

A
CLEAN CHURCH

W. Carl Ketcherside

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Studies in Discipline for Soldiers in the Army
of the King of Kings

By
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*T*HE author respectfully dedicates
this book to the faithful churches of
Christ, whose support has made it
possible for him to write the volume.

PREFACE

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

Two salesmen came dashing through the gate at the railroad station, and busily engaged in conversation, boarded a railway passenger car sitting on the track. When they had placed their sample cases in the rack overhead, and had adjusted themselves in the seat, a train porter came through the car. He asked, "How come you gentlemen are in this car? Wheah you all goin'?" One of them replied, "We're going where this car goes!" The colored man replied, "Then, boss, you're not goin' anywhere, because this car ain't goin' nowhere!" "What makes you so sure of that?" asked the salesman. "I know what I'm talkin' about," replied the porter, "This car is not goin' anywhere because it ain't got no engine. It's not hooked on to anything!"

That's the reason a lot of churches are not getting anywhere. They are not hooked on to anything. They've broken the coupling of love and faith between themselves and the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are powerless and inert spiritually. Not long ago, I was riding one night on a streetcar. As we negotiated a sharp curve on the line, the lights suddenly went out, the car ceased to throb with energy, and came to a dead stop. I did not know what the trouble was, but the motorman did. Going outside and to the rear of the car, he took hold of the guy rope for the trolley pole and fished around with it, until he brought the trolley once more in contact

with the overhead wire. Instantly the lights came on, the car began to pulsate with hidden power, and we were soon making forward progress. The power had been there all of the time, but we had just lost contact with it.

All the power there is in the church comes from that great central dynamo of heaven. Like the trolley car, the church gets its power from above. There is enough energy provided to drive the church forward as a conquering institution which can overcome all obstacles, but in too many cases, the trolley pole has jumped off the line. We need to have constant contact with Jesus, through prayer and the Bible, if we are to "turn the world upside down" as did the early church. Yes, it is true that the church is often held back because it has lost contact with the One who has gone ahead.

Sometimes, though, the church is stopped in her tracks, because she is attempting to drag too much of a weight behind her. Perhaps you have heard of the man who borrowed his friend's boat one dark night, in order that he might row across the river to his home. Clambering in, he picked up the oars from the locks and began to toil and pull on them. He could make no progress, although he bent to the task and the perspiration burst out upon his brow. Finally, he gave up and sat down on the bank of the stream to wait until daylight. With the dawn, he learned that the boat was chained to a dead log, which he could not see in the darkness. He could get nowhere because he was trying to drag too much dead timber.

Many congregations are at a stand-still. They make no growth in the spiritual life of the membership. The community accepts the church much as it does the sectarian bodies about them. The church has become just another denomination in the eyes of the world. The sad feature about all of this is that many of those in the church of Christ "love to have it so." Unless we cease to try and make the church what the world wants it to be, and make of it what Jesus expects it to be, we forfeit our right to exist as a people. We must be right not only in doctrine, but in practice.

The subject of discipline of a corrective nature is ignored by dozens of congregations of believers! They profess to love Jesus and yet refuse to obey the command to put away sin from among them. With an earnest desire to avert division and strife in the future; to build up and edify the church in the present; and to help correct some of our mistakes in the past, I have written this book.

I acknowledge freely my inability to make this volume what I would like for it to be, and although it sets forth my deep convictions upon this important matter, I ask that those who review it do so without sparing me. Let the truth be known! If error is contained in the reasoning set forth in these pages, let it be refuted, and that in such a manner as will keep men and women from being led astray by it! I will appreciate it greatly, if the spirit of those who review it, be charitable and friendly, but let us forget the attitude of those who criticize and learn from their criticism. So I plead that all feeling for

the writer be banished, and the subject-matter be exposed to the searchlight of God's Truth.

I beseech all of the brethren, humbly and sincerely, to think upon the things set forth in these pages. May God be with and bless those who read, that they may be led to search the scriptures daily to see if these things be so. And may all of us be influenced to a closer walk with God, so that the church may grow and prosper, and the Cause of Christ be strengthened throughout the world. Let us all "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

—*W. Carl Ketcherside*

SIN IN THE CAMP

The bodies of the thirty-six dead soldiers lay crumpled on the hillside before the city gate. The leaders of God's army were sore afraid. The "hearts of the people melted, and became as water." Joshua and all the elders of Israel fell to the earth before the ark of God, and put dust upon their heads.

Then it was that the voice of God spoke. "*Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them . . . therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies . . . neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.*"

Only a few days before the armies of Israel had finished their thirteenth circuit of the city of Jericho. The priests had sounded a blast upon the rams' horn trumpets, the people had given a lusty shout, and the walls had fallen down. Because all of the first fruits belong unto the Lord, including those of conquest, the order had been given, "*All the city shall be devoted, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord. . . . All the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.*" To the best of the knowledge of Joshua, the command had been carried out fully.

Then the time came for the attack to be launched against the second city, Ai. In characteristic fashion, Joshua sent men to spy out the city and to determine the best strategy to follow in deploying

his soldiers. The spies returned with the report that the full army would not be needed. The population of the place was negligible, and it was suggested that only about three thousand armed men go up in the foray. Joshua hearkened unto the advice of his spies, but something unforeseen happened. The men of Ai poured from their city gates, and the men of Israel could not stand against them. They turned their backs upon the enemy and fled in the wildest disorder. Three dozen of the soldiers paid with their lives for the attack.

Joshua went to his knees in prayer! Then it was that God told him to get up and revealed that it was not a time for prayer, but for action. He demanded that the congregation put away the sin that was among them, and stated, "*Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.*" The next day, Joshua determined that one of the members of the tribe of Judah, Achan by name, had stolen a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. He had hidden the spoil under the floor of his tent.

Messengers were sent to bring the stolen booty. It was displayed in the presence of all Israel that there might be no question as to the guilt of Achan. Having established beyond question the sin and the sinner, the whole congregation took the guilty man and his family down into the valley of Achor and there stoned them to death. The record of the event closes with the significant words, "*So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger.*"

A LESSON FOR THE CHURCH

Of the events which transpired in the life of ancient Israel, the apostle Paul declares, "*Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted*" (1 Corinthians 10:6). We need to consider such narratives of God's dealings with his people, for "*they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Again we read, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*" (Romans 15:4). The apostle again referring to an expression from the Old Testament says, "*For our sakes, no doubt, this is written*" (1 Corinthians 9:10).

In view of all of these statements, we may well look for the enunciation of some of the principles upon which God bases his association with his people, in the story of Achan. Let us enumerate a few of them, in outline fashion.

1. It is possible for sin to exist in the congregation of God's people without the leadership being aware thereof. Joshua did not know of the trespass of Achan. This fact does not justify toleration of sin, when it is known to the leaders.

2. Sin in the church often affects others than the sinner, and may even cause those who have not been guilty, to stumble and fall. There were thirty-six men who died as a result of the sin mentioned in our text. That is one of the grievous results of sin. It has an influence over others who may not even have been involved.

3. When sin is known to be in the congregation, it is a time for action rather than for prayer. It is true that we are to pray always, and in all things, but it is never true that prayer is a substitute for another command. When God informs an alien sinner to be baptized for the remission of sins, he cannot obtain remission by praying to God. When God instructs the church to withdraw from those who are disorderly, we cannot pray them out, but we must take formal action.

4. The church can only stand against her enemies when she lives up to the profession she makes. Unless the lives of the members preach the same kind of sermon as the tongue of the speaker, the church will be in disrepute. The prophet Nathan asked David, "*Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? . . . By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*" (2 Samuel 12: 9, 14).

Paul condemns the Jews for their hypocritical pretence, and tells them that they preach a double-standard, one for those who hear and another for themselves, and as a result declares, "*For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you*" (Romans 2: 24). Of sinners in her midst, the church may say as did old Jacob to his murderous sons, "*Ye have troubled me to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land*" (Genesis 34: 30). Often we are forced to turn our backs unto the enemy when they fling the cruel darts of accusation about the lives of the members. No power on earth can

face the church and overthrow it when all of the members are following holiness, without which no man can see the Lord!

5. God's people should not postpone action essential to purifying and cleansing the church. Many times there are those in the number of disciples who are fearful and fainthearted. They do not want sin condemned publicly in positive terms. They do not want the church to take action about which the world will hear. They would prefer that the world know the church is tolerating sin than to have it learn that the church is made up of those who are living consecrated lives. The Lord said, "*You cannot stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing*" (Joshua 7:13). It is noteworthy that "*Joshua rose up early in the morning and brought Israel*" (verse 16) and we too should begin at once to cleanse the congregation.

6. The steps leading to sin are outlined in the confession of Achan. "*I saw . . . I coveted . . . took . . . hid*" (verse 21). If we would not look upon sinful things we would always be free from sin. However, if we do see them, we should not covet them. "*Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then lust when it has conceived bringeth forth sin*" (James 1:14, 15). Sin produces a guilty conscience, a desire to hide! It is interesting that the first sin followed the very same steps mentioned by Achan. Satan has not changed the bait on his hook from that day to this.

7. The proof of guilt should always be well established before any public discipline is administered.

Joshua was not content with the mere acknowledgment of the sin, but sent messengers to the tent, who found the stolen items and brought them to Joshua and all of the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. This would preclude the possibility of any member of Israel later affirming that an innocent man had been punished.

8. The punishment was administered by the entire congregation. It was not the work of Joshua and the elders alone. They guided the body of people in ascertaining the guilty person, the nature of the crime, and the correct penalty. But the discipline was the act of the entire group. "*All Israel stoned him with stones*" (Joshua 7: 25).

This was in exact conformity with the law. God had stated through Moses, "*If there be found among you . . . man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God . . . you shall stone them with stones until they die. . . . The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of ALL THE PEOPLE. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you*" (Deut. 17: 2-7). Incidentally, in this passage is found another statement of the care that should be exercised in determining guilt before action is taken. God said, "*If it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain.*" No man can be scripturally disciplined upon mere hearsay, but when there is a question, diligent inquiry must be made into the facts of the case, until the truth and certainty of the accusation be established. It was

a matter of God's law of justice that no person should be condemned upon the testimony of one man, but two or three witnesses were required to establish an accusation. That principle has been carried into the New Testament.

9. God's wrath is kindled against his people when they knowingly tolerate sin among them. The only way to set aside that wrath is by getting rid of the sin. The church cannot prosper as long as it places a low estimate upon sin. It must realize that God's people are to be a holy people. There is much in the little word "So" as used in the Bible. After describing in detail the method by which Achan and family received punishment, the record declares, "*So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger*" (verse 26). This means simply that in the manner described was the Lord turned from anger. Let us not forget that the anger of the Lord was directed to the congregation which tolerated the sinner as well as to the guilty person. This is made plain in the first verse of the chapter under consideration.

The question is sometimes asked, "Why did God demand the punishment of the family of Achan as well as the head of the house?" The law established the fact that one who had knowledge of a trespass and refused to make it known, would bear his iniquity (Leviticus 5:1). Those who uphold evildoers, even of their own kindred, are as guilty as the ones whom they defend, and should be subjected to the same punishment. In the case of Achan all of his physical properties and personal possessions

were completely covered with the heap of stones, that they might be a witness of the guilt of this man who lost the right to share in the glories of the promised land because of his covetousness.

In the days of Joshua, God dealt with Israel as "children of the flesh" (Romans 9: 8), but now he deals with spiritual Israel. If the law that he gave to them was so rigid in its requirements, can we be justified by setting aside or frustrating his spiritual law in these days? Will God recognize a congregation that tolerates within its number those who are covetous, fornicators, idolators, liars, and otherwise guilty of trespass and transgression? Can we be saved if we emphasize the command which brings people into our fellowship when worthy, and disregard the one by which they should be removed when unworthy? Does God mean it when he commands us in the name of Christ to withdraw ourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly? If we keep the whole law and yet violate this one point, can we please our Maker?

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

American educators have had to change their minds within the past few years. They have come to the conclusion that the psychological ideas which have been foisted upon them in years gone by have worked to the detriment of the schools and have actually contributed to juvenile delinquency. You see, up to the time when these vain speculators began to inject their wild theories, teachers were given authority to punish recalcitrant pupils, and did so. Then some one evolved the idea that children should not be curbed or repressed, but rather permitted freedom of expression. It was thought that a refusal to permit a child to do as he pleased might develop certain inhibitions and complexes. As a result of this hypothesis, the teachers were forbidden the privilege of punishing the disobedient students. With the disappearance of authority from the schoolrooms of the nation, a disrespect of all government crept in. At last we have aroused to the fact that you cannot maintain an institution such as a school without law and discipline.

Virtually the same condition existing in the educational institutions of our land has also been in effect within the domestic circles of the homes of the nation. The country has heard much about the move to "free the women" and the wives and mothers have assumed a prominent place in the political life of the commonwealth, often to the neglect of their homes and marital responsibilities. Has the disregard for the word of the husband produced happi-

ness? Has the so-called "equality basis for the sexes" brought about the joyful Utopia which it was predicted would be ushered in? On the contrary, our divorce courts are filled with cases, and broken homes are so common that sympathy is no longer extended to those who have made a failure of the most intimate union known to the world. A home cannot exist without authority and discipline. If everyone is the "head of the house" no one is!

When children tell the father and mother what to do, and make them do it, there comes about an overthrow of God's order. The result is chaos and suffering. Most of the difficulties in this life arise from the fact that someone gets out of his proper place. As long as everyone stays in his allotted sphere and improves himself within it, happiness will obtain. Children are to be in subjection to parents, and not the parents to the children. Homes cannot continue unless discipline is recognized.

No army can weld itself into a strong fighting unit without discipline. If each member of the ranks is permitted to do as he pleases without consulting or considering the rights of others, morale would go down to nothing, and inefficiency would undermine every attempt against the enemy. The officers of the army demand respect, and they receive it. Even the privates who grumble about their superiors admit they would be at sad loss without someone to issue orders.

The church is the school of Christ. Here it is that we attend as pupils to learn the most important lessons of life. If every pupil could do as he pleased

without recourse to the instructions laid down by our superintendent, Jesus Christ, it would militate against the best interests of all. The word church means "called out" and it is made up of those who are called out of the world. If, after having been summoned from the world to live on a higher plane, the members can continue to compromise with the former life which they lived, it is evident that the church will be reduced to a mere worldly institution. The church needs discipline!

It must be recalled also that the church is God's house. It consists of his family. Instructions are issued for the conduct of those who are members of that family. Paul said, "*These things write I unto thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God*" (1 Timothy 3: 15). Unfortunately all of God's children do not behave themselves as they are taught to do by the Holy Spirit. Under such circumstances they must be chastened. "*For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons*" (Hebrews 12: 5, 6).

Too, the church is the spiritual army of God. No other representative figure is used more frequently by the apostle to describe the relationships of the church. We are told to "*war a good warfare*" (1 Timothy 1: 18), and to "*endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Timothy 2: 3). God's army is divided into congregational units, and faithful men who are qualified are to rule over these and to exercise authority according to the "manual of

arms" laid down for us by the captain of our salvation. Every soldier is expected to be a member of a local unit, or congregation, and subject to its discipline. It is just as foolish to think that members may be "free lances" in the spiritual army of God, as to think of someone in the United States army without proper identification with a company or branch of service.

Some there are who think that because they are members of the Church of Christ, they may be "at home where their hat's off," without congregational allegiance or responsibility, but this is not according to the Scripture. The mere fact that a man is a soldier in the United States Army, does not mean that he will not be assigned to a specific company and subject to his immediate officers. Any other arrangement would soon bring disorder and confusion into the armed forces. The same will occur within the church, if such a condition is tolerated.

DEFINITION OF DISCIPLINE

A short time ago, a young man said to me, "I do not think that preachers ought to spend their time preaching on discipline. I do not believe in discipline!" The speaker demonstrated that he did not know what he was talking about. Under such circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that he did not know what the preachers were talking about.

Many individuals think that discipline in the church has to do exclusively with the withdrawal of fellowship from the ungodly. This is a sad mistake. It is true that excommunication from the

fellowship is a part of discipline, but it is a very small part of it, and is only the ultimate of discipline, or, that is, discipline carried to its final act, insofar as the church is able to administer it.

