or practice, true or false, the centre of gathering; the latter makes Christ, who is Head and Saviour of the Church, the Centre. This produces a vast difference both in the character of the worship and the growth of God's people, because the Holy Spirit does not gather God's people on

sectarian ground, nor around any other centre than Christ Himself. He must remain true to God's great purpose, however much God's professed people have departed from it.

Any company of Christians thus gathered in confession of their common membership in the Body of Christ will, of course, recognize any other company or companies likewise assembled, and they will practise together all that Scripture enjoins upon the whole Church of God. Individuals presenting themselves to be received, and accrediting themselves as members of the Body of Christ, will be received as such by any one of the companies on behalf of Christ and of the whole Church; or, any one sinning against Christ, and requiring to be put under discipline, will be so dealt with by any one of the companies on behalf of Christ and of the whole Church. The truth that "there is one Body" will govern all their ways and actions; everything will be done in the light of that fact. They cannot be together in one place, but they are together in one Spirit.

This is what is meant by the ground, or principle, of the one Body, and the practice resulting from it.

But God's people are never out of danger in this scene. Satan, their great enemy, is ever watchful, ready to spoil whatever is of God. In this truth of the one Body, and its resulting practice, for instance, self-willed men may in some given place do what is wrong – Diotrephes-like, cast out godly men who stand in their way, and then trade upon the obedience which that truth produces, using it now to enforce, not God's will but their own, and to enslave their brethren, thus corrupting its divine purpose. In such a case it is Satan usurping the truth; and we are never to yield to him, but to resist him. It is popery – a persecuting power, which to obey is but to surrender a good conscience and make shipwreck of faith. As Rome proclaims herself loudest that she is the true Church, so those who thus misuse the truth of the one Body will be heard proclaiming the loudest that they alone are on the ground of that one Body, and that, be their actions righteous or unrighteous, you must go to them to occupy that very ground! Such an abuse of truth turns, alas, many from the truth, and comes fearfully near to "changing the truth of God to a lie." But, whatever the confusion, the Word of God as our guide is plain: "Follow righteousness" is the first thing; then, "faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim.2:22).

(Vol.28, p.26).

Note (biblecentre): See also: [Denominations of Christendom](#)

Book of Life

Ques. – What is meant in Rev.3:5 by, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life?" Can any one's name be blotted out of that?

Ans. – It seems so plainly from chapter 22:19. It can not be, however, "the Lamb's book of life" (chap.21:27); for this one is surely kept with inerrant precision. There is no doubt the "book of life," here, is the record of our confession of faith in Christ, and of discipleship, in which, by our profession, we have, as it were, written our own name.

(Vol.28, p.111).

Note: The New Trans. of ch.22:19 reads, "the tree of life," not the book of life. The other references to the book of life in Rev. (13:8; 17:8; 20:12), including 21:27, seem to refer to the Divine record of those who are of faith from the founding of the world. This leaves the meaning of this one passage (3:5) to be determined. The reference, I think, is to the same

book, and conveys the assurance of what the Lord will not do. Nothing can separate from Him in whose hand are the issues of life and death. There is no need to suppose there are names that will be blotted out of the book of life, as though people could be once saved and enrolled, then finally lost. Why impart this idea into the passage when such a possibility is foreign to the teaching of Scripture? Or why think we are dealing here with a different book (one of mere profession instead of reality) when there appears no intimation of it being different from all the other references? Why then, it may be asked, assert the fact of not blotting out? Just because the false idea that such is possible is the prevailing notion of the Sardis state of the church – the false notion we meet on every hand as a result of departure from the simplest blessed truth of the Gospel. The Lord's word declares the impossibility of being once saved then lost, or blotted out of the book of life in which the name has been once enrolled. It is just such an assurance which would be needed to overcome in the condition which Sardis pictures.

Born Again

Ques. – Scripture does not say, “He that is born again hath [eternal life](#),” but it says, “He that believeth on the Son hath life.” Must we not be born again before we can have [eternal life](#)?

Ans. – No; Scripture does not say, “He that is born again hath [eternal life](#),” because Scripture knows that to be born again and to have [eternal life](#) are one and the same thing. And we all know that for a life to exist it has to be born, whether in the natural or in the divine. He that is born of man has in him the life of man, such as he is; and he that is born anew – born of God – has in him the life of the eternal God – [eternal life](#) therefore. Let any one question that every believer, from the youngest babe to the oldest father, during any [dispensation](#), has [eternal life](#) abiding in him, and he questions the very nature of God of whom they were born, besides laying the axe at the root of the grace of God.

Scripture does say, “He that believeth on the Son hath life;” not because life and new birth are not identical, but because the Son is the object of faith – the One who imparts that life by new birth. Your doctrine would make new birth to be purely an act of God's sovereign grace, and apart from faith; then life after new birth, through faith. Scripture refutes that doctrine, as John 3:5 and 1 Pet.1:23 are witnesses.

So does John 5:25 also show: It is the dead who hear the voice of the Son of God and live; not those who are born again, for they are already alive.

In Scripture, to be “dead” is not at all to be irresponsible, as your doctrine implies. This idea of being born again apart from faith leads to strange things to reconcile the many statements of Scripture that life is through faith. It has to separate things which are one – things which may be distinguished but cannot be separated.

Let us not build a system of our own, then do violence to Scripture, to make it stand on its feet. Let us be believers, feeding upon the sincere milk of the Word, and growing thereby according to God.

(Vol.30, p.251).

Note: See also the subject “New Birth.”

Brazen Serpent

Ques. – Why does not the brazen serpent occur at the beginning of Israel's journey instead of at the end?

Ans. – Because it was only by their experience across the wilderness that the need of new birth could be manifested. There is nothing in all the Word of God which declares the absolute depravity of man like the decree that he must be born again if he would enter the kingdom, and Israel's history from Egypt to Canaan is a painful proof of that depravity. Even in the New Testament, the statement as to new birth does not occur till after the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke have borne witness to the desperate evil of man, shown in the way he has treated the Son of God. John's Gospel, coming after this, pronounces therefore the real condition of man by saying he must be born again. It is as if a physician said to his patient, I have used all my skill and all my remedies to cure you, and you are no better, but only worse. There is no hope for you. What you need is an entirely new constitution. The physician, it may be, knew from the start what the end would be, but his kind heart would defer saying it to his patient till its truth could be evident to that patient himself by the experience of the treatment. God certainly knew the end from the beginning, but His loving heart deals with man a long time before He tells him the hopelessness of his condition. He thus prepares him for the only remedy.

(Vol.32, p.56).

Bread (Leavened and Unleavened)

Ques. – Was the bread used at the Lord's Supper leavened or not? In 1 Cor.10:16, "the bread which we break" is the communion of the Body of Christ. As there was no evil in Him, could that which speaks of evil be used in the symbol?