Discipline means, "Mental or moral training; education; subjection to control; regulation; chastisement." If you are ever inclined to make such a sweeping statement as did the young man referred to above, just glance at this definition. Do you believe in mental or moral training? Do you believe in education? Do you believe in control or regulation? Then, you believe in discipline.

The guardhouse does not constitute the only discipline to which the soldier must submit. It is only for those who will not submit to discipline in general! Even the routine affairs of the soldier's life constitute a part of his discipline. He learns to arise at a certain time each morning; he learns to make his bed; he learns to use his weapon; to march in unison; to work in harmony with others.

Just so, every act of our Christian life, is a part of the discipline to which we must submit. Our attendance at the worship service of the church, our participation in the edification meetings, our study of the Word even when we are tired, our conquest of evil habits which have formerly held us in their grasp: these are all part of our training, our mental and spiritual education. It is only when men will not study the Word, when they refuse to attend the services of the church, when they maintain the evil habits of their worldly days, that they become subjects of the public discipline of the church. It should

be remembered always that PUBLIC DISCIPLINE is applied only to those who will not PERSONALLY DISCIPLINE themselves. There could be no public discipline administered if all were careful to discipline themselves.

OUR SUBJECT

This book is not intended to be a "Book of Discipline" for the church. There can be but one book of discipline, the inspired Word of God. In it God, through the Holy Spirit, has revealed unto us all that is essential to doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3: 16).

We do not intend herein to cover every phase of the discipline of the Christian life. To do so, we would need to reproduce the New Testament in its entirety, and without alteration, modification, addition or subtraction. This would be absurd, since we already have the New Testament.

We shall deal primarily with the corrective phases of discipline. God has laid down for us certain great and abiding principles. He has not always given us the minute details for application of these to each specific case. In such matters, we must utilize the judgment and intelligence, with which we have been furnished. We cannot legislate, we cannot make laws. But we must apply the laws of God in a way consistent to the Christian walk, always bearing in mind such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 14: 40; Romans 14: 22, and kindred passages.

In order to be faithful to God, the church must obey the commands that have been given to it; not

just those which are easy to fulfil, but ALL of the commands. No congregation can merit God's approval unless it cleanses itself as far as possible from sin. It must remove from its fellowship and communion those who refuse to walk orderly before the Lord. A refusal to do this, means that the Lord will disfellowship the congregation, that is, he "will remove the candlestick out of its place."

It is with a fervent desire to see the churches of Christ merit the approval of our Father above, that we send forth these messages. It is obvious that we cannot answer all of the questions that will be asked on this important subject. Perhaps the discussions which will be provoked by the things herein written, will work for good by causing many to "search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so." Such an attitude is characteristic of the nobility of God. Let us diligently pursue our study of what God demands of each of us. Then let us put into practice the divine requirements.

PERSONAL OFFENCES

The New Testament teaches that there are two kinds of offences which become matters of church discipline. These are public and private offences. The manner of handling each of these is prescribed in principle, and because of the nature of them, the methods differ in their incipency. The terms "offence" and "trespass" are used interchangeably in Luke 17:1-4, thus it is scriptural to refer to "public and private offences" or to "public and personal trespasses."

Private offences are those which directly affect individuals only, and such as are known to individuals only in their origin. When a private injury is made public and becomes known promiscuously and generally, it passes from the realm of a private to that of a public offence. Herein lies the wisdom of the Father in making such a definite distinction in the two, for all of the regulations with reference to private offences have been given in order to keep them from becoming public.

The reasons for limiting private offences in scope, and of providing for their settlement before they reach the public notice, are these:

- (1) To make for ease of adjustment of the difficulty. The more people who become entangled in an affair, the more involved it becomes. Further, human nature being what it is, the great danger of partiality and factionism entering to offset a permanent settlement increases according to the ratio of those who are informed secretly by each of the

principals in the case. Two men might get together and settle a case of offence in a few minutes, but if even their families have been informed of the trespass, many complications could arise. Inasmuch as it is the purpose of God to have us dwell together in the unity of the Spirit, and keep the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3), that method which most quickly provides for the forgiveness of an injury is best.

(2) To limit the influence of the trespass on the lives of weaker brethren. The church is made up of both strong and weak. In every congregation there are those who have recently accepted Christ. Their knowledge is limited and they are still in the swaddling-clothes of their initial obedience. Our desire in all things should be to build them up. Anything which would not be for their edification should be avoided. In order to carry out this idea, consideration must be given those who are immature in the Christian life. "*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification*" (Romans 15:1, 2). Our duty toward the fainthearted is to extend comfort, and toward the weak to lend support (1 Thess. 5:14). We should carefully avoid anything which might discourage them until they are strong enough to bear the full measure of Christian responsibility.

In almost every case of church trouble, there are those who have become disheartened, and have fallen out by the way. They reason that if brethren who have been in the family of God for so many years cannot adjust their differences and show a spirit

of brotherly love, there is little use of them attempting to manifest the life of the Master. It is quite apparent that if every private injury were made the subject of public discussion and trial, the church would be continually in an uproar, and few indeed would be able to keep confidence amidst such a consistent storm. It is a truly wonderful provision which has been made for settling private offences in private.

(3) To keep the church from being distracted from its major task of saving humanity. The mission of the One Body is the same as that of its founder, it is *"to seek and save the lost."* While Jesus was on earth, *"one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man who made me a judge or a divider over you?"* (Luke 12:13, 14). It appears that the church in many instances has spent years and exhausted its efforts in attempting to adjust difficulties, many of which should never have been called to its attention.

When a matter of private offence is broached to the overseers of the church it is not their duty or privilege to inquire into the matter immediately. Rather, it is their obligation to inquire if the scriptural procedure has been followed by the aggrieved party. If it has not, he should be forthwith instructed to carry out the commands relative to scriptural adjustment of private injuries, and until those commands are obeyed, the matter is not the concern of the church as such.

(4) To keep the world from blaspheming the

gospel of Christ. The enemies of the church are constantly on the alert. They are watching the conduct of the members, not for their good, but for the overthrow of the gospel. Nothing pleases Satan more than to be able to sow discord among brethren, and to create confusion among those who have previously worked together in one accord. While it is true that it is impressive upon the world for the church to exclude someone who is guilty of a public sin, it is just as true that it is harmful before the world for members to parade their petty accusations against each other in public. It is affirmed by the Scriptures that "*tattlers and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not*" tend to "*give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully*" (1 Timothy 5: 13, 14). One of the reasons for the regulation of the private conduct of all of us, is "*that the word of God be not blasphemed*" (Titus 2: 5).

God's arrangement being what it is, he who makes public a private offence, without applying all corrective remedies, violates God's law and thwarts the divine purpose. His sin may become greater than the original offence against him. It is amazing how members of the Body will side-step the divine provisions. Only those who love the church more than personal vindication will suffer in silence.

We know of a sister in the church who called up at least six persons on the telephone, and told them everyone the details of what had been done toward her by another sister in the church. In every case, she closed her conversation with the warning, "Don't tell anyone about this yet, because you know it's a

private offence, and I suppose I'll have to talk with her about it first."

This case is not more ridiculous than that of the preacher who wrote up one of his brethren in a religious paper and circulated it far and wide to members, non-members and sectarians. When approached on the matter by some of the brethren, he told them that it was none of their business, for it was a personal affair between himself and the brother, although he had never previously spoken to the brother about most of the accusations he made.

THE LAW FOR PERSONAL OFFENCES

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18: 15-17).

Inasmuch as this is the basic law governing adjustment of personal injuries, it will be well to analyze it. Correct analysis demands that we determine the subjects, action, direction of the action, method and purpose. All of these are set forth in the very first sentence. The subjects (persons) involved are brethren in relationship, and they are two in number: the offender, the offended. The

action is manifested in two words, "Go" and "Tell." The direction of the action is from the offended to the offender, that is, it is made obligatory upon the offended to go to the offender, and when he arrives, to tell the offender of his fault. This is very plain, and rightfully so, since all may become offended at some time in their lives, and the law governing the action must be specific and couched in no ambiguous terms.

The method of adjustment is set forth by one word "alone." This forbids positively the circulation of the fault by the offended, prior to the time he has gone to his brother and told him of the matter. How many times this has been violated in the past. As always, when God's law is trampled upon, suffering must result!

The purpose of the action and method is expressed in the words "gain thy brother." Of utmost importance is it to remember that this motive should be ever predominant in our negotiations. Whatever therefore is necessary to gain our brother without compromising God's Word, should be employed. This necessitates love, kindness, forbearance, and the other virtues which are so much a part of the Christian life. When you gain a brother you make a friend; when you lose him you make an enemy.

It may be asked as to what is expected of the offender in order to make proper adjustment of the case, and to restore a feeling of amity with the offended. This depends upon the nature of the fault. Sometimes it occurs that offence is the result of misunderstanding. This requires only a thorough

EXPLANATION producing a consequent understanding.

One of his neighbors reports to A, that Brother B told him that A had not read his Bible all summer.

The neighbor adds that B surely does not have a very high regard for the status of A, as a Christian. Upon hearing this, A goes to B immediately, and asks if it is true that he told the neighbor that he had not read his Bible all summer. B readily acknowledges that he did so, and adds, "I told him that you had not read your Bible all summer because the condition of your eyes would not permit it, and I also expressed my regret, because I know how much comfort the Word has been to you in the past. However, the thing I had in mind especially was the fact that we miss your public teaching so much, and I have always had the highest regard for your ability in explaining the teachings of the Book." Certainly such an explanation should correct any false impression, and be acceptable without even a request for forgiveness, since B is not really at fault, but the offense was actually in the construction placed upon his words by the neighbor.

Often, however, the case demands genuine repentance upon the part of the offender, for where an obvious fault exists, there must be a reformation and request for forgiveness. Let me state an actual case which came under my observation:

A and B were members of the same congregation, and both were members of the local schoolboard for a rural district. When the time came to secure a teacher for the coming year, A was very insistent

that the wife of his brother be given the position. B, having known of the inefficiency of the woman in a previous school, and realizing that she had been dismissed because of her lack of ability to maintain discipline, opposed the suggestion of A very strenuously. With the aid of the third member of the board, who was not a Christian, he secured another teacher.

This action incensed A to a high degree, and resulted in his writing an insulting letter to B, who took it and went to the home of A to effect some sort of reconciliation. He requested an acknowledgement of error from his brother, but was arrogantly refused. In this instance, a change of heart followed by a request for forgiveness was certainly in order. I regret to say that it was not thus adjusted and eventually A had to be excluded from the fellowship of the church, by reason of his conduct.

Where a direct loss results to the offended through a fault of the offender, restitution is required. A mere acknowledgment of wrong without subsequent restitution is not sufficient. It is true that the offended may waive the restitution, or suffer himself to be defrauded, but it is a belief of the writer that true repentance includes restitution where such is demanded. It is a part of the "*fruits worthy of repentance*" (Matthew 3: 8).

Brethren X and Y live on adjoining farms. Y sends his son to borrow a tractor from X to use in his fall plowing. The son breaks a part on the tractor but returns it to the premises of X without informing him of the fact. When X goes out to use

the tractor he discovers the broken part, and is offended at the action of the son of Y. He goes to the father about the matter, and Y expresses his regret that the tractor was broken while in his employ, and offers to replace the damaged part and make what adjustment is fair and right. This is the proper way to settle such a case, because it follows a scriptural principle.

Long before the days of modern machinery, God laid down this law, "*If a man borrow ought of his neighbor, and it be hurt or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make it good*" (Exodus 22:14). If in the above-mentioned example, X had hired out to Y to use his tractor in plowing, and had broken it while driving it himself, there would have been no complaint against nor recovery from Y. This principle of justice is also recognized in God's Old Testament law. "*But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: it is a hired thing, it came for his hire.*" While we are not under the Old Testament as a rule of faith and practice, the principles upon which justice are extended do not alter.

THE SECONDARY APPROACH

When neither explanation, repentance or restitution, is forthcoming, the aggrieved must make a further attempt to keep the private injury from becoming a matter of public note. He must select witnesses and take with him for another interview. That these witnesses are not to be mere observers, is evidenced by the expression, "*If he shall neglect to*

hear them." This proves that they are to admonish and intercede in the hope that their words may be effective where the entreaties of the offended party were unavailing.

Nothing is said with regard to the qualifications of such witnesses, but it will be admitted by all that they should be selected from among the saints, since their testimony will be used as corroboration before the church, if the offender will not hear them. No one will deny, therefore, that they should be humble, sincere, and of reputation among the brethren. They should be men who have influence upon the offender, for the uppermost desire yet, should be to save him.

When it is apparent that the witnesses selected have no means of settling the difficulty, the next instruction is to "tell it unto the church." This passage has occasioned considerable difficulty in itself in the past, opinion being divided as to whether it means merely that the case should be reported to the church, or if it means that it should be tried publicly before the church, with the church as such sitting in judgment.

We incline to the view that it means simply that the aggrieved party is to report to the elders of the church that the offense has been given. They should then enquire if he has fulfilled the law with reference to attempted adjustment. Upon being assured that he has, they can then summon the witnesses to testify that they admonished and warned the offender, but without success. The testimony of such faithful witnesses is all that is required for the church to act, and that they are to testify is made plain from

the specification as to their choice, "*Take with thee one or more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established*" (Matt. 18: 16).

If further examination need be made to assure that there will be no miscarriage of justice it may be done by the elders, who have the right to summon both of the principals involved and the witnesses to testify. It may be in extreme cases that others will need to be brought in. Or, the church may even set some one or more of its members, to judge in the case and report their findings for the action of the Body. This is made clear in 1 Corinthians 6, where Paul condemns the idea of calling upon heathen magistrates to adjudicate differences in things pertaining to this life. He says, "*I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?*" This implication is very pointed that they should "set them to judge" who are of esteem for wisdom in the church.

It may be asked then, if this is the equivalent of the church sitting in judgment? To this the reply is very simple. When a matter is taken to the state for trial, the entire population, men, women and children do not sit on the case. But it is tried by the state through their authorized representatives. When the indictment is read it begins, "The State of Missouri vs. John Doe." The state operates in the administration of justice through its chosen representatives. The church may do the same.

At this juncture, we deem it wise to insert a state-

ment from the pen of Alexander Campbell, as found in his book "The Christian System," Chapter 16, under the heading, "The Christian Discipline."

"Is it to be told to the whole community in full assembly met? or to those appointed by the congregation to hear and adjudicate such matters? . . . Every well-organized church has its eldership, who hear all such matters, and who bring them before the whole assembly only when it is absolutely necessary, and even then at a convenient season.

"The whole community can act, and ought to act, in receiving and excluding persons; but in the aggregate, it can never become judges of offenses and a tribunal of trial. Such an institution was never set up by divine authority. No community is composed only of wise and discreet full-grown men. The Christian church engrosses old men, young men, and babes in Christ. Shall the voice of a babe be heard, or counted as a vote, in a case of discipline? What is the use of bishops in the church, if all are to rule—of judges, if all are judges of fact and law? No wonder that broils and heart-burnings, and scandals of all sort disturb those communities ruled by a democracy of the whole—where everything is to be judged in public and full assembly. Such is not the Christian system. It ordains that certain persons shall judge and rule (1 Tim. 3: 5; 5: 17; Acts 20: 28-31; Heb. 13: 17), and that all things shall 'be done decently and in order.'"

It is interesting to note that M. Winans, who was a contemporary of Campbell, wrote an endorsement of his position, and gave an account of how such

matters of discipline were handled in the pioneer church of which he was a member. His description of church polity was given a century ago, and the account is found in the *Millennial Harbinger*, of January, 1836, as follows:

“By attention to the instructions of the apostle, the whole church, male and female, old men, young men, and babes in Christ, are not detained to hear all the testimony detailed by the witnesses relative to some shameful breach of the laws of the King, *‘that should not even be named among them as saints.’* Nor are the fathers compelled to sit in judgment upon their children, nor husbands upon their wives, nor wives upon their husbands and children, nor children upon their fathers and mothers. Thus has the apostle guarded against the harrowing up all the ties of nature, and putting to blush all the relatives of a transgressor.

“I will now detail our practice, as a church, in cases of discipline. If the offense have been originally of the individual kind, when report is made to an elder, he enquires of the reporter whether the laws of the King, as expressed in Matthew 18 have been properly attended to; and on being answered in the affirmative, he calls upon the church to appoint men to investigate and report whether the accused is guilty of a breach of the King’s laws or not, and whether he be penitent and willing to ask forgiveness of God and of the church, or not. If, upon report, he be penitent, he then publicly confesses his fault and asks forgiveness, and is forgiven; but if not, he is separated from the privileges of the

church, by confirming the report of the judges thus set apart by the church.' ”

While upon these matters, we may quote again from Alexander Campbell, as he wrote in the *Christian Baptist*, August 4, 1828.

“The practice of telling all private scandals, trespasses, and offenses to the whole congregation, is replete with mischief. It often alienates members of the church from each other, and brings feuds and animosities into the congregation, and it is very seldom that a promiscuous congregation of men, women and children can decide so unanimously or so wisely, upon such cases, as two or three either called upon by the parties or appointed by the congregation. This moreover appears to be the true import of all the laws upon this subject in the New Testament.”

It is certainly not amiss to remark that when the church deems that justice can only be done by a complete review of all proceedings and testimony before the entire congregation in lawful assembly gathered, there is nothing in God's Word to forbid such. Absolute equity should be the aim of all in the adjustment of differences, and if a case is such that the testimony can be given without spreading of scandal or generating of hatred and ill-feeling in the church as a whole, it may at the discretion of the eldership be tried before the entire congregation. However, the decision in the matter must be carried forward by the church through its qualified and chosen eldership, acting for and in behalf of the congregation as a whole.

GOING TO LAW

The saints in Christ are forbidden by the gospel to take their grievances into the civil courts for adjustment by and before magistrates who are not Christians. The regulations governing this matter are set forth in 1 Corinthians 6: 1-8, as follows:

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.”

ANALYSIS OF THE LAW

The expression "between brethren" (verse 5), shows that this law is effective only in cases where brethren in Christ differ. The church cannot sit in judgment upon those who are without (1 Cor. 5: 12). The only law which the church is empowered to use in settling difficulties is the spiritual law, or law of God. Those who are not members of the One Body are not amenable to that law. "*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*" (Romans 8: 7).

If a Christian is sued by one who is not a Christian, the Christian has a perfect right to utilize the provisions of the civil law for justice and protection. He may defend himself with that law, for the civil law is ordained by God, and rulers are not to be a terror to good works, but to evil. Indeed, the civil law "*is a minister of God to thee (Christians) for good*" (Romans 13: 3, 4). It could not be such a *minister* unless permitted to serve, for the meaning of "minister" is "servant." It is certain then that the civil law is intended to serve the righteous aims of Christians as well as of society in general. For this it was ordained of God.

While the saints in Christ have a right to defend themselves when sued in court, they should attempt to reach a settlement out of court, and before trial, if at all possible. This is the essence of the teaching of Jesus, "*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the*

judge deliver thee to the officer (sheriff), and thou be cast into prison" (Matthew 5: 25).

Christians should go farther than "half-way" to avoid lawsuits, even with those who are non-members of the church. It is our duty to continually labor to promote peace with everyone. *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12: 18).* Many times it would be better, and even more profitable from a financial standpoint, to give an aggressor more than he requested of our property, than to go into court and lose everything. *"If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matthew 5: 40).*

That saints may call upon the law for their protection against injustice is evidenced by the fact that Paul made such an appeal for personal safety, when a group of conspirators resolved to kill him (Acts 23: 16-22). Upon another occasion when the apostle was being bound as a prelude to scourging, he made the appeal of his Roman citizenship to take advantage of the law forbidding the beating of a Roman (Acts 22: 25). He further appealed unto Caesar in order to protect himself against an inferior court which might be "packed against him" (Acts 25: 9-11).

In 1 Corinthians 6: 1, the term "unjust" does not mean to imply that civil judges are all unfair. The objection to going to law with brethren before the earthly judiciaries is not based upon such a premise. Many of the members of our courts of the land are eminently honest and impartial in their rulings.

However, they must judge all of the cases referred to them purely upon the basis of the law which has been written by men. That law is composed of statutes which have been approved as a result of the experiences of society in attempting to find a workable basis for living together on this earth. It is inferior to the law of God which has its object the preparation of those who accept it for life in the world to come. The humblest disciple of the Master, possessed of an excellent knowledge of the divine law, would be better equipped to judge between brethren, than the greatest jurist upon earth, because he would have as the standard of his judgment, the divine revelation of the Holy Spirit as given in the New Testament.

“Unjust” is used in the text as the opposite of the term “saint.” One is a child of God, the other is one of the children of this world. The implication of the word “unjust” is found in verse 6, where the expression “unbelievers” is made to apply to the same group of judges.

Incidentally, verse 1 provides the scripture for a trial of differences in the church. Those who frequently ask the question, “Where is the authority for a church trial?” will find it in this passage. The apostle does not condemn the trial of cases between brethren, but rather demonstrates that such trials should be held before the saints. Instead of suggesting that saints are unworthy to judge such cases as occur between brethren, he assures that there must be some who are qualified to do it.

As proof of the worthiness of the saints to judge,

two premises or arguments are advanced: (1) the saints shall judge the world; (2) the saints will judge angels. It is reasoned that judging the world is a responsibility of tremendous importance and of the gravest moment. Compared to that, the judging of things that occur in the relationship of brethren upon this earth, should be a task fairly easy, for these are "*the smallest matters*" (verse 2). In some way the Christians will be associated with Christ in the final judgment of the world. The action as stated, is yet future. Whatever else may be meant or implied, it is certainly true that those who have kept the commands of Jesus will arise in judgment against those who have not and condemn them by the very lives which they lived. Those who embrace and make the most of their opportunities to obey God will judge (condemn) those who ignore his teaching. Thus with regard to those living when Jesus was on earth, it was said, "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here*" (Matthew 12: 41). In the same manner, if we live obediently during our life upon earth, we shall rise up in judgment with the world and condemn it.

The saints will also judge angels. This cannot refer to the angels who were faithful to their trust as "*ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*" (Hebrews 1: 14). Consequently it must refer to those angels who "*kept not their first estate, but left their own habi-*

tation" and by reason of such rebellion were "cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2: 4; Jude 6). Certainly if we remain true to our God amidst the adversities, pains, tribulations and trials of this present evil world, it will be a judgment against those who dwelt in the very presence of God and who were not subjected to the temptations in the flesh which we know.

Compared to the momentous responsibility of eternal judgment, the things that pertain to this life, are among the "smallest matters." If God is willing to share with us the task of judgment in that great day, surely our brethren should be willing to manifest confidence in our judgment relative to the trivial differences which arise in this earthly sojourn. That is the reasoning of the apostle writing under the impulse of the Spirit, and to that divine reasoning we should all accede without quibble.

Much misunderstanding has arisen over the reading of verse four in the Authorized Version, which says, "*If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.*" This is not a command, and no doubt would better convey the meaning of the apostle, if it was read in question form, "Why set to judge those who are least esteemed by the church?" Those who are under consideration are the heathen judges or unbelieving magistrates. Certainly these would be held in lowest esteem by the church.

That this is the group referred to is made clear

by the following verse (5). After his previous assertion, Paul says, "*I speak to your shame.*" This is in condemnation of their action in going before unbelievers to be judged. He continues with the question, "*Is there not a wise man among you?*" The idea that is sometimes advocated that the term "least esteemed" has reference to those in the church whose knowledge and ability is so limited that they are not very prominent in the spiritual activities, but that such should be put forward to judge, is not correct. The apostle distinctly recommends that two qualifications are essential to the judge who would hear cases between brethren. Those two, as he names them are "wisdom" and "ability."

What should be the attitude of one who cannot receive a proper adjustment in a dispute with a brother in Christ? The answer to this is given in verse 7, as follows: "*Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*" The first of these questions has to do with personal injury; the second with property injury. We take wrong when someone speaks evil of us; we suffer ourselves to be defrauded when we permit another to take what is rightfully ours, and is not rightfully or legally his.

It is altogether possible that one of the brethren might be selected to hear and arbitrate a disagreement, and be faulty in his judgment. Brethren in Christ are only human, and their judgment, even though based upon God's Word as a standard might be wrong in application. The standard is a perfect one, but the application of it by the individual may

be faulty. Under these circumstances, what should be the action of the aggrieved member. Should he quit the church, or seek to build up a following within it as a faction? Certainly not! He must take wrong, and suffer himself to be defrauded, knowing that in the last day all of us shall stand before a judge who is as perfect in judgment as the law which he has given. Then, "when all shall be made plain" we'll have a perfect adjustment of all the many things, which during our lives on earth could not be settled. The only thing for the offended member to be sure of, is that he has done all that is required of him by the Lord, if then he suffers in silence, he will some day be openly rewarded at the eternal bar of justice.

It would be far better to lose all of one's property on earth, than to lose the eternal inheritance after death. If one quits the church in disgust and discouragement, he will lose his soul forever. He shows that he places a higher value upon the things of this world, than he places upon the glories of heaven. *"What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Many there have been who were innocent of any guilt, and who suffered under a false judgment. Then with hearts filled with malice and reeking with a desire for vengeance, they have set out to destroy the church, and ended up with dashing themselves upon the rocks of disappointment and frustration, only to lose all of the reward promised to those who are faithful unto death. Let us be willing to suffer

loss here that we may have inestimable gain over there.

It has been said that one good example is worth a score of precepts. We are all aware of the constant use of examples by our Savior, during his earthly ministry, in order to illustrate the spiritual phases of the Kingdom. I want, at this point in our study, to inject an account of a difficulty which arose in a certain congregation, and detail the method used in its settlement. Since all of the things which are to be set forth are factual, and inasmuch as the use of the names of those who were originally involved might prove embarrassing, I shall designate the ones concerned with letters of the alphabet. Otherwise, the statements made are true in every detail.

A and B were both members of a congregation located in a state in the midwestern part of our country. A was a raiser of feeder cattle, and at the time this incident opens was approached by B, who made an offer to purchase twelve head of cattle, paying the market price prevailing at the time of purchase. Later testimony indicated that the following verbal agreement was made.

B. "I'm not quite ready for the cattle as yet, but I want them and will take them. I'll call you when I'm fixed to receive them, and will pay you the market price on them at the time of delivery. You can weigh them on your platform scale."

A. "I'd just as soon you'd have them as anyone. Besides that, it will save me the long haul to the city market, and the expense of the commission men. If you'll give me a ring on the telephone, I'll deliver

them when you call, and the price agreed upon is the market price at time of delivery. I can haul them over as soon as you get your fence finished around the pasture, so just notify me!"

It happened that B finished his fencing project near noon on Saturday, and at that hour called A on the telephone. A informed him that his family was just ready to drive into town, and would probably be back too late to load the cattle. He suggested that delivery be made on Monday, and to this B gave his ready consent. The market price on Saturday at noon, was \$25 per 100 pounds. But on Monday the opening market was one dollar higher, and the prevailing price was \$26. In figuring up his bill, A used the latter figure, but B remonstrated. He declared that it was not his fault that A did not deliver them on Saturday when he called him. A, on the other hand, insisted just as strongly that the contract was to be the price at time of delivery, and that B had agreed to accept delivery on Monday. The price differential was exactly \$90.

After several weeks of disagreement, both brethren were aware that the matter was causing a disruption of the peace of their families. Not being able to come to an agreement between themselves, they approached the elders with the suggestion that they be allowed to select two evangelists who had formerly labored in the area to come and act as arbiters. The elders C, D, and E took the matter under advisement, then told A and B that the case was purely one of local jurisdiction, and to call in men from the outside, that is from other congrega-

tions, might tend to make it affect other localities, and even militate against the evangelists in influence before concluded.

Accordingly, it was suggested that Elders C and D sit as arbiters in the matter, Elder E agreeing to disqualify himself upon the basis of expediency, inasmuch as he was a brother-in-law of A, who had married the sister of E. This proposition was accepted, and it was agreed that both parties to the case would accept the decision of the two elders. The arbiters summoned A to tell his story in their presence, then visited B and listened to his recital. After this both men were brought together face to face, and the points of difference examined. All was done in a proper Christian spirit, the elders having admonished both principals that they would not tolerate any show or manifestation of anger, nor would they permit any "evil speaking" the one about the other.

After deliberation they wrote their decision, a copy of which is given herewith and which seems to me to be quite interesting in its details.

Decision

"The undersigned, elders of the congregation at Blank, having been asked to act as arbiters in a case involving two members of this congregation, A and B, wish to state the following:

(1) This case involved the sale of twelve head of livestock, the sale being made by Brother A, the purchaser being Brother B. A difference of \$90 existed between these men in settlement, Brother A claiming

that he was entitled to that much more than Brother B was willing to pay.

(2) It is our firm belief after hearing all of the testimony that both of these brethren were sincere in their original contention, and that the case arose as a matter of misunderstanding, such as is common when verbal agreements are entered into without a written contract showing positive specifications.

(3) It is our finding that due to the prolongation of this dispute both brethren have said things which are unbecoming, and although they have shown a proper spirit in asking for a decision in the matter, they owe to each other an apology for harsh words spoken during the heat of their controversy.

(4) Inasmuch as both men were lax in making their original contract sure and certain as to language, we do not believe that either should suffer the full loss or gain. Therefore, we have decided that Brother B should pay to Brother A one-half the sum of difference, or the amount of \$45, and that this should be accepted by Brother A as an end to the controversy.

(5) We beseech both men to forgive each other and work together in this congregation in peace and harmony, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We commend them for their willingness to be in subjection to those of us who have the rule over them, and pray for their continued faithfulness."

Comment

The above decision may not have been the decision

you would have reached if called upon to assist in adjustment of the differences. However, it has always been an interesting one to me, since it came within my scope of knowledge, for several reasons. In the first place, it is noteworthy that the principals involved were willing to ask someone to help them by arbitration, thus saving the church and their own families any further difficulty. Again, it seems to me that the bishops of the church showed wisdom in suggesting that evangelists be not called in to hear a case which was purely local in its scope and was positively under the jurisdiction of the elders. In many instances, evangelists have trampled upon the authority of the elders by entering into congregations, and assuming the work belonging to the eldership.

Too, it seems that there are few leaders who would have gone about the matter in such a deliberate way, striving always to keep down further disagreement. One of the elders disqualified himself to act in the case, because of his relationship to one of the participants. This is in line with the practice of civil judges when it is deemed that there might be a future charge of partiality or favoritism. I would like to say that the case we have just considered was definitely settled by this decision and the men continued faithful in the work of the Lord in the community. The church was saved by commonsense application of the principles of the New Testament.

It is amazing to the student of divine law to note how little of the sacred volume of the New Testament is devoted to precepts outlining procedures for

dealing with the personal offences which arise. This dearth of material which makes up a great part of the statute books of the state, and which is so predominant in the Old Testament, becomes even more astounding to one of legalistic training, when it is recalled that the Book freely admits, that "*in many things we all offend*" (James 3: 2).

It can be accounted for upon the basis that the New Testament is a law engraved upon the heart. Its purpose is to govern the relationship of the redeemed "*not of the letter but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*" (2 Cor. 3: 6). The church of the blessed Master is not intended to be so much a court for the trials of felons, as it is intended to be a school in which all sit at the feet of the great Teacher, and learn to love each other by learning to love Him. Those who have caught the spirit of the New Testament of God's grace will have little difficulty in adjusting their lives to include a deep affection for their brethren. "*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*" (1 John 4: 7, 8).

Thus the new covenant is one of principle rather than precept. The Old Testament dealt with God's people as with children or servants. Both of these need specific precepts from the fathers or masters. When children attain their majority, they may be expected to exercise their judgment to some degree in application of principles provided. This is made clear in Galatians 4: 1-7, which concludes with the

statement, *"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son: and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."* In view of this, it is a cause of astonishment to notice how many of the grownup children of God still act like children in their petulant, trifling disagreements, when they cannot have their own ways. In the only thing in which we are told to be like children, we act like adults. *"In malice be ye children!"* Only adults hold a grudge through the years. Children soon forget and return happily to play with the very ones whom they previously assailed.