Ans. – It is very likely that, the Lord's Supper being instituted at the close of the Passover feast, where no leavened bread was allowed, our Lord used that which was at hand, the unleavened bread of the Passover. We must remember however, that for us, being no longer under Judaism, the significance of literal leaven in our daily use is entirely of the past. The point to note is that bread was used – the ordinary food of man. Our blessed Lord gave up His body unto death in order that He might be the food of His people. In taking, at the Lord's Table, that which ordinarily is our food, we do not raise the question at all whether it is leavened or unleavened. It is Christ Himself whom we remember and who is typified in the bread which we break.

(Vol.21, p.166).

Bread (The Breaking of)

Ques. – What should be the primary object on coming together on the first day of the week – worship, the remembrance of the Lord, or the breaking of bread?

Ans. – It would be difficult to sever these objects in our minds. If we come together properly to break bread, it must be in remembrance of Christ and this will surely produce worship. The disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7). The act of breaking bread was the purpose of their coming together, but surely in remembrance of Christ.

In this connection we would earnestly call attention to the meeting for breaking of bread. We have instruction at the Bible Readings, we have unburdened our hearts at the Prayer Meetings, and having judged our walk, we come with free hearts to break bread – to meet the Lord.

Surely the meeting will be distinctively one for tender memories, melted hearts, and adoring worship. All teaching, exhortation, etc. will be entirely subordinate. Christ Himself will be before us, the one commanding object.

(Vol.13, p.84).

Ques. – How is Matt.18:20 fulfilled while the Lord is in heaven?

Ans. – Of course He is not visibly present, but who that has gone to His table to meet Him has been disappointed? Very real, very blessed, is His presence there. He is a divine Being, filling all things, as God everywhere present, specially and personally so when He manifests Himself to the two or three gathered to His name. But there is more. We too are in heavenly places in Christ (Eph.2:6); we also have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb.10:19). There as Man we find Him and gather around Him. It is all real to faith, not yet to sight.

(Vol.13, p.84).

Bread (The One Loaf)

Ques. – How do you explain the first clause of 1 Cor.10:17 with the last clause of verse 16 – “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ? for we being many are one bread and one Body?” And what force has the “for” that seems to connect the two clauses? Has not the bread (one loaf) a double significance in this passage?

Ans. – The general meaning of the passage is quite plain. Just as Israel was a partaker of the altar because of eating the sacrifices, so he who ate at the idol's table would have fellowship with the idol. We partake of the one loaf because we are one Body, and exhibit our oneness by so doing. It would seem that the “for” links very closely the two classes, and it would be scarcely possible to think of the one loaf without thinking not merely of our blessed Lord, but of His people for whom He died to gather them into one. In Lev. 24:5-9 we have the show-bread, evidently type of Christ the food of His people (who are now all priests). Because it is in relation to Israel these are twelve loaves, representing the national unity – the twelve tribes. So the loaves represent not only Christ, but His people as identified with Him. Does not this correspond with the one loaf now? The Church is one, not twelve, and while we see in the loaf Christ's body given for us, of which we partake, we are at the same time reminded of our oneness in Him. Once and again in this epistle the apostle identifies the Church with Christ. “Is the Christ divided?” (1 Cor.1:13). “As the body is one, and hath many members... so also is the Christ” (1 Cor.12:12; see JND's Version). The use of the figure of the loaf the second time shows that there were not two loaves but one, type of Christ's body given for us, and at the same time (amazing grace!) representing His Church one in Him. Is there not instruction in this – the close and intimate link of our Lord with His people? In the feast that presents Himself before us constantly, we are ever reminded of the one Body, the Church, for which He died.

(Vol.14, p.195).

Breathed on Them

Ques. – In John 20:22 it is said that the Lord breathed on the twelve disciples and said: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” Did He speak of the day of Pentecost, or did they receive the Holy Spirit at that time?

Ans. – It is not of a special act or moment that this passage speaks, but of what characterizes the present [dispensation](#). Consider the last part of John's Gospel from chapter 13 to end of the 20th; you will see that in this last night, with His disciples alone, the Lord prepares them for what was before them. He was

going to leave them; His work here on earth was finished; He was going back to the Father; they were to believe in Him now even as in the Father, invisible to them. He washes their feet as a picture of what He is doing to us now. He strengthens them in view of the opposition they would meet from the world, even as He had suffered opposition. In His high-priestly prayer (ch.17) He says: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (though the cross was yet before Him), and He presents them to the Father in the value of that work which is considered as done. It is all anticipative, you see.

Now in the 20 th chapter, as the Risen One, He takes His place before them as the Head of a new race to whom He gives a new life – [eternal life](#) – "He breathed on them." As He had breathed natural life into Adam, now as "the last Adam, a quickening Spirit" (1 Cor.15:45), He takes His place as the communicator of [eternal life](#) to the new race of whom He is the Head, and the gift of the Holy Spirit accompanies the new position in which He brings those whom God has given Him. The passage therefore speaks not of receiving [eternal life](#) then, nor the Holy Spirit then, but is emblematic of the Lord's place in new creation.

(Vol.41, p.303).

Bride of Christ

Ques. – What authority from Scripture have we for the common expression, "the [Bride of Christ](#)," used in reference to the Church?

Ans.1. – In Gen.2:22 we read: "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He," or rather, builded He, (into) "a woman, and brought her unto the man." It was the bringing the woman to Adam that formed the union, not the making the woman. Union, or marriage, is the joining of a man and a woman together – the making them one. Eph.5:22-32 clearly applies this to Christ and the Church. It is by the Spirit that union is effected. Hence union, or joining to the Lord, began at Pentecost. It is still going on and will continue until the complement of the members of Christ is filled up. When that is accomplished, the wedding feast will follow. At this feast the one who is united to Christ – the woman – will be ready, she will have her adornments on (Rev.19:7-8) so that Christ will present her to Himself a glorious Church, not a spot or a wrinkle on her. Now [Eve, in Gen.2:22, when brought to Adam became a bride, a wife](#). So, too, the Church of Eph.5:22-32, when Christ presents her to Himself, will be a bride, a wife, and thus it is perfectly according to Scripture to speak of the Church as the Bride of Christ.

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He is now building it, and sanctifying and cleansing it. She is preparing herself for the wedding feast, for the place she is going to occupy when the marriage is consummated – the place of a bride and a wife. Then she will be displayed in the adornments she is now through grace preparing for herself. God, in manifesting her as thus arrayed, will "show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us" (Eph.2:7). In that eternal wedding day, the Christ so long despised by men, and whose sacrifice has been, and still is, disowned, will have abundant glory and honor as the hosts of heaven and earth gaze on the glorious beauty of the Bride (Eph.3:21; Rev.19:7). Christ, the Lamb, Head over all things, will have a partner to share His glory, but whose place in His affections none not of His Church, whatever their blessing may be, shall have part in. The tribulation martyrs will reign with Him (see Rev.20:4), but will not be a part of what is called "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph.1:23). This is reserved for His Body. It alone will be the Bride. (C. C.).