It will be germane to the issue for us to note a few of the divine principles enunciated for our regulation of relationships within the fellowship of the Body. *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honor preferring one another"* (Romans 12: 10).

"Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17: 3, 4). It seems to be an easy matter for most of us to rebuke one who offends, but it is rather difficult for many to forgive a penitent, and especially if the offence is aggravated by repetition multiplied many times. Perhaps we, as did the apostles when they heard this instruction, need to cry out to the Lord, *"Increase our faith."*

Since it is declared that *"It is impossible but that offences will come,"* we should examine our hearts

before such an offence arises and determine if we have the proper attitude toward God and our brethren, to act scripturally when such an offence is presented unto us. There are only three ways by which an offence can be caused against us: by aggression upon our person, property or character. When any such offence occurs, let us fortify ourselves through prayer, and ever maintain a firm desire to save the aggressor. "*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory!*"

Realizing our own weakness, let us approach the offender in humility and meekness, "*considering thyself, let thou also be tempted*" (Gal. 6:1). If by persuasion and reason, we can bring him to see his fault, and he is thus led to repentance and restitution, we can go away feeling a surge of joy in our hearts, for the record says, "*Thou hast gained thy brother!*" We can only gain him or lose him. Is it not much better to gain him, than by undue antagonism to drive him so far away that he can never be reclaimed? "*Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*" (James 5:20).

Let us not go looking for offences. One generally finds what he looks for. Many have their feelings protruding so far on each side, that you cannot get in their vicinity without apparently giving offence. Such people have not learned the essence of the gospel, but weak in faith and character, they seek to cover up their own deficiencies by projecting their faults upon others. Let us strive to be "*strong in the*

Lord and in the power of his might!" The Christian religion is for grownup men and women; not for those who are childish, but for those who are child-like!

PUBLIC OFFENCES (Restoration)

The chief aim of all discipline is the good of the individual. This is true of instructive as well as corrective discipline. We teach men and women *"how to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God,"* in order that they may recognize the various aspects of the divine law, and thus not become transgressors, since *"sin is the transgression of the law."* It is not to be expected however, that we shall be able to prevent the rise of all offences. Jesus declared, *"It must needs be that offences come"* (Matt. 18: 7), and, *"It is impossible but that offences will come"* (Luke 17: 1). The apostle testifies, *"For there must be also heresies among you"* (1 Cor. 11: 19).

The ideal situation would be a congregation so perfectly taught that being governed to perfection by the law of God, no distressing or disturbing element could arise. Inasmuch, though, as the church is made up of humans, and since all of us are fraught with weakness, we cannot expect such an ideal situation. We should teach all their obligations to God and their brethren, to eliminate as much of wrong from their lives as possible. Continual instruction is needed in Christian living. That is why the church needs to be taught, rather than to listen to mere preaching. To the extent all are taught in love, to that extent we will be free from the necessity of exercising public discipline upon offenders.

There is an old adage, uninspired but true, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Another of these famous old sayings is "A stitch in time saves nine." These have become proverbial as a result of the experiences of mankind through generations of the past. We may well profit by the homely truths which they represent. If we cannot prevent all from transgressing by instructive discipline, corrective discipline must follow. We should next attempt to restore all who are guilty, or overtaken in a fault. When it is impossible to restore, and only when it is so, we should take the final step, that of exclusion of the guilty person. Even then, the act should be performed for the good of the offender.

Alexander Campbell, writing in "The Christian System" makes this statement, "Offences must come, and if possible they must be healed. To cut off an offender is good; to cure him is better; but to prevent him from falling, is best of all. The Christian spirit and system alike inculcate all vigilance in preventing; all expedition in healing offences; and all firmness in removing incorrigible offenders. Its disciplinary code is exceedingly simple, rational and benevolent. It teaches us to regard all offences as acts of impiety, or acts of immorality; sins against our brethren, or sins against God alone; the omission of right or the commission of wrong."

The officers of each congregation should be ever on the alert to discover signs of weakness in those who are under their care. One of the qualifications of the bishop is to be "*vigilant*" (1 Tim. 3:2). The

elders were told to "*Take heed unto thyself and unto the flock*" (Acts 20: 28). A good shepherd is always observing his flock to determine if there is danger of illness from exposure or other external influences. The leaders of ancient Israel were condemned in this language, "*The discased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost. . . . Therefore . . . thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand*" (Ezekiel 34: 4, 9, 10).

At the first sign of faltering upon the part of any member, he should be given strength by proper diet of God's Word, which is as bread to the hungry, water for the thirsty, and medicine for the sick. Many times we could prevent a brother from erring if we would but teach him the "way of truth more perfectly." If we would talk to the ones who are weak instead of talking about them, the church would be spared much grief and the Cause would be protected. We should ever manifest sincere concern toward those who need strengthening.

With all of our care, there will still be those who will offend God and the church by their words and deeds. When such a difficulty arises, we are given instructions as to our procedure. "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*" (Gal. 6: 1).

ANALYSIS OF INSTRUCTION

With regard to this scripture it may be observed that we have set forth here: the subjects, the action, the attitude, the attitude toward self, the purpose of the latter. Let us note these in order.

(1) The subjects. The first is the brother in error; the second the one who is to assist him back to the path of virtue and rectitude. We believe that the one who is "*overtaken in a fault*" as herein mentioned means one who is swept into guilt by sudden temptation or passion. There is nothing to indicate that it refers to one who deliberately plots and plans to commit some wrong, for it is not to be expected that children of God will commit sin deliberately and as a part of the plan of life.

Who is to restore such an one? Is this the duty of the elders alone? Some there are who excuse their lack of interest in the erring brother, by shifting the responsibility for his restoration to the shoulders of the officers of the church. This is evidently not God's plan. "*There should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it*" (1 Cor. 12: 25, 26). It is the duty of every faithful member of the Body to attempt restoration of those whom they can visit and encourage to return to faithful service.

"*Ye which are spiritual*" places only one limitation upon those who are commanded to restore the erring. It is not a part of an official duty, but simply the obligation of all who are spiritual. Those who visit the one overtaken in a fault should not be guilty

of the same sin. It requires confidence in his restorer upon the part of the one who is in the fault, if ever he is to be brought back. Otherwise, "*wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things*" (Romans 2: 1). If you who read this are spiritual, and you know of a brother who is overtaken in a fault this day, it is your duty to go and attempt to restore him. If you do not, then you have violated one of the instructions of the gospel of God's dear Son. "*Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I tell you?*"

(2) The action. This is expressed by one word "restore." We should consequently approach the task in such a manner as to bring about this action, or result. Anything which would tend to drive the erring farther from the truth must be avoided for it will achieve the opposite of the desired end. The term "restore" as used here does not mean to restore one who has been disfellowshipped or excluded. It simply means to "set him right" by recovering him from the fault of which he has been guilty. Circumstances must be taken into consideration, and no formal rule is given by the apostle as to how the result should be obtained.

The temperaments of men differ greatly, and the words that might be spoken to one to restore him, might drive another away. Even in the same family, children differ greatly, and the procedure of parents in correcting them, must vary according to their dispositions. A cross look from the father might cause one child to burst into tears of regret, whereas another might be so stubborn that chastisement

with the rod would hardly bring it into subjection to the father's will. Thus it is in the family of God.

However, it may be safely said, that certain general characteristics enter into every attempt at restoration. It is the application of those principles which differ. "*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*" (Colossians 4:6). Before a man can be restored to the right way, he must realize that he is in the wrong way. With God's Word in hand the restorer should instruct the guilty as to the teaching of the sacred truth, pointing out exactly of what his fault consists, and wherein he has violated the divine precepts. Then he should be admonished in love to correct his fault ere it be too late. This should be followed with prayer that the erring brother may fully understand his position, and become truly penitent before the Lord. Instruction, admonition, and prayer: these three constitute the tools in the hand of every unofficial Christian to bring about the restoration of those who go astray. Let us use those tools to mould and shape the hearts of our brethren, so they shall be in the image of Christ.

(3) The attitude toward the guilty. This is specifically covered in the expression, "*In the spirit of meekness.*" It will be well to notice first, the attitudes which are forbidden by this injunction. Certainly we cannot approach an erring brother in the spirit of anger, for this is the opposite of the spirit of meekness. Moreover, "*the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*" (James 1:20).

A spirit of controversy should be avoided as much as possible. Perhaps the least effective way to win a man to your way of thinking is to become involved with him in a heated argument. All hope of restoring him will be lost if such a dispute degenerates into clamorous accusations hurled back and forth. *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice"* (Ephesians 4:31). *"Do all things without murmurings and disputings"* (Phil. 2:14).

The expression of the apostle also condemns a spirit of arrogance and lordly assumption. We should never seek to have men "look up to us" but we should all "look unto Jesus!" *"Be not wise in your own conceits"* (Romans 12:16). *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory"* (Phil. 2:3). *"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye"* (Col. 3:12, 13).

No one should engage in the work of reformation of character in another whose own character has not been reformed and made like that of the Son of God insofar as patience, humility and gentleness are concerned. These attributes do not mean that one should not be firm in adherence to duty, but rather that duty should be carried out in mercy, justice and equity. Harshness must give way to humility; pride to patient forbearance; and wrath to righteousness.

(4) Attitude toward self. The inward look as well

as the outward look must be a part of the life of all who are spiritual. Too many when they engage in the task of restoring another, look only at the offender. We are told to "consider ourselves" also. Our own frailty, our liability to fall, should make us conscious ever of a need for compassion toward those who have fallen into sin. This means that we "must put ourselves in the place of the other." You can determine the degree of interest and kindness you should manifest toward the erring, by asking yourself the question, "How would I want my brethren to act toward me if I had fallen into this error?" If then, you "do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you," you will maintain that degree of Christian charity which is so essential.

(5) The purpose of this attitude. The apostle seeks to make us realize that our human infirmities are so treacherous that any of us may be overtaken in a fault. We may yet be guilty of the same sin about which we admonish our brother; we may even go beyond and transgress in a manner which would cause greater harm to the church and to those whom we love. David was guilty of the very sin upon which he pronounced the sentence of death (2 Samuel 12: 5). Peter, who so eloquently proclaimed in the house of Cornelius that God is no respecter of persons, and later defended his action in fellowshiping with Gentiles, by affirming that to do otherwise would be to withstand God, through fear of men created a faction in the church at Antioch, and was accused of hypocrisy by his fellow-apostle (Acts 10: 34; 11: 17; Gal. 2: 11-13).

Our duty is not fulfilled if in praying for our brother, we forget to pray for ourselves; if in condemning his error, we neglect to admonish ourselves to be careful; if in instructing him, we fail personally to learn the way of truth more perfectly, that we might walk circumspectly in the future.

Inasmuch as "*love is the fulfillment of the law*" (Romans 13: 10), we may safely conclude that having it uppermost in our minds, the proper technique to be employed can be worked out by each of us. A mother may not know all there is about the subject of psychology as applied to children, but her love for her children overcomes her lack of knowledge. Just so, we may not know a lot about the proper approach and we may be ignorant of the finer points of salesmanship in breaking down resistance, but if our hearts are filled with love for those who are falling by the wayside, we will accomplish good. The mother of the writer was hardly able to read at all, yet she was a wonderful mother to all of her brood, because her love overflowed her heart and filled the lives of all of us. I would not have traded her for a child psychologist!

"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins" (Proverbs 10: 12). *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. . . . Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"* (1 Cor. 13: 4, 7). *"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness"* (Col. 3: 14).

THE EFFECT OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline administered publicly has a three-fold aspect in so far as its effect is concerned, sustaining a relationship to the offender, the church and the world. Its prime object is to save the offender, its secondary object to purge the church, and its tertiary object, to influence the world to a greater respect for the standard of righteousness set forth in God's Word.

Even withdrawal of fellowship must be with a view to saving the one who is guilty. It is the capital punishment of God's spiritual law, which deprives the guilty of all the privileges and benefits of fellowship with the Lord's people, thus making him consider the true status of his condition, with a view to bringing about his return to the church. Let us detail in outline form the scriptures which prove this to be the true objective as pertains to the offender. Discipline is essential, because:

1. It produces life, by bringing us into subjection unto the Father of spirits. We cannot be in Christ, without being subject to God. Rebellion against God's law brings punishment, but the reason for such chastisement is that we might live, or enjoy spiritual union with the Father. *"We have had fathers of the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?"* (Hebrews 12: 9).

2. It is for our profit, that we might be partakers of God's holiness. *"For they (earthly fathers) verily*

for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12: 10).

3. It yields the fruit of righteousness in peace unto those who endure it. "*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby"* (Hebrews 12: 11).

4. It tends to confirm one in the truth, making him sound in the faith. "*Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith"* (Titus 1: 13).

5. It enforces lessons which can be derived by no other way, as for instance, in the case of blasphemy. "*Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme"* (1 Timothy 1: 20).

6. It produces a destruction of fleshly lust, working to the ultimate salvation of the soul. "*Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Cor. 5: 5).

7. It provides the means by which one can recover himself from the snare of the devil. "*In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will"* (2 Timothy 2: 25, 26).

8. It produces a sense of shame, which is essen-

tial to humility, and leads one to return to the fellowship. *"If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed"* (2 Thess. 3: 14).

In view of the preceding scriptural reasoning, it would appear that the worst enemy of an offender is the one who winks at his transgression, and thus encourages him to persist in a course which must certainly produce eternal condemnation. The greatest friend is the one who points out the error of the way. The church can do no greater service to a violent transgressor than to deliver him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. To tolerate him in the fellowship, to have company with him, is unquestionably the surest way to guarantee that he will be lost. Failure to administer discipline may bring about the removal of the candlestick of the church.

EFFECT ON THE CHURCH

The good of the church demands regular, systematic and impartial practice of scriptural discipline. We send our children to school today to study hygiene of the physical body. At an early age they learn that the body cannot function properly as long as it is filled with toxic poison. They know that such poison spreads from one member to the other until it eventually affects adversely the entire system. The Body of Christ cannot harbor within its members those who are detrimental to the structure as a whole. There must be a purging, a pruning, a cleansing to enable the church to be in a healthy and workable condition.

1. Discipline in ridding the congregation of evil, makes of the church a new lump, filled with sincerity and truth. *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"* (1 Cor. 5: 7, 8).

2. It is a proof of obedience in all things. The apostle specifically told the church at Corinth to put away from among themselves the fornicator. Later he wrote, *"For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things"* (2 Corinthians 2: 9). The command to exercise discipline is a supreme test of the church, because it necessitates that all human consideration be set aside in favor of the divine regulation. The church that will not withdraw publicly from those who are disorderly is not a faithful church of Christ, because it is not obedient in all things. If we can select the commands that we wish to obey, and ignore the others; or if we can do the things that are easy to do to the neglect of the things which are more difficult, then we are sectarians pure and simple; for it is these considerations which are responsible for every sectarian body on earth.

3. Discipline is the only method by which the church can clear itself in the sight of God, when it becomes infected with sin. Without such clearing of self, the church will not merit or receive the approval of God. *"Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves. . . . In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter"* (2 Corinthians

7: 11). A study of the context will show that "this matter" referred to the withdrawal as commanded, from the fornicator mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5.

4. Discipline inspires godly fear and reverence in the hearts of those who hear or see it administered. The chastisement of a child in the home often has a salutary effect upon the other children, acting as a preventive against the same violation or another akin to it. "*Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear*" (1 Timothy 5: 20). The first recorded sin of the New Testament church was a case of covetousness, which terminated in a prevarication told by a man, and endorsed by his wife. The discipline in this initial case was handled directly by the Lord, and both parties fell dead. The result is summarized in these words, "*And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things*" (Acts 5: 11).