Ans. 2. – The Christian, like a married woman who has been set free from her first husband by death, has been freed from law by Christ's death in order to be "joined" (RV) to Another, the risen Saviour (Rom.7:1-4). Again, Christians have been "betrothed" to Christ, to be presented, "a chaste virgin," unto Him (2 Cor.11:2). Both these views are emphasized in Eph.5:22-32, and there applied to the whole Church, which (1) already stands in the relation to Christ that a wife does to her husband, and (2) in

another aspect is like one "betrothed" to Him.

1. The Church is already Christ's "bride" because already united to Him (Eph.5:30-32; compare 1 Cor.6:17). Hence the Church is "subject unto Christ" as her Head, as a wife should be to her husband (Eph.5:24,33).

2. But the Church is also like one "betrothed" – one whom Christ loved, for whom He gave Himself, whom He is now sanctifying by the washing of His Word, and whom He will soon present unto Himself "glorious."

Thus even now, during her time of humiliation on earth, the Church is "joined" to her glorified Husband and is "one Spirit" with Him. But she awaits till He shall have made her "glorious" like Himself, when He will formally "present" her to Himself and openly celebrate their nuptials. This public "marriage supper" we find in Rev.19:7. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." But notice that she is already His "wife." This marriage comes in between the judgment of the false "church" (Rev.17 and 18) and the return of the saints with Christ to judge the world (Rev.19:11-21). Thus the "Lamb's wife" here is doubtless the Church, and the invited guests are other heavenly saints.

But the "bride," "the Lamb's wife," of Rev.21:2,9, is not the Church, but the "New Jerusalem." The heavenly city is the Lamb's wife in His character as "the Father of Eternity" (Isa.9:6, Heb.). Christians, with all saints, are viewed as the "children" of this wife, for she is that "Jerusalem which is above...which is the mother of us all" (Gal.4:26). This is the great "free woman" of Scripture and of the prophets, of which Sarah was a type (Gal.4:21-31). It is a symbolic representation of that great bosom of grace and new creation which God, in His counsels, espoused to Himself as the fruitful principle by which He would beget all His spiritual children.

Of course, there is no contradiction. The Lamb is the Husband of the heavenly city whose mighty bosom of grace claims us all as her free born children. The Lamb is also the Husband of the Church. And He will yet be the Husband of a Jewish bride on earth. In His love unto death He espoused all these and He will make them fruitful. (F.A.).

Ans. 3. – The expression "the Bride of Christ" does not occur in Paul's Epistles, and he is specially the minister of the mystery of the Church; but that Christ regards the Church as espoused to Himself is evident from 2 Cor.11:2: "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

A consideration of Eph.5:22-32 will also show that the marriage relation in the human family is a type of the relation of Christ and the Church. Thus the expression has sufficient Scripture warrant. That it has been used extravagantly by some we cannot deny, but we ought not to discard it on that account (W. McC.).

(Vol.23, pp.82-84).

Bruised Reed

Ques. – To whom does Matt.12:20, "A bruised reed shall He not break," etc., refer? – To the individual, the remnant, or the nation at large?

Ans. – The connection in Matthew would seem to show that it primarily refers to the remnant; and the same may be said of the portion in Isaiah (42:3) from which the quotation is taken. Israel as a nation has turned from God, but a remnant, in weakness and brokenness, is waiting upon Him. The nation should have been God's faithful servant, but was not; then His own Servant, Christ, came perfectly fulfilling His

will. But He does not despise the lowly; so in Matthew we see Him healing the helpless, while the leaders of the nation look on with contempt. He, blessed be His name, does not despise the afflicted, nor quench the feeblest flame of faith, yea, though it be but a smoke. Of course there is a sweet and precious application to the individual also.

(Vol.22, p.27).

Building upon the Foundation

Ques. – In 1 Cor.3:6-15, does the building done by others upon the foundation “which is Jesus Christ,” refer to adding to the assembly only, or to any work or service done by the believer?

Ans. – It is evident that the subject of the chapter is primarily the temple – the building being erected at the present time for God's habitation, and made up of “living stones,” that is, men born of God – alive in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit. The chief thought therefore is: Will my ministry at the judgment-seat of Christ be found to have furnished material suited to this building? But while men are the material which compose the building, there have been different services rendered to those men here on earth. All those services will be scrutinized, and what has been for the welfare of the building, what has really edified it, no matter how insignificant it was in the eyes of men, will be approved. Those who are injuring the building by evil work will be destroyed. It is a solemn subject for us all, for while there are those especially responsible in the matter, no doubt, every one has a measure of responsibility to bear, and will be called to account for it.

(Vol.34, p.138)

Note 1: Note that there are three classes spoken of in this chapter:

- Work good as well as the workman (v.12-14).
- Work vain, but the workman saved (v.15).
- The corrupter of God's temple, the workman destroyed (v.16,17) – the word for “defile,” or corrupt, and “destroy” is the same in Greek.

Note 2 (biblecentre): In Mt 16 Christ is the builder and in 1 Peter 2 the building consists of believers, precious stones. Here, in 1 Cor. 3, the emphasis is on the responsibility of men engaged in building. In this context, precious materials are Christ honouring doctrines and worthless materials are erroneous doctrines. The reader may find much help, for instance, in the [comments by Hamilton Smith](#) on this verse.

Call of Andrew and Peter

Ques. – How are we to reconcile the call of Andrew and Peter, as seen in John 1 (as it appears they met the Lord and began their discipleship down by the Jordan), with that of Matt.4, where the Lord meets and calls them up by the Sea of Galilee?

Ans. – The first call, at Jordan, was when John the Baptist had pointed out Jesus as the “Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” They follow Jesus, and become acquainted with Him. This was their salvation-call. Next, at Galilee, we have their call from their nets, to be “fishers of men.” This was their service-call. All the Lord's people have these two calls – first, to Jesus as Saviour, the Lamb of God; second, as Lord and Master. So far from conflicting, they fill out and supplement one another. After the first call, Andrew and Peter evidently did not give up their former occupation; after the second they did.

Capital Punishment

Ques. – Kindly state in *Help and Food* the teaching of the New Testament regarding capital punishment.

Ans. – First of all, “There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom.13:1). But for what purpose are they ordained of God? “He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom.13:4).

The expression “the sword” used here is quite sufficient to establish capital punishment, for the sword is for death and nothing else.

The cross of Christ itself establishes it, for while it is the place where the repenting sinner finds salvation, he finds salvation there because it is the place where the just punishment of sin was executed upon our adorable Redeemer. The just government of God is perfectly upheld by the cross, and therefore the grace to all that repent and believe the gospel.

But to seek to set aside the power and the duty of the government to execute murderers, which is now being done by many under the plea of Christianity, is utterly to confound the differing characters and purposes of both government and Christianity, and to destroy both.

Let the government faithfully execute all murderers; punish, and terrify every evil-doer, and let Christians, in the love of Christ, seek the souls of all men alike, to bring them at the feet of Jesus, and all will be in its proper place.

Having now answered your question as to the New Testament, we would remind you that government is no more of New Testament origin than creation, marriage, sin, death, etc., etc., are, though the New Testament affirms all. Its origin is in Gen.9:5,6, where “capital punishment” is clearly ordained of God. We are not aware of one line in Scripture where He has ever revoked this.

What a mercy of God therefore is government, even in its lowest forms! The sense of this excites the Christian to prayer for all who compose it, as the New Testament bids us.

(Vol.23, p.111).

Captivity Captive

Ques. – What does Eph.4:8, “He led captivity captive,” refer to – the overcoming Satan and the principalities and powers with him, as in Col.2:15? Or was it as some teach, “Christ going down into Sheol or Hades and bringing up Old Testament saints with Him and leading them up to Paradise?”

Ans. (1) – Most unquestionably the former. He led captive, captivity. There is the thought of conquest, victory over a foe. Satan seemed to triumph, “the power of darkness” to prevail, but at the moment of apparent victory – nay, by the cross itself – Christ triumphed over Satan's hosts, He bound the strong man.

What shall we say of a doctrine that would sunder our Lord's Person, and put His spirit in heaven with the Father, and His soul – the desires and affections – in Hades? Or of the Old Testament saints having been shut up in the bowels of the earth till liberated by our Lord's going down and leading them out? Such views are not merely unscriptural, but devoid of sobriety – well nigh grotesque. They may serve to pander to a morbid curiosity, but they misrepresent the grace and power and goodness of God. We trust

beloved brethren will be kept in all simplicity, not occupied with that which cannot be to edification, and which distorts the precious truth of God.

(Vol.14, p.140).

Ans. (2). — I know it is asserted by some, and pretty strongly too, that the Lord Jesus, at His death, entered the unseen world and liberated the Old Testament saints, who were supposed to be the captives, and who had been imprisoned there till then, and thus He led captive “a multitude of captives” (Eph.4:8). This and other strange ideas are held about this passage of Scripture, but I consider them all to be mistaken.

If Old Testament saints are in view at all, they must have been in that blissful part of the unseen world described as “Abraham's bosom” (Luke 16:22). Where, then, did the Lord take these captives to? Certainly they have not got resurrection bodies yet. What, then, did they get that they had not before? Or, where could they have been before, and why captives? And if captives to death, that could only be as to their bodies; and are they not still that till the first resurrection? Indeed, the idea is simply absurd on the face of it, and bristles with insurmountable difficulties.

To me the passage simply means that “captivity” is death. Death held men in captivity; and when the blessed Lord died, and rose from the dead, He took captivity captive; He conquered death; and death is now His captive. He has “the keys of death and hades” (Rev.1:18). “Through death He has annulled him that had the power of death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb.2:14,15). Verse 9 of that chapter (Eph.4) says: “He descended first into the lower parts of the earth,” i.e., He went down into death, and annulled death, so that even Christians can say: “Death is ours” (see 1 Cor.3:21,22). Death is Christ's captive, and has no power. So that when He comes to claim His own, death will not be able to keep the bodies of His saints — “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess.4:16).

I know we are referred to the marginal reading in our Bibles, which gives “a multitude of captives.” But the New Translation does not give it so; and the manifest teaching of the passage, too, is against it. I think it is a blessed thought that the Lord has taken death captive and robbed it of its power, and given gifts to men, so as to minister to the needs of His own, and thus secure the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of His Body, till we reach the end of the journey; and then, when He comes for His own, death is already conquered and captive, and must remain silent while He takes the bodies of His saints out from among the dead. It is not taking captives captive, but captivity captive. (W. Easton, Vol.25, p.165).

Charity

Ques. — What is the significance of the word “Charity,” so often spoken of in 1 Cor.13?

Ans. — The word “charity” is now usually understood as kindly feelings toward others, as benefactions or gifts to the poor, etc. But this does not express the meaning of the Greek word *agapee*, which is used throughout this chapter. It is correctly rendered love in the Revised and all good modern Versions. In 1 John 4:7-12 this same word *agapee* is used several times, and rightly rendered “love,” there. To say, “God is charity” (the same word) instead of “God is love,” would rightly shock our ears.

But it is difficult to explain, in our human language, spiritual qualities like love, patience, hope, life, etc. So love is described in 1 Cor.13 by what it does and what it does not. Love shall never end, for “God is love!”

(Vol.37, p.139).

Children of the Desolate

Ques. – Who are the children of the desolate (Gal.4:27)?

Ans. – They are those of the people of Israel who are saved, in spite of the desolation, by the grace of God. Jerusalem by rejecting Christ was made desolate. During this [dispensation](#) of grace God is gathering in children, both Jews and Gentiles. Thus Jerusalem has more children when she is desolate than when she was in outward favor.

(Vol.38, p.84).

Children of the Devil

Ques. – Can we apply John 8:44, “Ye are of your father the devil,” to all who are not children of God?

Ans. – The Lord applies the term to a people who manifest what they are by their works, and no wise person would apply it under any other circumstances. Even then, a wise person will realize that the Lord was free to use expressions which we are not free to use, for He never erred in judgment, whilst we do. His eye could penetrate where ours cannot.

As classes, however, 1 John 3:7-15 clearly makes but two: “The children of God... and the children of the devil.” “He that committeth sin is of the devil... Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” “He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous... Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

Whatever differences of state there may be, and are, both in the children of God and the children of the devil, the Word of God recognizes no other class beside those two.

(Vol.31, p.223).

Children of the Kingdom

Ques. – Are “the children of the kingdom” in Matt.8:12 the same as the unbelieving world?

Ans. – No. They get the same end as the world, but much more severe; for they are those who have had divine privileges and have not valued them. They have never judged sin in themselves, though they may have judged it severely enough in others. They have never, therefore, appropriated God's remedy. They have known all about it, but have never possessed it – never really known Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. What a multitude are in this condition now! May God yet arouse them out of their slumbers.

(Vol.25, p.28).

Children Subject to Parents

Ques. – Until what age are children responsible to be subject to their parents?

Ans. – The law among men has settled upon ages which are supposed to be ages of discretion, and as a rule such laws are just and wise: on the one hand, condemning lawlessness; on the other, tyranny, for there is danger in both. A refined moral sense will go farther than age limits, and demand subjection in the child during the time of dependence on the parent for support. Where the love of Christ prevails in

the family, the children will not be anxious to shake off parental oversight and counsel, but will rather seek, cherish and obey it; nor will parents assert authority unduly, but will rather seek to carefully develop conscience in their children and leave them free, as soon as they deem it safe, to find their own path.