In the law of Moses, provision was made for the public trial of a false witness, and the law of "lex talionis" was invoked against the offender. "*Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put away evil from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you*" (Deuteronomy 19: 19, 20). So long as the church preaches one standard of conduct and lives another, that long will it be troubled with evildoers in its midst. When the time comes that the law of the Lord is enforced by the church as commanded, then will the membership become more settled, rooted and grounded in the faith, and there

will be fewer problems of conduct to trouble the leadership. Wickedness shall continue until it is no longer tolerated. In order to purge idolatry from among his people Israel, God decreed the death of the idolater, and said, "*And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this among you*" (Deut. 13:11). Those leaders err grievously who want to hide sin from the eyes of the church, and administer discipline secretly and privately. Such a course defeats one of the great purposes of disciplinary action! No sin is ever settled by being white-washed. There is a difference between whitewashing sin, and washing it white in the blood of the Lamb. The first course of action hides it from man's sight; the second remits it in God's sight!

When Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their company died because of their rebellion against the chosen leaders of God, it was provided that their censers of brass which had been used by them, should be beaten into broad plates and used to cover the altar. Since that altar was the center of worship for the nation, they would see a constant reminder ever before their eyes that God will not tolerate rebellion against the authority of his leaders, who serve him faithfully (Numbers 16:38, 39). We need to keep before the eyes of our mind the fact that the same God still governs.

5. Discipline is God's surgical scalpel for the removal of cancer from the Body. Sin is a malignant growth which puts forth its roots to affect all of the living tissues about it. Heresy spreads through the

congregation with increasing rapidity unless it is checked by positive and unrelenting opposition. *"Their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred . . . and overthrow the faith of some"* (2 Timothy 2: 17, 18).

A rotten tomato in a basket of others; a decaying potato in a barrel, these all affect those about them until and unless they are removed. The only hope of saving a body when incurable gangrene sets in upon one of the members is by removal of the diseased part. One does not have an arm amputated because he desires it, but rather because he desires to preserve the body as a living unit. The church does not cut off from its membership those who are guilty, because it dislikes or hates them, but to keep the organization pure and clean. Jesus will not tolerate an impure body!

6. Discipline is the means by which the church proves her right to continue in the favor and under the protection of God's Son. A refusal to obey the command to remove the gross offenders against heaven's authority, makes the church guilty of the same rebellion as the original evildoer. It is possible for God to withdraw from a congregation, that does not do His will. *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place"* (Revelation 2: 5). The candlestick was a symbol of a congregation (Rev. 1: 20). Those who have accepted the gospel have entered into covenant relationship with God.

In order to have the blessing of heaven upon us we must obey all of the precepts set forth in the gospel. *"Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do"* (Deut. 29: 9).

EFFECT ON THE WORLD

Many squeamish souls, thinking more of their worldly friends than of the commandments of God, object to the exercise of discipline, especially in exclusion of evildoers, offering the excuse that it will have an adverse effect upon those who are not yet Christians. Certain things should be borne in mind as we strive to live for God. One of them is that we should not ask what effect our obedience to divine commands may have. Our duty is to obey; not to seek excuses to keep from doing so! If the entire world turned against us for doing what God commanded, we would still have but one choice—to obey God. *"Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"* (Galatians 1: 10). *"Let God be true, but every man a liar"* (Romans 3: 4).

However, we may safely affirm that discipline exercised by the church according to the divine regulations, not only will not have a bad effect upon the world, but will actually provide for the growth of the church, and it is so designed. Thinking men and women do not want to belong to a hypocritical institution. They do not want membership in an organization that preaches one thing and practices another. It is true that the very reason a lot of people give for

having no interest in the church, is that the church is filled with hypocrites. If therefore, the church took away from them this excuse, by eliminating the hypocrites from the flock, it is evident that it would have a greater influence for good.

A church that is corrupt can never do what it is expected to do in freeing the world of sin. We have too long been treated to the ridiculous spectacle of an unconverted church attempting the conversion of an unconverted world. If the church will clean up, clean out and keep clean, it will appeal to those who are sincere and earnest, because it will maintain a standard of purity, not only in word, but also in deed.

If ever the enactment of discipline should have had the effect of driving men and women away, it was in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Here was an aggravated case of hypocrisy resulting in an outright lie. The penalty was assessed quickly, and was the most severe imaginable. It brought death swiftly and surely. If discipline unduly influences people from the church, this should have done it. Instead we read that "*believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*" (Acts 5: 14). There was power in the profession of the church, because a standard of purity corresponding to its plea was to be maintained.

The church is constantly under the surveillance of those about it. "*Ye are our epistle known and read of all men,*" said the apostle to Corinth (2 Cor. 3: 2). We are the "sinner's Bible; we are the scoffer's creed." If the Bible says one thing, and our

practice another, we are guilty of the charge of departing from the teaching of the living God. If the Bible says "Put away that wicked person from among you," and practice says, "Keep the wicked persons among you," how shall we convince the world that we believe the Bible? No congregation ever made a mistake by doing what the Bible says. This is true on any subject of a spiritual nature. It is certainly a mistake to refuse to do what the Bible says!

It is by our united effort based upon the apostles' teaching that we shall be able to answer the Savior's prayer for unity; and it is only by fulfilling the desires expressed in that prayer that we can influence mankind to "*believe that thou hast sent me*" (John 17: 21). We cannot bring the world to Christ by compromising with evil. It is only by firmly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints that we shall impress the world for their eternal good. Let us not think more of the world than we do of the Bible, lest in an attempt to keep from offending the world we find ourselves offending the Savior of the world.

WALKING DISORDERLY

The command to disfellowship the incorrigibly disobedient is as plain as any other command in the New Testament. There can be only one reason why a church does not practice it, and that is a disrespect for the authority of Jesus Christ. We propose now an analysis of the passages dealing with this subject directly. The first of these to which we call attention is 2 Thessalonians 3: 6, "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*"

1. Observe that this is a command, not a mere petition or expression of desire. Further, it is a command given by one of the chosen ambassadors of the King whose subjects we are. From the court of heaven, where His eternal majesty is manifest, comes a positive order to do this thing under consideration. The church of Christ has no difficulty teaching the command to be baptized. It is insisted upon. We have no reticence about the command to "*lay by in store upon the first day of the week as we have been prospered*" (1 Cor. 16: 2).

If we obey all of the other commands, yet wilfully neglect this one after we have been taught on the subject, can we be pleasing unto God? "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*" (James 2: 10). Is not a positive refusal to put in practice this command a direct insult to the authority of the Son of God?

Why should the church demand of others absolute obedience, when it deliberately refuses to obey? The command to exclude the unworthy is a testing command—given to try and prove the church. Paul gave that command to the Corinthian church *“that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things”* (2 Cor. 2: 9).

Can we claim to love the Christ if we do not accomplish his will? *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14: 15). Can a church know God without obeying this command? *“Hereby we know that we do know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (1 John 2: 3, 4). Can we expect the blessings of heaven if we neglect the commands of heaven? *“Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight”* (1 John 3: 22).

2. The command to withdraw from the disorderly has been issued in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. At this time Jesus has all power and authority given unto him, both in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28: 18). He is the head of the church (Col. 1: 18), for God hath *“put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church”* (Ephesians 1: 22). The apostles are ambassadors of the king and speak as *“though God did beseech you by us”* (2 Corinthians 5: 20). When they issue a command *“in the name of Jesus Christ”* it comes forth by the authority of the great King.

A short time ago, a man of my acquaintance ob-

jected to the exercise of discipline in the congregation of which he was a member, on the ground that he could find no command given by Jesus during his personal ministry, for any such action. It is not expected that we should find detailed information for discipline in the church, before the church was ever established. The church did not come into existence upon this earth until after Jesus arose from the dead and ascended to his place of power at the right hand of God.

However, the ridiculous position referred to is not strictly according to facts, for even before the church was set up, Jesus in his personal ministry gave a command for those who could not be restored, to be excluded. I refer to Matthew 18:17, where, after all other possibilities had been exhausted to reconcile a personal offender to the truth, Jesus said, "Tell it unto the church, but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Inasmuch as there was no fellowship existing between God's people and the heathen in those days, and inasmuch as they refused to keep company with the publicans, who were generally renegade Jews, this is the equivalent to a command to cut off such an one, as would not hear the church, from its privileges, blessings and prerogatives. Jesus did teach that those who would not be subject to the church should be disfellowshipped.

But if the passage just alluded to, had not been included in the things recorded of the Son of God, it would not affect the situation under consideration. The apostles of the Son of God were given full au-

thority to set up the church on earth, and to inaugurate the government and discipline thereof, and unto them Jesus said, "*Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*" (Matt. 18:18). If we "*continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine*" (Acts 2:42), we shall be obligated to both teach and practice what these men have taught on the subject of discipline.

3. "*Withdraw yourselves.*" This is the action necessitated in the command. It is an action made obligatory upon the church, as such. The letter in which it is found is addressed to "*the church of the Thessalonians*" (1:1). In order to lessen the effect of this command, many in the past have said that it is merely a statement of individual action; that each member of the congregation was to quietly and privately separate himself in heart and mind from such transgressors. This is not the teaching of the Bible. Such a course would often leave the church in the position of having half their membership in fellowship with a wrongdoer, and the other half withdrawn from him.

Exclusion of the disorderly is a congregational action, taken formally and publicly. Acceptance into congregational fellowship is a public act; withdrawal must be just as public. It is a "*punishment which is inflicted of many*" (2 Cor. 2:6). It must be carried out when "*ye are gathered together*" (1 Cor. 5:4). It must be because "*he will not hear the church*" (Matt. 18:17). The command to "*withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly*" (2 Thess. 3:6), "*for we hear that there*

are some which walk AMONG YOU disorderly" (2 Thess. 3: 11), is the equivalent of the command, "*Therefore put away from AMONG YOURSELVES that wicked person*" (1 Cor. 6: 13). The second shows how the first is accomplished; in other words we are to withdraw from the disorderly by putting them away from among us, or out of our company or fellowship.

Many times brethren oppose any formal action upon the part of the church against those who have separated themselves, gone elsewhere to endorse sectarianism, or just ceased to come. It is often argued, "We do not need to do anything in their case, for they have withdrawn themselves." There is no authority by which one can do this, and the church cannot escape its obligation in such fashion. If a person has been received into the fellowship of the church publicly, the church has an obligation to look after his welfare. The oversight of the church is responsible for him, since they are to "*feed the flock which is among you, taking the oversight thereof*" (1 Peter 5: 2); and "*them that have the rule over you . . . watch for your souls, as they that must give account*" (Hebrews 13: 17). If one becomes delinquent, or is in danger of being led off into heresy, he must be visited and admonished; rebuke must be administered if essential, and if he cannot be restored, he must be excluded.

4. *From every brother.* This takes in a wide scope, embracing all who fall in the realm of the disorderly, a category which we will soon consider. Let it here be understood that the expression "every"

eliminates partiality in the administration of God's law. No one is to be given a preferential rating in the church by which he can escape the just discipline of God. *"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality"* (1 Timothy 5: 21).

"Every brother" includes preachers, elders and deacons, as well as unofficial members of the Body. It has no restriction as to prominence or ability of the one who is disorderly, yet it is here that the church often fails to measure up to God's standard. A number of years ago the elders of a certain congregation found it necessary to present the name of an evangelist, working under their oversight, to the church, with a recommendation that he be excluded for his conduct. The action was approved, and the preacher wrote to numerous ones throughout the brotherhood and asked them to reserve judgment upon his case until they had all of the facts. He even sent some of the letters which he had written to those he felt he might influence. However, in every case, he was informed that he would need to right himself with the congregation where he had been excluded, that it was not the right of any congregation to set itself up as a court of review, to offset the discipline of a faithful church. The excluded preacher got nowhere with his attempt to overthrow the discipline.

Later, the very same elders found it necessary to exclude another preacher upon the charge of falsification and rebellion. But this preacher was more

prominent than the other, and having access to the homes of many of the weaker brethren, he circulated reports which were untrue, and a number, not knowing any better, thought they were better able to judge upon the case several thousands of miles from it, than the elders who were on the ground, and a disturbance was caused. It must be remembered that God's discipline is to be applied to men of prominence as well as the most insignificant individual, and if it will not stand the test when applied to the prominent men in the church, it will soon not be applied at all. To uphold any man in his wrong, is the quickest and surest way to strike at the heart of the church!

Often, the reason a congregation does not practice disciplinary measures, is due to the profligate lives of some of those who are closely related to the leadership. Sometimes the elders have children who are wild and reckless, although they have gone out from their homes and are no more under the parental roof. They realize that if discipline is exercised, the ones who are charged, will use the families of the leaders as an excuse for their conduct. Rather than apply the command of God's word to their own families, they will refuse to apply it at all. Such men disqualify themselves as leaders of God's people. If however, they love Jesus more than father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter, and they will clean up the lives of their own families or withdraw from them, they will merit and gain the respect of the congregation.

The law of God as pertaining to leprosy was that

the sufferer be excluded from the camp for seven days, pending further examination and disposition of the case. The sister of Moses, Miriam, joined with Aaron in speaking against the authority of Moses and this angered the Lord, who smote Miriam with leprosy. At the anguished intercession of Aaron, Moses entreated the Lord, saying, "*Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee*" (Numbers 12: 13). The answer of God is a standard of impartiality in judgment. "*Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.*" God made no special provision for the families of his leaders!

There was no distinction made under the Old Covenant, in the relationships of this world, when it came to keeping the congregation free of evil. "*If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods. . . . Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him*" (Deut. 13: 6, 8).

One of the most regrettable things in the world is to see a doting parent attempt to uphold his child in that which is evil, thinking that he is doing it for the good of his offspring, when the action he takes is the very thing that will destroy the soul of the child in eternal condemnation. Merely having the name of your loved ones on a church record will not save them. Retaining them in their sins may lose their souls, and cause Jesus to blot the church out. God will not tolerate a "respect of persons" for he is "no respecter of persons." God's will be done!

5. "*Walketh.*" This term indicates a course of conduct or procedure in life. It does not refer to a casual or isolated act, but a persistent or repeated performance in a given direction. One who walks takes more than one step. To walk means to make progress in the direction one is facing. To walk disorderly means to persist after proper admonition and rebuke in the direction one is facing. Thus, the church is not to withdraw from one who is overtaken in some fault, immediately upon hearing of the offence. Instead the one who is guilty should be visited, remonstrated with, admonished, and only after he gives proof that he is impenitent and intends to justify his wrongdoing, should the brethren withdraw from him.

6. "*Disorderly.*" This is a very important word, inasmuch as upon our understanding of it, depends the exercise of discipline, insofar as individuals are concerned. What is a disorderly walk? What must one do in order to fall within this class who must be excluded? Is there any way of determining the answer to these queries? Surely there must be, or else we will never be able to obey the command, since we would not know unto whom it applies.

The proper idea of the word in the original Greek, is that of soldiers who do not keep the ranks, who break step, and get out of the line of march. The term as we use it means "not according to orders." There have been orders issued by the captain of our salvation; those who accept and obey those orders, are orderly; those who reject and disobey them are disorderly. Thus, it is obvious, that the word means

any course of conduct which is contrary to the rules of Christ. Nor would one have to disobey every rule of the Savior in order to be disorderly; if he persistently disregarded one of those rules, he would come within the meaning of this verse.

It was not necessary for the fornicator at Corinth to also be covetous, a drunkard, an extortioner, a liar and thief to be excluded from the fellowship. He was guilty of a disorderly procedure in his illicit relationship, and that alone was enough to make him a subject of the discipline of the congregation.

We should give earnest consideration to the implications of the term "disorderly" since there are many who hold the church back from the exercise of discipline by quibbling over this issue. There can be no question but what the flagrant wrongs alluded to in our preceding paragraph are disorderly, for they are specified by the apostle in 1 Corinthians 5: 11, where they are positively mentioned as incurring the punishment of the congregation. Some there are who have reasoned that the only sin of which the church can take cognizance for public action, is fornication. The absurdity of this is determinable by a consideration of the things which Paul had in mind at Thessalonica, when he issued this command.

A study of the context will show that those who refuse to work and spend their time prying into the affairs of others, hustling about uselessly, are classified as being disorderly. Paul had seen a tendency upon the part of those in this congregation to coast along, and be supported by others, the while they

intermeddled with the affairs of others in the congregation. Thus he wrote to them in a previous letter, "*Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you*" (1 Thess. 4: 11). Apparently this instruction had gone unheeded, and small wonder, for there is no group of people on earth who will pay so little heed to good advice and sound counsel, as those who have a fervent desire to meddle in the personal affairs of others. A sermon may be preached against gossip and the only effect it has upon the gossipers is to cause them to gossip about the sermon.