(Vol.33, p.81).

Ques. – What shall we do with a son of ours – a boy of sixteen years – who has been accustomed to obey, but who of late has acquired ideas of independence, and refuses to submit to parental government?

Ans. – First of all, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God... casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Pet.5:6-7). It is discipline upon yourselves from Him; and this needs to be first of all acknowledged and bowed to. Ask Him also to show you why this is needed. Then show your son that they who refuse to submit to God, He finally casts into the outer darkness; those who refuse to submit to the government of any business [...] must go out of their employment; and, in the same way, those who desire to live with their parents must of necessity submit to the government of their parents; for a house without government is a house without salt; and a house without salt means corruption.

(Vol.26, p.109).

Christ a Man in Heaven

Ques. – Is the Lord Jesus Christ a Man in heaven now, and is He **literally to rule over this world** as a king rules over his nation?

Ans. – Yes, surely, though in a glorified state. He is as truly a Man in heaven where He is now as when He was here upon earth in a state of humiliation. After His resurrection, He remained on earth forty days, appearing to His disciples again and again. See in Luke 24:38-43 how the Lord convinces them, even by eating before them and showing them the wounds in His body, that He was the very same Man that suffered on the cross, and with whom they had companied for three years.

When He finally left them, to return to heaven, they saw Him taken up bodily from among them on the Mount of Olives. As their eyes remained fastened heavenward, while He had passed out of their vision, angels were sent then to say, “This same Jesus (His human name) which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11). Meanwhile He is declared by Scripture, in a special manner in Hebrews 7, to be a Man in heaven, filling there His office as High Priest of His people. When the time of judgment comes, it will be “by that Man whom He (God) hath ordained” (Acts 17:31). When He takes in hand the ruling of the world, it will be as the One of whom it is written: “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given,” etc. (Isa.9:6,7). When the Son of God became a Man it was forever and ever. He will no more cease to be Son of Man than He will cease to be the Son of God. If He did, we would lose Christ, for Christ is both God and Man; and if we could be without Christ in heaven, it would cease to be the heaven promised by our Lord in John 14:2,3.

Much of what we have said above answers your second question. You cannot clearly understand the Old Testament apart from Christ, the promised Messiah, being realized as a temporal Ruler – the King of the Jews. To us, in the New Testament, He imparts spiritual blessings which link us with heaven. But in the Old Testament He is promised as the King of Israel, issuing from the royal house of David, heir to David's throne, and as such to subdue all the nations under His authority. When the Church, now in formation, is completed and taken to heaven (1 Thess.4:14-17), the [dispensation](#) of heavenly things is over; then the Jewish or earthly dispensation is renewed for the fulfilment of all the promises of God to Israel. It is this which brings about Armageddon, about which men now anxiously inquire. The nations of the earth will refuse the temporal reign of Christ as they have refused the spiritual. They will also seek

to destroy Israel, with whom is linked the Lord's temporal reign, as they have sought to destroy the Church, with whom is linked His spiritual reign. Satan, the prince of this world, will assemble them against Jerusalem, where they will meet with complete defeat.

Mixing together or confounding the earthly with the heavenly things, causes confusion and darkens the understanding of the Word of God. "Rightly dividing the Word of truth" is of vital importance.

(Vol.33, p.27).

See also: the [Millennium](#)

Christ, Commencement of Public Ministry

Ques. – Is there nothing to be learned from the fact that Christ did not commence His public ministry until He was thirty years of age? And is there no significance in this other fact that He fasted forty days, and that the number forty occurs repeatedly in Scripture?

Ans. – Surely there are lessons to be learned from these facts. Thirty years was the God-appointed age for the Levites to enter upon their service (Num.4:3); it was at that age our Lord was presented to Israel and entered upon His ministry (Luke 3:23).

A man is not fully formed until about thirty, and our Saviour, though God as well as Man, never used His deity to shield Himself from youth's lessons of patience on its way to manhood. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Such an example, prayerfully considered, would check impatience in Christian young men who may be in danger of too much haste to enter public ministry. Nothing is more dangerous to a Christian young man of manifest gift than to push himself forward in ministry before reaching his years of manhood. He is apt to be admired and petted because of his youth and precociousness, and this may mar his life even in after-years. We do not say this to discourage young men, but only to gather profit from our Lord's example.

As to the number forty, it is unquestionably one that has special instruction, linked as it is, with our Lord's history and that of others. The "Numerical Bible" gives substantial help in this line. A pamphlet, "The Witness of Arithmetic to Christ," is an extract from it; to be had of our Publishers. **Note (biblecentre):** See also: [Numerical Structure](#) - by [F W Grant](#)

(Vol.32, p.109).

Christ, Glorified Body

Ques. – Did our Lord have a glorified body when He arose, the same as He will have when He comes for His saints?

Ans. – We feel incompetent to speak of any change taking place in relation to the Lord. He was like the sun veiling His glory behind a cloud, needing only the pushing away of the cloud to manifest that glory. We need a great change in our bodies to fit them for the glory, a change which only His almighty power can accomplish. He needs but a change of circumstances to manifest the glory of His being.

(Vol.28, p.307).

Note (biblecentre): What does seem to be clear from Scripture, though, is that (i) in

resurrection, the Lord had a body (see the following question), that (ii) this resurrection body was such that Mary confounded Him with the gardener (John 20). But in the glory He will have His 'body of glory' (Phil. 3:21). It will take "the working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself" to transform our bodies of humiliation into conformity with His body of glory.

Ques. – Why did Christ say He was not a spirit (Luke 24:39)?

Ans. – Because He was not merely that as (in their astonishment and inability to realize that He was risen from the dead) they thought He was. He was as truly now the Man Christ Jesus as He was before His death – with body, soul and spirit. The [humanity of our Lord](#) is as essentially needful as His deity for the fulfilment of God's purposes. He has left us no possibility of doubt therefore concerning the perpetuity of the one as of the other. He is God from eternity to eternity; He is Man from incarnation to all eternity.

(Vol.28, p.307).

Note: For more articles on Christ's manhood and deity see the section on: [Jesus Christ - His Person](#)

Christ of God

Ques. – Why does the Lord, in Luke 9:21, forbid His disciples to tell that He was “The Christ of God?”

Ans. – Because while He was indeed the Christ of God in His person, He must needs pass through death and resurrection to enter into the great offices of that title. How could He reign over Israel with their sins upon them? He must first bear their sins in His own body on the tree and thus put them away before He can identify them with Him as His own nation. His words to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-27) show this.

Throughout His ministry our Lord ever seeks to hide His Messiahship, except to those who were of faith and could therefore be carried through the times of His humiliation. Even these fainted in a measure, as we see in the two disciples above mentioned.