When Paul wrote his second letter to the congregation he knew that the command to go to work had not been heeded, thus he commands withdrawal from such as refused to heed the order. Let us prove that. In the verse succeeding the command to disfellowship these individuals, he assigns as a reason that they knew how they ought to follow the apostles and their co-workers, for "*we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you*" (2 Thess. 3: 7, 8). Disorderly behavior would be the opposite course of that pursued by the apostles. If a man in the congregation was lazy, indolent and slothful to the extent that he ambled from house to house among the membership, eating at their table for nought, refusing to work when he could, and making himself chargeable to the church, such an one would be disorderly.

Continuing, we read, "*For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies*" (verse 11). Here is a clearcut designation of one type of disorderly walk. It is true that no one can do the church greater harm than a malicious gossip, busybody and talebearer. Those who keep occupied have little time to spend in regulating the private affairs of their neighbors, and still less time to hang on the telephone and spread such affairs around to others. It is apparent that the apostle felt the church should not tolerate such people in the fellowship. They were detrimental to the Cause, and should be made ashamed by the action of the Body.

The question most frequently raised, perhaps, is this, "Can one be excluded from the fellowship of the church, against whom no charge of immorality can be sustained, and whose only wrong is his refusal to attend the services?"

To this question, Alexander Campbell replied (*The Christian Baptist*, May 5, 1829): "No person who detaches himself from a Christian assembly for his ease or any worldly concern, can deserve the confidence of his brethren, any more than a wife who deserts the bed and board of her husband; or a child, who in his minority, deserts the table and fireside of his father and mother, can deserve the confidence and affection of those relatives they have forsaken. Nor can a church consistently regard and treat as brethren those who do not frequent their stated solemnities. Such absentees are to be dealt with as other offenders; and if reformation be not the result,

they are as worthy of exclusion as other transgressors. Demas was as much of an apostate as Hymaneus and Philetus."

To settle this question scripturally, there are a few things we will need to notice. Have we been ordered by the tradition received from the apostles to meet together in memory of our Lord? If so, is one who repeatedly is guilty of absenteeism from such meetings, and that without reason, walking according to orders? If not according to orders, is such course disorderly? Having answered these queries we will have answered the original question.

The apostolic revelation binds upon us the necessity of meeting in memory of our Lord. "*As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*" (1 Cor. 11: 25). This is to be observed when we "*come together in the church*" (1 Cor. 11: 18), and "*when we come together into one place*" (1 Cor. 11: 20). Abuse of the supper upon such occasion indicated that he who was guilty "*despised the church of God*" (1 Cor. 11: 22). The Lord's Supper is a community affair, and not an individual or private affair, "*For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we all are partakers of that one bread*" (1 Cor. 10: 17). The church must "*come together to eat*" (1 Cor. 11: 33).

If a brother by partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily, despised the church of God, would not one who utterly disregarded it, do the same? Since the instructions which Paul gave for regulation of the Lord's Supper, were those which he had "*re-*

ceived of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11: 23), will not a disregard of the apostolic teaching be a disregard for the word of the Lord? Can a man disregard the word of the Lord and not be disorderly? The command is "*Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is*" (Hebrews 10: 25). Can a man keep this order and do the opposite of what it enjoins?

There is even stronger proof that we are under orders to assemble with the brethren. As a matter-of-fact the very word "order" is used in the text. Let us consider 1 Corinthians 16: 1, 2, "As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Observe that this is an order; it is issued to the churches, it requires the assembly of "every one of you." Now the man who deliberately remains away from the assembly is disobeying this order which tells *every-one* in the church to lay by in store upon the first day of the week. That this is a community arrangement is evidenced by the expression, "*that there be no gatherings when I come.*" If everyone could stay at home and lay by in store (and if one could, all could), then when the apostle came there would have to be a gathering. But the purpose of this order was to set aside the necessity for such gathering up of the finance, by having everyone under order to contribute as prospered upon each Lord's Day. The individual who absents himself from the assembly of the church repeatedly is walking disorderly.

It is to be feared that the assemblies of brethren do not impress those who are members of the church as much as they should. Often a man stays away from the services for a year, for no reason except his own indifference and unconcern. Then when he returns, the very first Lord's Day, he is called upon to preside at the Lord's Table, or to teach the lesson. Those in the audience who are inclined to want to stay away from God's House are thus encouraged to do so, thinking that surely one does not forfeit any blessing or privilege by his repeated and prolonged absence.

We need to view absence from the worship of God in the way that God sees it, and we will then realize that it is not something to be taken lightly. In Old Testament times, God decreed, "*Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord*" (Leviticus 26:2). When a man disregarded the sabbath, and was found picking up sticks, he suffered the extreme penalty. Unquestionably that penalty was exercised as a lesson and warning to the rest of Israel.

The day of atonement was to be celebrated by fasting and abstinence from work. Fasting was spoken of as "afflicting the soul." Disregard of the instructions as to the sanctity of this day brought retribution upon the head of the offender. "*For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people*" (Leviticus 23:29, 30).

There could be no tampering with such regulations. God expected his people to keep the law with reference to their assemblies exactly as given.

Let us suppose that the king of England notified one of his subjects that he would appear at his home on Tuesday morning at ten o'clock, for the purpose of discussing with him the terms of a royal inheritance to which the subject was entitled. Upon arrival with a retinue of servants, the king is informed that the subject received his note, and knew of the appointment, but chose to go fishing, or to visit some relatives in a distant place. Would not such an act be a flagrant disregard for the authority of the king? Would it not be an insult of the grossest sort? Then what do you think of those who have an appointment to commemorate the death of the King of kings, and who choose rather to go fishing, or to visit their relatives? Is not this one of the most cruel insults that can be rendered by a subject to his monarch? Do you think such a one will receive the royal patrimony, or inheritance?

It must not be forgotten that absence from the worship of the church is generally the result of wilful choice. A man might be swept into lust by a momentary lapse of his virtuous guard and an overwhelming of his own passion; a man might even let slip a profane word in a thoughtless moment, but when one stays away from the house of God, it is generally the result of a calculated plan and plot of his own. It is a wilful sin. Can one be guilty of wilful sin without walking disorderly?

7. *“Not after the tradition which ye received of*

us." Walking disorderly is walking not according to the tradition received from the apostles. The term "tradition" basically means "that which is delivered from one to another." It is ordinarily applied to that which is orally delivered, as a precept, law, or teaching, passed by word of mouth from one person to another. However, it does not necessarily have such a limited meaning in the New Testament. The same apostle says, "*Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle*" (2 Thess. 2: 15). Thus, it appears that the apostle taught the traditions to which he refers, both orally and in writing.

When present with a congregation he taught orally; when absent from them, he taught through writing. But what he taught when present, he also taught when absent. "*Such as we are in word by letter when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present*" (2 Cor. 10: 11). It is apparent that the term "traditions" as used in this sense, then, has reference to the doctrine which Paul set forth, and which he taught to every congregation. Having received of Christ what he delivered unto the church, he gave it freely and without fear, whether present or absent.

To walk not according to the tradition received from the apostles, means only to walk contrary to the teaching or precepts of these men. That constitutes a disorderly walk. That constitutes a basis for withdrawal from the offending party. We must cease to have fellowship with those who do not walk according to the revealing truths of the gospel; we

must separate ourselves from them, as Israel was commanded to separate from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, lest we too be swallowed up in their punishment.

The ranks of God's army must be kept in line. There can be no toleration of sin in the camp. If we are to present a striking force with power against the enemy, we cannot afford to permit the enemy to weaken us by having within our ranks his fifth-column workers, sabotaging the efforts of the Lord's people. The instructions are clear. We either obey them or we do not! We cannot plead ignorance of what God requires of the church. Will we heed the orders of our captain, or will we continue to think that strength is counted purely in numbers?

THE CORINTHIAN EXAMPLE

The church at Corinth afforded the apostle Paul his best opportunity to exemplify the teaching of the Heavenly Father on how to keep the church clean, and the apostle devotes a great deal of his time to the subject in both of his letters sent to that congregation. The student of church discipline will need to review and analyze the principles which he lays down, and do so in thorough fashion. We will take up in verse-by-verse fashion his legislation in 1 Corinthians 5, which deals with the case of a man guilty of fornication, and the duty of the church in such a crisis.

VERSE 1

"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

There are three individuals involved in this case; the father, the father's wife, and the son. The father was still alive at this time and is the one who suffered wrong (2 Cor. 7:12). The father's wife was not the mother of the son, as in such a case the language would so indicate. The implication is that the father had married a second time (perhaps upon the death of his first wife) and that the son had thereupon enticed and seduced this second wife to commit such illicit intercourse with him. It is also apparent that the woman involved was not a member of the church, since if she had been, the instruction

would have been given to exclude her from the fellowship, as well as her paramour. God's word knows no double standard!

This scandal in the church was generally known. It was "reported commonly." The apostle could have heard the details of it from the family of Chloe (1:11), but the world in general knew about the condition, and it was so public as to be beyond concealment; so generally proven as to bar denial. It is regrettable that the church will ever permit an offence to go unsettled until it becomes a public scandal, but when it does so, immediate steps must be taken to clear the matter from the records.

The illicit union which was maintained by the two at Corinth was especially aggravated in nature, being such as even the heathen Gentiles would not approve. The expression, "not so much as named" does not imply that it had never been heard of or mentioned among the Gentiles. History reveals a few cases in which it had been indulged but the statement in this instance apparently means, "to look upon with favor" or "to tolerate." The heathen would not allow or tolerate such a violation of nature, and for the church to permit it to go uncorrected, or to leave the impression that it tolerated the crime, was unthinkable. It would create the thought in the minds of the people of the world that the state or standard of morals was lower in the church than among the idolatrous heathen.

We are not left in ignorance of the wrong that was being committed. It is simply stated that the fornicator was maintaining the wife of his father for

indulgence of carnal intercourse. The word "have" in its original sense, is defined by Thayer, "To have (use) a woman (unlawfully) as a wife." With this brief but pointed description of the sin, we pass immediately to a consideration of what the attitude of the church should be in the case.

VERSE 2

"And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

This does not mean that the church was puffed up because they had such an offender among them. Subsequent events and actions upon their part belie any such interpretation. But the church was filled with pride in spite of the true condition that existed in their midst. They were like the church at Laodicea, which was "rich, increased with goods, and had need of nothing," insofar as they viewed their condition, but knew not that they "were poor, and wretched, and blind, and miserable, and naked" as God viewed them. Such churches are "whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones and uncleanness."

The church at Corinth was puffed up because they came behind in no spiritual gift (1:7); they were lifted up in pride for one man against another (4:6). And they persisted in this false pride at the very time when sin was eating like a cancer at the heart of the church. Their pride was like the veneer placed over a piece of rotten wood, beneath was putrefaction and decay. But the glowing ex-

ternal show which they made before the world could not hide the corruption which was tolerated.

What should be the spirit of the church when it discovers sin in its membership? The answer is plain. The church should mourn and show sorrow, and such sorrow as will lead to action. They should mourn to the extent that they will erase the evil from their midst. Certainly there should be no spirit of anger, partisan feeling, factious boasting, or desire for revenge. Instead, there must be a deep spirit of sorrow that the occasion for discipline has arisen, but such a godly sorrow as will work the will of God and cause us to take the steps which he has detailed. In view of this, we can well realize that there are many congregations today which blatantly boast of their accomplishments, but which would be much more in character if they put on the sackcloth and ashes of deep grief at the sins which they have tolerated.

VERSE 3

"For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed."

We believe that the internal evidences point to the fact that this letter was written from Ephesus, and there seems to be general agreement among the scholars of the world upon this point. In any event, Paul was a long way removed from Corinth, when he indited these words. That absence however, was only physical or bodily. He was with the brethren at Corinth, in spirit. His heart was with them in

their difficulty, and he later said of this letter, "*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly for you*" (2 Cor. 2: 4).

It has been assumed by some that the expression "present in spirit" referred to some special and miraculous power by which the apostles could issue judgments in cases at a remote distance. This seems to us a strained rendering of the passage, as examination will prove that it is here used as being merely the opposite of "absent in body." Paul was with the church in heart and mind, though he could not be there in the flesh.

The case was so generally known, the facts so clearly proven by the conduct of the erring brother, that Paul determined without being present what should be done in the case. His expression "have judged already" means that he had come to a decision as to what should be done to the sinner, and that decision was the same as he would have rendered had he been present with the church. Some sins are so public, so open, so well-known that little if any testimony is needed to establish guilt. The Book declares, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after" (1 Timothy 5: 24). Some men's sins need little testimony to establish; whereas others are detected after hearing the full testimony in the case.

VERSE 4

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the succeeding verse, the congregation is told to deliver the evildoer unto Satan, that is to exclude him from their fellowship. In this verse, it is proven that such action must be the work of the church, and it must be a public act. It is an important fact to recall that even though Paul was an apostle, and though he had already judged the fornicator as guilty, yet the act of withdrawal had to be done by the congregation of which the guilty one was a member.

There is nothing to indicate that it had to be at any particular meeting of the congregation. A meeting might be called especially to take care of this business enjoined upon the church, but such meeting had to be one of the church, and not just of a specific group meeting in secret conclave. The matter of presenting it to the church for action would naturally belong to those who had the spiritual oversight of the flock; whatever action was carried out would be done through the elders or oversight, but it would be the action of the whole body—of the many, rather than the few.

A meeting such as this would act by the authority of the Son of God. Jesus has left the matters of discipline in the hands of the church on earth. Further, he has empowered the church to act not only in receiving members, but also in dismissing

them, when they have proven to be unworthy of fellowship among God's children. The church which acts upon such cases, being careful never to violate the principles of the sacred Scriptures, will act as agents of divine authority, and the act will be ratified in heaven.

The verse might be paraphrased to read, "When ye gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus, to carry out the spirit of my command, deliver such an one unto Satan by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ vested in you by the gospel." The church is given the power to act in exclusion of the guilty. There can be no question about that, and they misrepresent who say that a faithful church has no right to withdraw from anyone. Heaven endorses the action we take as long as the procedure is in harmony with the gospel law revealed unto us.

VERSE 5

"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

The command to deliver the guilty unto Satan, is but a form of expression denoting exclusion from the fellowship of the church. There are but two spiritual realms: one, the kingdom of God's dear Son, presided over by Jesus; the other, the kingdom of darkness, presided over by Satan. One who is excluded from one of these would automatically be placed in the other.

If it be urged that the church has no right to

deliver a man unto Satan, we mention that the apostle here told them to do it, and that by the authority of Jesus Christ. Since the apostle would not have instructed to do that which was wrong, and since it is done by the authority of Jesus Christ, he treads on dangerous ground who flies in the face of revealed truth, and denies the right bestowed by the apostles and God's dear Son. It is amazing how presumptuous individuals can become, especially when they attempt to protect a doer of evil.

But we ask if it is wrong to deliver to an individual what is rightfully his? Is a fornicator a follower of Christ? Is an extortioner? a drunkard? The word of God says that "*such shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 6:10). If they shall not inherit the kingdom of God, they must belong to the kingdom of darkness. Jesus said to certain ones, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*" (John 8:44). Is not fornication a lust of Satan? Then those who commit it belong unto him, and not to Christ. Is it wrong to deliver Satan's property unto him? Would it not be rather wrong to retain that in the church which does not belong to Christ?

It is wronging an individual to retain him in our fellowship, when we might influence him to do right, by taking this extreme measure. Paul said of Hymenaeus and Alexander, "*whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme*" (1 Timothy 1:20). It was not a matter of personal revenge with the apostle, but he desired that these men should learn something which could be im-

pressed upon them in no other fashion, and thus, by learning it, restore them to Christ.

So in this passage now before us, the delivery of the man unto Satan was to be for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved eventually. No man who walks according to the lust of the flesh will be saved. "*The world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever*" (1 John 2: 17). The lustful desires must be destroyed, the life must be purged from them. We do not share with some modern interpreters the idea that the "destruction of the flesh" implied some grievous disease which would automatically visit the man as a result of his sin, and through the power of the apostle. When this man was later restored, no mention is made of recovery from any disease. Instead he was in danger of being swallowed up with "*overmuch sorrow*" (2 Cor. 2: 7).

Desire and lust originate in the heart or mind. It is there they must be destroyed. The disease of members of the physical body, even as a result of lustful practice, would not necessarily destroy the desire. We need only to recall that many who have suffered the ravages of venereal disease as a result of lust, have still held to their vicious propensities even when their bodies were being consumed by "*receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet*" (Romans 1: 27). It is by a change of heart, by godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of, that the fleshly cravings are changed from the unnatural vices to honorable use of the body as provided by the Lord.

How can excommunication accomplish this? No man will leave his filthy practice unless he becomes ashamed of it. A refusal of fellowship is intended to produce a feeling of shame (2 Thess. 3:14). A man who has any feeling of fear of eternal judgment, must feel the sting of sin, by viewing his own evil in the proper light, if he is to repent. Nothing is more calculated to achieve this than a demonstration of intolerance for sin upon the part of the church. So long as the church shows a toleration for sin, that long will men feel safe in its practice. When the church refuses to condone evil, those who commit it, must be forced to make a choice. Many of them for the first time, will weigh the results of their actions, and make the right choice. There is nothing to choose between, as long as the standard of the church is the same as that of the world.

The spirit will be saved only by the crucifixion of the fleshly desires. *"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness . . . for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience"* (Col. 3:5, 6). You cannot save a man by keeping him in fellowship when he is unrepentant.

VERSE 6

"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

It is an unhealthy sign when a church, which is filled with corruption, still glories over the fact that it is making a definite show before the world. Many

congregations in these days boast about the number added during a meeting, the size and appointments of their church edifices, the amount contributed to their treasuries, and at the same time have their records filled with sinners of every shade and grade. To all such, we repeat the words of the apostle, "*Your glorying is not good.*"

To boast about outward manifestations of power, the meanwhile permitting sin to go unchecked internally, is to disregard the proverbial statement, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Perhaps no figure more pregnant with meaning could have been selected to show the insidious, secret, yet ever-working power of sin in the Body. The term "lump" refers to the dough into which yeast was placed. A very small bit of such yeast will soon affect the whole. The means of its working is by influence over the particles in nearest proximity, which in turn affect those in connection with them, until by this chain reaction, the mass is all permeated and the remotest portions are subject to the fermentation which becomes irresistible. So it is in those congregations which permit sin to linger, fester, and finally break forth into a consuming fire. "*Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*"

VERSE 7

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

The citation of the adage mentioning leaven,

would naturally make the Jewish mind immediately revert to the national custom at the annual passover feast. At such a time, a very formal and rigid practice was indulged by every family in the land. God had commanded them to put away all leaven from their houses for seven days (Exodus 12:19). In view of this, the entire family was enlisted in an elaborate ritual of inspection, in which a candle was taken, and search was made of every nook and cranny, to be sure that no small portion of leaven escaped undetected. Accordingly, and in view of its working in the dough, the Hebrews metaphorically considered leaven as that which corrupted. They applied it to doctrine (Matt. 16:12), or as did Paul in this case, to sin in general.

The church is exhorted and urged to "purge out" the old leaven. This means to cleanse the church of evil influence and practice; to free the Body from the sin and the sinner. The enlightening influence by which this is to be done is the candle of truth—God's Word. Jesus said, "*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*" (John 15:3). The purpose of such cleansing or purification is "*that ye may be a new lump.*" By elimination of sin from its membership, the congregation becomes as it was before any wrong entered in. No corrupting doctrine or example should be allowed to remain, but the congregation should be kept free from all such.

The expression "as ye are unleavened" means "as becomes your profession" or high and holy calling. It is expected that the church, being composed of followers of the Son of God, shall pattern after His

example. That is the profession we make to the world, and they have a right to expect that we shall eliminate anything which is inconsistent with our plea. We may paraphrase this sentence, thus: "Cleanse the congregation of all sin, so that you may be free of unrighteousness in view of your holy calling and profession."

The passover lamb was a type of Christ in many particulars. The Jews were commanded to put away leaven from their houses at the slaying of their passover sacrifice. Jesus died "once for all" and "*now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*" (Hebrews 10: 26). In view of the continuing effect of his blood and sacrifice, the church should continually keep itself pure. It is not enough, as among the Jews, to put away leaven once per year. In the church this must be a systematic, regular and continual program.

VERSE 8

"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

A consideration of the language and context will show that the feast mentioned here cannot be the passover, for that ceased to be observed by Christians, being only a memorial of deliverance of fleshly Israel; nor does it refer to the Lord's Supper specifically, but only as it is a part of a larger service. Whatever feast is referred to, it must be one in

which the "bread" is sincerity and truth; that is, this constitutes one of the items of the feast. Certainly therefore, it must be a "feast" in a spiritual, rather than a literal sense.

The feast referred to is the one mentioned by Jesus in John 6: 53-55, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*" Jesus was not here referring to the communion service, but to the entire vocation of Christian living as exemplified by his life and service. Everything embraced in the plan of redemption, which centered in the Son of God, is a part of that eating and drinking. We must share in it, be partakers of it. Since to mutually partake or participate in a thing signifies fellowship, we may read the verse under consideration as follows: "Therefore let us engage in our Christian fellowship, not with the old leaven of sin, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

We are the invited guests at the feast of fellowship provided by the great King. If we remain in his fellowship we must be sincere and walk in truth. If we prefer to keep fellowship with sin and evil, then we must forfeit the right to fellowship around his spiritual board, upon which are spread all the blessings of mercy and grace. The feast to which Paul refers is that of Christian fellowship or partnership in all of the work and worship of the blessed

Lord. A remembrance of this fact, will also clarify the following verses where reference is again made to eating!

VERSE 9

"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators."

It is here implied that Paul had written a previous letter to the church at Corinth, in which he dealt with the subject of the attitude of the church toward fornicators. The letter has not been preserved, nor is it to be supposed that the fourteen letters which we have, are all that he penned. He labored many years with many congregations, and since "the care of all the churches" came upon him daily (2 Cor. 11: 28), we may rightfully conclude that he wrote many other communications. We have preserved for us, under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, all that are essential to tell us how to behave ourselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God.

That the expression does not refer, as some think, to this epistle, appears to us to be evident from the context. In verse 11, Paul says, "But now I have written unto you." There appears here a plain contrast. "I wrote unto you in an epistle . . . but now I have written unto you." The things set forth in this epistle which we are studying were written to exemplify and explain what he had written in a former letter, not now extant.

In the former letter, Paul made but a general application of the subject, "I wrote unto you not to

company with fornicators." This is pointed and no doubt was very necessary, seeing that Corinth was a profligate city, in which fornication was openly practiced without censure, and as a matter-of-fact, indulged in as a part of the religious observance of the inhabitants in their idolatry. Some of the members of the congregation had formerly been guilty of fornication, adultery and sodomy, prior to their obedience to the gospel call. (1 Corinthians 6: 9-11). The present letter is intended to explain more fully the limits of the regulation previously given.

VERSE 10

"Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."

The former instruction "not to company with fornicators" is here explained to mean that Paul did not intend for the members of the Body to withdraw from all social intercourse with unbelievers about them. Members of the church are also members of society, and as such must carry on transactions with many who are guilty of evil. It does not become a Christian to go up to a grocer and say, "Mr. Grocer, are you a fornicator? If so I cannot buy groceries from you!" Neither would it help to the influence of the church to say to your baker, "Mr. Baker, are you an extortioner? If so, I cannot buy my bread and cakes from you!" The law as given by the apostle did not go to this extreme.

How far can we go in company with such worldly people? The maximum is not here given, and consequently the limits must be worked out from the principles given to all of us for Christian guidance. It is evident that we can associate with them in those things which we have in common with them, insofar as those things do not conflict with the Christian life, or become inconsistent with it. In the matter of public improvements for the good of the community we may meet with them and discuss such projects as will be for the betterment of all, both in the church and out.

We are to "*do good unto all men*" and when we can do good for those in the world, we may associate with them for that purpose and to that extent. We may sit up with them when ill; relieve their needs in destitution, and otherwise do those things which will assist them to recover their place in society, but we are not to make them our companions, nor choose them as our bosom friends. We cannot compromise with them to attempt to win them to Christ. We cannot play cards with them in order to get them to study the Bible with us; nor attend the theater with them to get them to attend the gospel meetings with us. These things we do not have IN COMMON with them, and we must never have them so. We must be separate in these matters. We can be friendly, neighborly and kindly in our attitude toward them, making it clear that such an attitude is not to be interpreted by them as an endorsement of their condition.

Paul mentions four classes in this connection.

The first he calls "*the fornicators of this world.*" It is a sad commentary upon society that to escape these "*one must needs go out of the world.*" The expression "this world" is used as a distinction from fornicators "in the church." It is a general expression signifying those who are not professed Christians. And now we may add, that it is a sad commentary upon the church, that such an expression must be used to designate those who have never professed Christ and are guilty of fornication, from those who are guilty of fornication, even though they have made a Christian profession.

The "covetous" are those who are greedy of gain, who are as we sometimes say, "money-crazy." These seek to lay up treasures on earth at the expense of treasures in heaven. They are mammon-worshippers and tight-fisted. Money to them is a god.

The "extortioners" are not only greedy of filthy lucre, but are such as will employ unfair and debasing methods to secure it. They will oppress the poor, "devour widows' inheritances," and "grind the faces of the poor" as one of the ancient prophets describes it.

The term "idolaters" is so generally known and understood as to require not an explanation from us. It was generally applicable to the Corinthians prior to their acceptance of the gospel.

None of these classes can we choose for our companions in this life. The command is "not to company with such," and while that command cannot be taken in the absolute, or "*altogether*" insofar as it pertains to those people in this world, we are still

not to become intimate in our association with them. A good rule is that we may associate with them so far as we do them good, and so far as they do not influence us for evil! We are not to associate with them for OUR PLEASURE but for THEIR GOOD!

If the command as originally given by Paul had to be taken in the absolute or maximum degree, he says "Then must we needs go out of the world." The world is so full of such persons that we cannot escape them by going to some other part of the world. The only recourse would be to take our lives, and we are here taught that it is wrong to commit suicide to get away from the evils of this world. If it be urged that Christians could erect a monastery whose gates were closed to all intercourse with the world, and in that seclusion they could escape from harmful external tendencies, we hasten to reply that such attempts to get away from society are also condemned by this passage. We are not to go out of the world to escape contact with the sinners in it, but we are to regulate that contact in such a manner as to keep from fellowshiping those who are guilty, even though we associate with them in those things which we have in common with them.

VERSE 11

"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

There is a difference between sinners in the world

and those in the church. The command to "*not keep company*" must be taken in the absolute insofar as the church is concerned. In order to avoid all company with sinners in the world, we would either have to remove all sinners from the world, or remove ourselves from it. Both of these courses are condemned, not being compatible with the spirit of Christ (Luke 9:4). But while we cannot remove sinners from the world or withdraw from the world, we can exclude sinners from the church and withdraw ourselves from them, and this we are commanded to do. "*If any man . . . called a brother*" again proves that discipline applies to all in the church. There is no exception, every person is under congregational government, everyone is subject to discipline.

There has been considerable controversy as to the meaning of the expression "not to eat" as used in this connection. Some have assumed that it refers to the Lord's Table, others to a common meal. The writer feels that both of these positions are too limited in extent, and miss the whole spirit and tenor of the legislation. We agree that the church should not pass the emblems of the Lord's house to an excluded member. The Lord's Supper is for the Lord's people in the Lord's house on the Lord's Day. It would be ridiculous to exclude one, turning him over to Satan, and then give him the privilege of communing with the church in its highest expression publicly of fellowship. Those who have been excluded should be barred from the communion until restored to the fellowship.

The difficulty in interpretation in this instance can be resolved if proper connection is established between the terms "not to eat" (verse 11) and "keep the feast" (verse 8). The feast has been determined to refer to the entire program of participation in the service and fellowship of the gospel blessings. Following the same figure, Paul commands us not to eat (that feast) with such characters as he has mentioned. This is but the equivalent of saying "with such an one have no fellowship!" Since the passing of the emblems to such an one would be an invitation for him to participate with us in that service, it certainly would debar such guilty persons from the Lord's Table.

It is conceivable also that to invite such persons to your home for association and companionship at the common table would be an expression to them of fellowship. If any such impression was gleaned by the disfellowshipped from such an act it would be wrong to eat a social meal with him. Let me illustrate. If my father were excluded by the church for wrongdoing, I might still invite him to come and eat at my table. But, if when he came, he made the statement, "I can see that you do not endorse the action of the church against me, for if you did you would not thus have me to come and eat with you," my only alternative would be to say, "I did not invite you because of any spiritual relationship which exists between us now, but because of our fleshly relationship. You are not now my brother in Christ, though you are my father in the flesh. I am in accord with the action of the church, and I exhort you and

admonish you to make acknowledgment of wrong and get right with God. If you persist in the thought that my invitation to you to come to our home, is an indication of fellowship, and opposition to the church, we shall have to suspend these visits."

We believe that the limit to which we can go in our kindness to such persons is the limit that they set in their reasoning concerning such kindness. We are to manifest a proper spirit always, even toward those who are our enemies, but we must not "let our good be evil spoken of" and we must permit no interpretation of our deeds which would lessen the effect of discipline. Insofar as our relationship as members of the Body is concerned, it is broken off when the guilty is excluded, and the teaching is plain, "Have no company . . . with such an one no not to eat." The two expressions have much in common as used by the apostle. We are not to share or participate in the Christian vocation with those who belong to Satan.

There are several excellent reasons why the rule to "have no company" was made stricter with regard to those who are called brethren, than toward those who are in this world, never having made a profession of faith in Christ. It requires a pure church to please Christ, and to influence the world for good. A man does not have the intimate and close association with his grocer, druggist or train conductor that he has with a brother in the church. No one is led to believe that the mere fact I purchase my groceries at the corner store indicates that I approve of and fellowship all of the conduct of my grocer.

But we are bound together by strong ties of the spirit in the church and hold out to the world that "we are many members, but one body" and all the members have the same care one for another. Seeing that such intimacy exists in our association, it is only natural that we should be accused of upholding the error of those with whom we maintain such relationship.

Further, the world is continually observing the lives of those who are members of the church, and they hold against the church and the gospel the crimes that are committed by those who profess to be believers. Regardless of the inconsistency of such reasoning, it is present, and we must face facts as they are. It is evident that complete separation is essential from the sinners in the church, if the church is to continue as the salt of the earth, for "*if the salt have lost his strength, wherewith shall the earth be salted?*"

The protection of the spiritual influence of the church, the salvation of those who can be brought to Christ, the blessing of heaven upon us as a community of believers: all of these demand that we keep the church clean and pure as possible.

VERSE 12

"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?"

Here is another reason why a difference is made in sinners who have never made a profession, and those who are within the church. As Christians we

have no jurisdiction over those that are without. We cannot pass sentence upon their acts; we are powerless to discipline them by the law of heaven. Even the apostle Paul disclaimed authority over those in the world.

However, it is the duty of the church to judge those who are members of it. A divine standard has been given and the lives of all of us must be measured by that standard. Those who refuse to subscribe to it, are to be judged and disciplined.

VERSE 13

“But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

Those who are in the world should not feel lifted up in pride that they are not under the judgment of the church. They will be judged and condemned for their evil works, and that by the great judge of all the universe. They too will be banished from the presence of God and all that is holy, just and pure. Such punishment does not rest within the scope of the authority of the church on earth, and we must leave it with God who doeth all things right.

But inasmuch as it is the duty of the church to judge those within its confines, Paul demands that Corinth put away from among themselves that wicked person. Our first obligation is to try and separate the sinner from his sin; failing in that we must separate the sinner from the church. If a man will not crucify the members of his body, he can

no longer continue as one of the members of the body of Christ.