Thus, while our Lord was as truly the Christ before His death and resurrection as after, He could not be proclaimed abroad as such till the work which is the foundation of that office was accomplished.

And what is true of that office is true of every other. Saviour, King, Priest – every one of [His offices](#) rests upon the work of the cross. In His Person, however, every one of them is true of Him from eternity to eternity, and He could exercise them when and as He pleased. Long before the cross He could, on the ground of it, carry an Enoch and an Elijah straight to heaven bodily.

(Vol.31, p.28).

Christian Scientists

Ques. – Why do “Christian Scientists” look so peaceful and happy? People say there must be something in a religion that does this. And why is this not oftener said of Christians?

Ans. – Because “Christian Scientists” live in a “fool's paradise.” Having taken in the falsehood that there

is really no sin, no evil, no suffering – all these things being but “errors of mortal mind” – the devil, whose existence they deny, deceives them at will.

Of our Lord Jesus it was written: “He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” ... and, “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa.53:3,4). In passing through this scene of sorrow, of evil, of death, how could our Saviour be any other than “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?”

But, as Christians, it is to our reproach that we are not more constantly “rejoicing in the Lord.” But our rejoicing is not in falsely denying that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom.8:22); it is in the Lord – in the peace that God gives, in the assurance of sins forgiven, in the hope of our Lord's return to take us away with Himself. This is not “a fool's paradise,” but faith in God, and His grace triumphing amid the groaning of creation in which we also have a real part. It would be difficult to understand how anyone can receive the shameful deceptions of so-called “Christian Science,” had not God's Word told us that “the god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor.4:4). The very name “Christian Science” is a gross deception, for it is neither Christian nor scientific. It denies sin and atonement; it is therefore opposed to Christianity. And as to Science, it is a burlesque of that.

(Vol.37, p.138).

Christians as Lights

Ques. – Please give an explanation of the shining of Christians as lights in the world. Is it unto God, or unto men? In Matt.5:16 it seems as if it were to men; but in Phil.2:15 it looks as if it were unto God. I find that much activity which is not of God passes for “shining as lights in the world.” If the world cannot understand Christ, nor the springs of a Christian's action, can the true shining of a child of God be really seen by it, especially as the world is blind?

Ans. – The verse following Phil.2:15 explains its meaning. Read the last clause of the 15th and the first of the 16th, and we see the character of the shining. “In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life.” Here we are told we are to shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, and we are to shine by holding forth the Word of life. So also the other passages. In 2 Cor. 4:6 the light has shone into our hearts in order that it might shine out in the life; or, as the apostle says in verse 2, by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

It is sorrowfully true that much that passes for Christian activity is but the energy of the flesh; but this must not lead us to class all service done to the Lord under that head. Thank God, in the midst of the abounding evil there is some true shining, which not only is marked by the eyes of Him who walketh among the candlesticks, but is seen by the world. That the world is dark and blind does not prevent the shining of the light. “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” “The world knoweth us not because it knew Him not.” These scriptures, while they show the blindness of the world, at the same time show that the light has come to them. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Men are responsible to act upon the light which God gives. “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.” Each of us, in our little measure, is to be a light during our Lord's absence. Surely, in view of the nearness of His coming, all His own should rise and “trim their lamps.”

(Vol.13, p.139)

Christmas

Ques. – Will you give your thoughts in *Help and Food* as to Christmas celebrations – Christmas trees, etc.? Are those things right for Christians?

Ans. – It all depends on the purpose of the heart. Generally speaking, the day is used as a public holiday, for feasting and pleasures in which our blessed Lord Jesus has no place. It were far better in such case that Christ's holy name were not associated with it. On the other hand, a large number do think of Christmas as a celebration of our Saviour's birth, and associate innocent pleasures with it for the children, such as a green tree hung with lights and little presents, often accompanied with suited hymns. Let us not condemn such, though thankful when the joy takes more spiritual forms.

(Vol.41, p.50).

Editor's note: earlier contributors to *Help and Food* were not so equivocal. See the following article, taken from Vol.18, p.341

THE OBSERVANCE OF CHRISTMAS

With many the associations of Christmas are suggestive of childhood's joys and of tender reminiscence of scenes of delight in the home circle. In this spirit it is perhaps still observed socially in the family, for the children's sake, by some who are aware that the day itself, in its religious claim and character, has no foundation in Scripture. The question that presents itself therefore is: Can the day be observed innocently in this social way, apart from its false religious character?

It is said that the day celebrated as Christmas, was once the day of a wicked heathen, feast called Saturnalia; and the season suggests the winter solstice as the occasion of the feast – the period of daylight being about to increase. The day being handed down as a Christian festival, and its name, "Christ-Mass," tells the rest. A corrupt church, a corrupt ritualistic sentiment, introducing a novelty among many other novelties, to please – not God, but men. This consideration, of course, is a very serious one, and calls to mind a fertile source of shame and sorrow to the Church: self-will at work – human choice in place of obedience; as among the Galatians, giving occasion for the rebuke, "Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

Let us consider the serious nature of this departure from simplicity. It is that setting aside God's word which, as an evil principle at work, has wrought confusion and corruption far and wide in the Church's history, as of old it wrought the ruin of Israel.

This, then, is the meaning of the day – the establishment of a religious custom, of a sacred day without any command from God. If we do this, where shall we stop? There is no stopping place; and the evil result we have referred to in the previous paragraph.

What, then, is the obligation of the faithful Christian? Should he not consider the observance of the day as a dishonor to the Lord, being disobedience, and therefore opening the door to further departures and dangers, as we have seen? And as to observing it socially with the children in the home circle, ignoring its origin and ecclesiastical claims, can this be done if we have at heart the things that are Christ's? Can we do it without giving up our character as warriors – leaving to others more faithful than ourselves to fight the Lord's battles and

defend the truth? Would it not be a compromise as to the truth, a provision for self indulgence, and a dangerous allowance of the enemy within our borders? The very notice that may be taken of a refusal to observe the day becomes a testimony to the truth, both to people without and to the children at home. And the absence of such testimony tends to perpetuate indifference to an evil which the day represents.

The day is enjoyed with zest by the world in common with the Church, and this is a sufficient warning to us. It is one of the wiles of the devil, against which we need to take to ourselves the "whole armor of God." It is a victory of Satan if he can get our hearts attached to a thing that is unscriptural and worldly in its origin and character. Such an attachment must enfeeble us in the conflict for the enjoyment of our Canaan possessions, and mar the clearness of testimony in the family that should direct the children in the way of reverence for God's word and uncompromising obedience.

Christ's Present Work

Ques. – What has been the employment of our Lord since "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19)? Is He still seated there?

Ans. – "Whom the heavens must receive until the time of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Heb.1:13). "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb.7:25). These and similar scriptures show that our Lord will remain upon the throne till His enemies are put under Him, till He sets up His kingdom. During this time He is engaged in the blessed and needful work of intercession for His people, and fulfilling His work as [Head of His Church](#).

(Vol.18, p.156).

Christ's Work for the World

Ques. – In what sense did Christ bear the sins of the world? (2 Cor.5:19). Some think He took the sins of the whole world and put them away finally, so that men will be judged for nothing but their unbelief.

Ans. – It is a great mistake to limit judgment to unbelief. Scripture is unmistakable in this. Every idle word must be accounted for (Matt.12:36). Men are judged "according to their works" (Rev.20:11-15). See also John 5:28,29; Acts 17:31; Rom.2:1-12. Unbelief is but the crowning sin, a refusal to accept the remedy provided by God – the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, all the passages which speak of Christ's work for the world (1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:14; John 1:29), simply show the freeness of the work of Christ. It is available for all, if they will receive it. Provision has been made and the invitation is given, but if the offer of grace is rejected men are yet in their sins.

(Vol.15, p.56).

Note: See also explanations on [propitiation and substitution](#)

Church (Authority of)

Ans. – The Church has no authority in herself. Her place is that of subjection to her Head and Lord. He makes known His will through the Scriptures by the Spirit. Therefore no action on the part of the assembly contrary to the Word of God is of the least authority. But, believing in the presence of the Spirit of God, and seeing from Scripture the responsibility resting upon the assembly to act for God, no one should raise questions save after prayerful deliberation, and in a scriptural manner.

(Vol.16, p.259).

Note (biblecentre): We need to distinguish authority and infallibility. Governments, parents, etc. all have authority but are not infallible. The church has no authority other than the Lord's (Mt. 18:18-20). See also the [note on binding](#)

Church (The)

Ques. – Where can I find the original [Church](#) which was established by Jesus Christ in the beginning? We read of that Church in the Bible; and the next we hear of the Church is the Roman Catholic, with the Pope as its head. Where is the Church with Christ alone as its [head](#)?

Ans. – The Church is hid in the midst of Roman and Greek corruption, of Protestant confusion, and in and out of the innumerable sects and parties of Christendom. She is composed of every one throughout the world who has repented of his sins, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who is therefore born of God, washed from his sins by the blood of Jesus, and [indwelt by the Holy Spirit](#). Every one of these is united to Christ and to every other member of Christ, by the Spirit of Christ who dwells in him, and they thus form the Church which is [Christ's Body](#) (Rom.12; 1 Cor.12; Eph.5). Christ in heaven is the [Head of that Body](#) (Eph.1:22,23). It remains ever one Body, and cannot be divided, because its unity is a divine work, and not left to the responsibility of man. Had not its members sinned against Christ, there would be between them the same outward, manifest unity in which it ever exists before the eye of God. But sin has broken that unity which is for the eye of man.

(Vol.29, p.139).

Note: The link of life binds each believer to our risen Lord. Were there but one Christian in all the world, the precious truths of a full and eternal salvation would be his. The link of individual communion also holds each believer walking humbly, in practical fellowship with "the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ." Did all but one grow cold and worldly, the sweet privilege of walking and talking with God would still be his in all its fulness, though of course there would be sadness because of the state of the rest.

But when we speak of the Church we do not think merely of individuals, but of the whole [Body of Christ](#). Individual salvation and individual communion there must be, but the Church brings in thoughts of responsibility as well as of privilege. These privileges and their accompanying responsibilities are unfolded to us in the Word of God. The Church is the Body of Christ, He the Head. It is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is therefore one. By the Spirit we are not only members of Christ, but members of one another. The [unity of the Body is to be practically manifested by keeping the unity of the Spirit](#). The Church is one. But this

means one not only in life, but in organism, possession of gifts, testimony, and discipline.

We cannot, if we would, shirk these responsibilities. We cannot go on as individuals, nor even as local assemblies. We are responsible to hold the truth, and seek to exhibit it, of the One Body and the One Spirit. May our God keep us from attempting any other path as seeming more easy. — *Help and Food*, Vol.13, p.220.

Churches (Roman Catholic and Greek)

Ques. — Could you give us a little instruction on the rise of the [Roman Catholic](#) and Greek Churches? Some discussion as to their relative antiquity and claims upon the people of God has been going on here, and we have very little knowledge of the subject.

Ans. — We suppose you are well acquainted with the teaching of Scripture as to the origin of the [New Testament Church](#), which is the Church of God, the [Body of Christ](#). It began on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came from heaven (Acts 2). By the Spirit all who were then believers in the Lord Jesus were “baptized (or formed) into one body” (1 Cor.12:13). Believers without exception since that time have been added to this same Body by the same Spirit, who is to continue here until the Lord comes and [translates the Church](#) to heaven.

For the building up of this Church, the Lord imparted various [gifts](#) — Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers, with minor gifts for minor services.

In due time some of the gifts, forgetting their purpose was to serve the people of God, assumed a place like the rulers of this world, which the Lord expressly forbids (Matt.23:10-12). This made two classes of believers — a [clergy and a laity](#). The clergy of the more important towns soon felt themselves above those of the smaller towns. Rome, being the capital of the Empire, the clergy there quickly acquired the ascendancy, until, under the Emperor Constantine, who associated the Church with the State, Popery (one of the clergy above all the rest) took a definite form, with its attending prelates, princes, lords, fathers, doctors — a shameless caricature of what the Lord Jesus intended the ministry to be. In no sphere of life may one find a greater measure of ambition, covetousness, intrigue, and corruption than here. And this is what is called the [Roman Catholic Church](#). It has no more claim upon God's people than a counterfeit check has upon the cashier of a bank.

When, at the end of the fourth century of the Christian Era, the Roman Empire (do not confound the Empire with the Church) became divided, Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Empire, acquired great prominence, and a conflict arose between its clergy and that of Rome, capital of the Western Empire, as to which of the two would dominate. The result was a break, and the Eastern Churches, generally adhering to the Bishop of Constantinople, founded together what is called the Greek Church, which differs but little in character from the Roman Catholic; for her parting from Rome was not through righteous and holy motives, as with [Protestantism](#) later on.

A strong effort is now in progress to undo the divisions of Christendom and unionize it; but God, His holiness, His Word, are left out, and while every Christian heart loves Christian unity, every honest conscience loves truth above all. Mere camp-followers will yield anything to the enemy. They who have taken an honest stand with truth cannot yield it. To attempt to force their consciences is but to increase division. [Separation from evil](#) is a necessity. When He assembles all the members of His Church to Himself above, at His coming for them, every wrong unconfessed here will be humbly confessed there, and nothing more will hinder the unity of the Spirit. The condition seen in Acts 2 will not only be

restored but perfected, nevermore to be disturbed, and then will be witnessed by all God's intelligent creatures the glory of the grace that could form such a holy, heavenly unit out of sinners of every description.

We have said more than our space allows, perhaps. The subject is so large, so interesting, and so instructive too, if we will let history – the past experience – make us wise for the present.

We would advise you to obtain from our Publishers some of the books on [Church History](#) which they furnish at different prices. Read in the family during the long winter evenings, they will enlarge the children's minds by giving them often sad but useful information.

(Vol.34, p.222).

Circle of Fellowship

Ques. – So much has been made of late years of the doctrine of a “circle of fellowship” (which is new to me), and I would like to ask what truths are necessary to be held in order to be in such “Circle?” and who has authority to say who is in or out of said “circle?” Do not the boards of the tabernacle represent individual members of the Body of Christ, indwelt by the same Spirit? Would not such a doctrine tend to great positional pride and consequent looseness of walk and practice? I can find no scriptural solution for any body of Christians being in any degree above their brethren elsewhere in the eyes of God; does not godliness, with humility and self-judgment, constitute the highest place wherever found? It seems to me that the time has come to hear the last call of our Lord to individual testimony (Rev.3:20). It must be a blessed place for those who have faith to take it, and who cannot conscientiously go on with the worldliness and unrighteousness that they have to go on with in the professed assemblies of God today. If wrong, I am willing to be shown.

Ans. – How does it come that you know that “so much has been made of late years of the doctrine of ‘a circle of fellowship,’” and that it is “news” to you? Is it like the Bible to many, who know that “much fuss is made about it,” and know nothing of it? In some things ignorance is a virtue; in others it is guilt.

But to your questions one by one: First of all, let us say with sorrow, that had not the Church gone astray, there would now be seen all over the world but one circle of fellowship, that of the [Church of God](#). But she has gone astray to such an extent that it has been said her annals were “the annals of hell.” What formed the “Protestant” circle of fellowship? It was the abominations of what called itself “the only and true church.” And since Protestants have formed a new circle of fellowship, by separating from [Rome](#), what causes have they not given for necessary circles of fellowship out of them also. Would you remain among a people where “Higher Criticism” makes God a liar – substituting their dictum for His Word; denying the Deity and virgin-birth of Christ, the atoning sacrifice, and the resurrection of our Saviour? If you did, you would in the end become like them; for the Word of God says: “Evil communications corrupt good manners,” and the Word of God makes no mistakes. If you did not, you would find yourself separated from them. 2 Tim.2:15, et seq., treats of such conditions, and gives us instruction how to meet them. Verse 20 gives the corrupted conditions; verse 21 the remedy for such as desire to be faithful; verse 22 gives the new-formed **circle of fellowship**, which extends to those in the same path. As you see, it is not “what truths are necessary to be held in order to be in such circle.” It is a divine path accepted, which places one with others who are of a like mind, willing to accept the reproach of Christ.

Such a circle will not pretend to be the Church, the [Body of Christ](#), but it will confess “there is one Body,” and that it is as members of it they assemble together, separated from others only to avoid the evils from which the Word of God bids them to be separate.

That there is danger here of “positional pride” we know but too well. Is there any less danger in what you mention as “the last call of our Lord to individual testimony?” We have never met with greater pride than with individuals who can associate with no one. Of course in any case it must be individual faithfulness, or else I am only following others – a miserable thing, bringing shame and grief in the end. But, in faithfully taking the path appointed of God, if we are humble, we soon find ourselves in the company of others.

You ask: “Does not godliness, with humility and self-judgment, constitute the highest place wherever found?” You confound state with place. A man may be in the highest place, but in a bad state. Israel were by the grace of God set in the highest place among the nations of the earth, and they fell into the lowest state.

We do not know what is your ecclesiastical place, but we pity any one who has to go on with the state you describe among “professed assemblies of God today.” Even the apostles found in their day plenty of evils to correct among the assemblies of God, but the Word of God ministered by them was heeded.

(Vol.32, p.250).

City (The Eternal)

Ques. – As to the eternal city, is not the tabernacle in the wilderness, with the camp surrounding it, a type of it?

Ans. – Yes; save that it is important to guard against the thought that the heavenly city is upon earth. That, it never is, but always “eternal in the heavens,” like the glorified bodies of those who will inhabit it.

(Vol.14, p.84).

Classes (The Three)

Ques. – Are there any other than the three classes, “the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God” (1 Cor.10:32)?

Ans. – The three classes spoken of by the apostle clearly embrace the whole world: he supposes none other to whom to give offence.

(Vol.8, p.196).

Clothed

Ques. – What is the meaning of the expression, “If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked” (2 Cor.5:3)?

Ans. – This third verse has evidently not the same meaning as verses 2 and 4. There the expressions are “clothed upon” and “unclothed,” referring respectively to the resurrection body and the disembodied spirit. In verse 3, however, we have not “unclothed,” but “naked,” which seems to have a distinct moral meaning in Scripture – unfitness for the presence of God (Rev. 3:17,18). Instead of “clothed upon,” we have simply “clothed,” – having the “best robe,” Christ, put upon us. The verse, then, simply means that the apostle was saved, was ready to depart and be with Christ. He was already clothed, and

therefore had no fear of being found naked, even if unclothed as to his mortal body. The thought seems to be suggested naturally from the second verse. He is then speaking of the natural hope of the Christian of being "clothed upon" – having his resurrection body – and adds, "If, indeed, being also clothed, we shall not be found naked" – that is, if, indeed, we are saved people, and not mere professors.

(Vol.13, p.56).

Coats of Skins

Ques. – In Genesis 3:21 we have the account of God clothing Adam and Eve with coats of skins. Does this imply that they were saved?

Ans. – That alone would not, for it might have been done simply as a type of what to us is salvation. But in calling his wife Eve (Gen. 3:20) Adam shows his faith in God's testimony concerning the promised Seed of the woman (v.15), and wherever there is true faith in what God reveals, there is salvation. The measure of spiritual intelligence depends upon the measure of the revelation given, and received in the heart; but whatever the measure of the revelation, the believing God is salvation. Abraham believed God's promise of a son when he was old and childless; "He believed the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Gen.15:3-6).

(Vol.34, p.196).

Communion

Ques. – Is Rev.3:19,20 a purely individual communion? And is the assembly, or collective testimony, disowned?

Ans. – This is plainly individual communion here, as indeed all true communion must ever be. It is also plain that God is here about to spew out of His mouth that which calls itself the Church; but it must not be forgotten that Philadelphia goes on to the end, as well as Thyatira and Sardis; and that such in Laodicea as sup with Him, and He with them, are not Laodicean in character, but Philadelphian. Nor is God less pleased with their collective testimony than in brighter times. The admonition, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," is the more urgent "as we see the day approaching." We need not surely, in so doing, call ourselves