There are six expressions in this chapter which denote withdrawal of fellowship. They are: (1) *"Taken away from among you"* (verse 2); (2) *"Deliver such an one unto Satan"* (verse 5); (3) *"Purge out therefore the old leaven"* (verse 7); (4) *"Not to keep company"* (verse 11); (5) *"No not to eat"* (verse 11); (6) *"Put away from among yourselves that wicked person"* (verse 13).

THE RESULTS AT CORINTH

The history of the action at Corinth against the fornicator is most interesting. We learn from Paul's subsequent writings, that the church took the action which he commanded, withdrawing from the guilty person. Fortunately this had the proper effect and the fornicator was brought to repentance. The implication is that the congregation was afraid to permit his return to the fellowship, without further word from Paul, fearing that he would again reprimand them as in the former letter. With this brief statement let us consider the scriptures which detail the action and reaction.

1. Paul writes his first letter in deep anguish, but with a prayer that it will be received in the right spirit by the church. *"I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly for you"* (2 Cor. 2: 3, 4).

2. The purpose of the first letter was not so much to affect the fornicator or his father, but to show Paul's care for the church. *"Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you"* (2 Cor. 7: 12).

3. *Not having heard what the reaction of Corinth was as to the first letter, Paul sent his fellow-worker*

Titus, to find out how they had received his message. Apparently the coming of Titus filled the Corinthian church with dread, as they surmised he might be coming with additional condemnation. "*His inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him*" (2 Cor. 7: 15).

4. Meanwhile Paul went to Troas, expecting to find Titus there (2 Cor. 2: 12, 13), but not finding him, he became so anxious for news from Corinth that he went to Macedonia in an attempt to intercept Titus (2 Cor. 2: 13). There he was subjected to all sorts of conflicts, but these were as nothing when he saw Titus. "*For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus*" (2 Cor. 7: 5, 6).

5. Titus reported that his spirit had actually been refreshed by the Corinthian contact. "*We were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all*" (2 Cor. 7: 13). In addition, he informed Paul that the first letter had produced the proper state of mourning over the sin in the church, coupled with an earnest desire to remove the offender, and to regain the good will of the apostle. "*He told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoice the more*" (2 Cor. 7: 7).

6. Paul learned that the fornicator had repented,

but was being kept out of the fellowship because he had been a grief of mind to Paul. *"But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all"* (2 Cor. 2: 5). He tells the church that the disfellowshipping was sufficient punishment. *"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many"* (2 Cor. 2: 6). In view of this, the former sinner should be restored to the fellowship. *"Ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him"* (2 Cor. 7, 8).

This proves that even fornication is not an "unpardonable sin." A man who is guilty of this aggravated crime can repent, and upon the proper indications of such penitence accompanied by a confession of wrong, he should be restored to the church. We should never cease to love a man, even though guilty of wrong, and we should ever be ready to prove that we do love him, confirming the fact by our action. There is a point at which punishment becomes adequate or sufficient for a wrong, and we ought not to go beyond that. To do so would be to act in a spirit of revenge or retaliation and would preclude discipline in love.

7. The command to withdraw fellowship has been given to prove whether or not the church is obedient in all things. It is not enough to pick out commands that are easy to obey; or do those things that are always pleasant. Duty demands a stern devotion to all of the commands of God. Hundreds of congrega-

tions in the past have fallen down at the command concerning discipline. They have sought every conceivable excuse to keep from obeying God, even trying to interpret other scriptures so as to conflict with the plain command. God wants to know if we will be true to him whatever the cost, and has issued this command to test our faith. *"For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things"* (2 Cor. 2: 9).

8. Congregations need to be made sorry for their state, and to the extent that they will repent of their tolerance of sin, and clear themselves by obedience to the command to cleanse themselves. *"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter"* (2 Cor. 7: 9-11).

Carefulness in this sense means "anxiety," and shows that with the reception of the first epistle a state of worry prevailed in the congregation until they had fulfilled the requirements of the apostle. "Clearing of yourselves" has regard to the charge that they were proud and puffed up, and had not

rather mourned. They cleared themselves of this charge by taking the proper action. "Indignation" was manifested against the sin, rather than the sinner. "Fear" constituted a reverence for God, and an awe of his chastisement, administered so positively by Paul.

"Vehement desire" has reference to the intense eagerness to carry out the requirement of Paul's letter and thus restore themselves to his confidence. "Zeal" was shown in taking up the matter without further delay, and carrying it through to the proper conclusion. "Revenge" as used in this case, has reference to the punishment of God as administered. The church constituted the agency through which the Lord brought spiritual punishment, and while vengeance is never to be shown individually, it must be recalled that the congregation is God's authorized minister for the infliction of spiritual chastisement, called "punishment" in 2 Corinthians 2:6.

If the church at Corinth did not deserve and could not receive the approbation and commendation of one of the apostles of Jesus Christ until they had cleared themselves of guilt, by withdrawal of fellowship from those whom they could not restore to Christian living, can congregations today be clear in God's sight who refuse to consider such action?

9. The impenitent must be rejected from the fellowship, and the penitent received back into the fellowship, in order to foil the devices of Satan. *"To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also. . . . Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Cor. 2:10, 11).

Satan wants the church to keep all of the evildoers in the fellowship; and all of the penitent out of it. Just as long as this man at Corinth was a fornicator, the devil was pleased to have him in the church.

By having him there, he realized that others would be affected. Some would be encouraged to commit the same or kindred wrong, and he would get them; some would be discouraged and quit the church, and he would get them; some would argue that the church could not do anything about the case, because it has no right to withdraw from anyone, and he would get them. As long as the church tolerates and winks at gross evils, the devil is having a holiday, for the church itself is working in his behalf.

However, when the church excluded the sinner, thus clearing itself in the sight of God, it was a blow to the devil and his devices. It was just as great a blow when the sinner repented and he felt him slipping from his grasp. However, Satan will settle for "half a loaf" which in his sight is better than none at all. Immediately he went to work upon the minds of the church to keep the penitent out of their fellowship. By such false reasoning he would be sure to get the one-time sinner, for when the brethren would refuse to take him back, he would begin to say, "It doesn't pay to live right, for once a man has made a mistake he is doomed, and I might as well go on in a life of sin, since there is no hope of ever returning to the warmth of fellowship in a Christian atmosphere."

The apostle demanded that the church withdraw from all impenitent sinners in order to thwart the

designs of hell; but he just as forcibly commanded the reception of all penitents who sorrowed after a godly sort, and his reason was the same. It seems that while Paul was not ignorant of the devices of Satan, a great many congregations are ignorant of those devices today. It is a poor army indeed which will not study the strategy of the enemy. Let us do so "lest Satan get an advantage of us!" Ignorance is inexcusable when God's teaching is so positive!

CONGREGATIONAL AUTONOMY

The church of Christ is a supreme monarchy. Jesus is the head, and as king all laws proceed from him. There is no legislative power vested in the subjects, nor do they have the prerogative of voting upon which law, or laws, they will recognize. The will of the Son of God is inviolate, and no amendment can be made thereto by any of those who profess to be his servants. Insofar as the discipline of the church is concerned, that has been vested in local congregations, and is exercised by them through their duly appointed officers. These congregations are bound together by the tie of mutual love, but are separate units insofar as government is concerned.

In view of this consideration, each member of the church on earth is expected to be a member of a local congregation and subject to its rule and discipline. Nothing is more clearly taught than the fact that each congregation was a self-governing unit in the days of the apostles. Those in each community who banded themselves together constituted the church of Christ in that community. They were not a branch of the church; they were the church in that area. Paul and Barnabas assembled with the church at Antioch a year (Acts 11:26). They were members of that congregation, for we read that they "*were in the church that was at Antioch*" (Acts 13:1). Being members of that church, they were by them sent forth on a mission, which, when it was

completed brought them back to their home congregation. Accordingly, when they returned, "*they called the church together*" and reported unto them (Acts 14: 27).

News of the effect of the gospel as preached among the Gentiles came unto the "*ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas*" (Acts 11: 22), who was at the time a member of that congregation. When a dispute arose at Antioch because of Judaizing teachers, they decided to send representatives to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. These men were "*brought on their way by the church*" (Acts 15: 3). This means they were supported by the church on their journey, their needs being taken care of by those who dispatched them upon their mission.

When the chosen delegates from Antioch arrived in Jerusalem, they made their report to the apostles, elders and brethren. The church at Jerusalem decided to send some of their members with Paul and Barnabas, to assist in delivering the letter which they had written, so the record says, "*Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men*" (Acts 15: 22). The whole church here could not mean the church universal, for they were going to send these men to other congregations to state the decision of the whole church. The term is explained in the same verse, by the expression, "*of their own company.*" The company of disciples at Jerusalem, the congregation or assembly at that place constituted the "whole church" in Jerusalem. All of these scriptures taken together demonstrate

that the assembly in each locality constituted the church in that place. Each of these congregations acted upon its own, and was not subject to the will of other congregations, in the transaction of their business affairs.

For this reason elders were ordained "in every church" (Acts 14:23); or in "*every city*" (Titus 1:5). The extent of the rule of such elders was over the church which had selected them; they had no jurisdiction over any other congregation. Accordingly a group of elders from one city were instructed to "*Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*" (Acts 20:28). A comparison of the context will show that the flock in this instance was the congregation of disciples at Ephesus. So another apostle says, "*Feed the flock of God which is among you.*" Each flock had its own officers, and their rule extended just to the flock which was among them; only to the one over which they had been made overseers, and to no other.

When a member of one congregation moved to another place, it was expected that he associate himself with the disciples at the place, making known in some formal manner his desire to be numbered among them. No man can "*join the church of Christ,*" for we can only become members of it by being added unto it. But the act of God in adding us to the church, does not necessarily add us to a specific congregation of the church. We become a member of a congregation by "*joining the disciples*" at the place. "*And when Saul was come to Jeru-*

salem he assayed to join himself to the disciples" (Acts 9: 26). When the congregation would not receive him into their fellowship, fearing that he was not a disciple, Barnabas took him and personally commended him to the leadership of the congregation (verse 27), and upon their acceptance of him, "*he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem*" (verse 28).

Where a brother was not known to any man, and could not have a faithful member vouch for him, "letters of commendation" were needed (2 Corinthians 3: 1). Such a letter contained in addition to a statement of the faithfulness of the bearer, an exhortation to receive him into the fellowship, wherever he should chance to come. Apollos carried such a letter with him. "*And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him*" (Acts 18: 27).

Occasionally disciples are met with in these days who claim never to have heard of "church letters of commendation." This is because of the laxity of the church in receiving men and women into their fellowship; and because of the laxity of other places in dismissing them from the fellowship. Fortunately for those who doubt the necessity of letters of commendation, we have one preserved for us. The letter called Philemon, is a letter of commendation. It was addressed to the church at Colosse which met in the house of Philemon (1: 2). It was in reality a "baptismal certificate" for Onesimus, who had been led to Christ in Rome, during Paul's bondage (verse 10). It commended Onesimus as a brother beloved in the

Lord (verse 16), and urged that he be received into the fellowship upon the same basis as the apostle (verse 17).

There must be some formal and public means by which a disciple moving into a new locality makes known unto the disciples at that place that he wishes to be numbered with them, and under the care and oversight of the congregation. There can be no dismissal from the fellowship of a congregation, of one who was never in it. If public withdrawal is required for the members of the church who prove unfaithful, public acceptance into the fellowship should be made of all those who are faithful. The details for accomplishing this are not made known, but they must be worked out by each congregation in decency and order. It is inconceivable that the order "*Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry ye one for the other,*" could have been made to a congregation where the membership was not defined or recognized.

However, since some are so foolish in their reasoning as to argue that there is no authority for local membership, we feel that a quotation from Alexander Campbell is in place just now. It is not intended to imply that Campbell is to be accepted in lieu of the apostles, but certainly the scope of his scholarship and knowledge of the government and discipline of the church entitle his words to respectful consideration.

"Members should be publicly received into all societies. They are so in the state. It is a matter of record. When a person is regenerated, and desires

to be enrolled among the disciples meeting in any one place, if his confession to salvation or immersion has not been publicly known to all the brethren, reason says that those who have been privy to the fact, who can attest his confession, ought to introduce him to the congregation, and he ought to be saluted or received as such by the brethren with whom he resides. This the slightest attention to propriety, the reason and nature of things, fully and satisfactorily demonstrate. Letters of recommendation are the expedient which, in apostolic times, was substituted for this formal introduction, when a citizen of the kingdom visited any community where he was unknown personally to the brethren.

“A person cannot be under the oversight or under the discipline of a congregation, unless he voluntarily associate with the brethren meeting at that place, and unless it be a matter of notoriety or record among the brethren that he is one of them. There can be no formal exclusion if there be no formal reception. If there be no formal or visible union, there can be no visible and formal separation. In truth, there can be no discipline in any congregation, unless it be an organized body; and no body can be organized unless it is known who are members of it. On the matter of such plain common-sense perception we have seldom thought it necessary to say a word, and should not now have noticed it at all, had we not found some societies which could not tell their own members, which even hesitated about the formal reception of any person into them, or of having it on record who belong to them.

They demanded a positive commandment or precedent for such a reception. They might as pertinently have demanded a positive commandment for persons to be formally married before they could be recognized as husband and wife, as to ask for a positive commandment for one of the most common dictates of reason, though, indeed, every commandment addressed to Christian congregations on relative duties and privileges assumes the principle that those who belong to any society are known to each other to belong to it" (The Christian System, pages 91, 92).

When a congregation recognized as faithful to the Lord, exercises discipline in the exclusion of one of their number, it is the duty of every other congregation to recognize such discipline, and to refuse solace or comfort to the erring one in his sins. He should be instructed to right himself where charges were preferred against him and action taken, and until he can produce a letter from the congregation, he should be denied fellowship of other faithful bodies.

What shall be done in the case of a man who is withdrawn from by his congregation, when there is some reason to believe that he has not been given a fair hearing? Is it the right of another congregation to step into the picture and set aside the decision of an eldership? Absolutely not! The elders of one congregation have no authority over the elders of another. There is no congregation and no group of congregations upon earth today which constitute a Supreme Court to which a man may appeal a decision of the eldership of a local congregation. The man

who attempts to do that is a schismatic and such action is subversive of all good spiritual government. To argue that every time a man is excluded from the fellowship by a local church, that he has the right to appeal to the brotherhood, and circulate slander against the local elders is heresy of the worst sort, and not to be countenanced by those who love the Lord.

Seldom indeed if a man has been true to God will all of the elders band together against him to do him injury. It is virtually unthinkable that a body of men who have been selected to rule and guide a flock would all so far depart from the principles of truth and justice as to do so. If one was inclined to be jealous of a member, the others would not submit to a course which would jeopardize the church. If, however, it should ever come to pass that a man who was innocent of all guilt, who was neither stubborn, wilful or insubordinate should be falsely accused, and action taken against him, it is still true that he has recourse to a scriptural plan of action. It is not to appeal to other churches to override the discipline.

“To give to the subject of discipline, at his own election of passion or caprice, the license to call in the interference of one or two other churches, to try his own church, would be to say the least . . . a rule eminently fitted for gendering the most implacable strife. . . . Do the Scriptures appoint any Sanhedrin to correspond with this agent in enforcing the discipline of the kingdom? We think not.

In cases of judicial injustice there are two things to be considered: (1) the injury done to the subject

of the sentence; (2) the question as to the guilt or innocence of the judge. The remedy in the first of these cases is in the right of appeal; in the second, it is in the impeachment of the judge. These cases should be clearly distinguished, for a judge may commit great errors, in the application of the law, without any criminality that would warrant for a moment, the process of impeachment. We must not take it for granted, because A has been injured by the misjudged discipline of the elders of a congregation, that they are therefore to be impeached. Neither are we to conclude, because they must not be impeached, that therefore A has not been wronged. But to allow A the right of appeal is not to impeach the elders who have condemned him; it is merely to admit they may have been in error" (This quotation from "The Millennial Harbinger," November, 1862).

Let us suppose that a serious matter arises in which a man is placed under censure by the eldership of the local church. He attempts to withdraw his membership, but this is not acceded to by those who have placed him under censure. He is charged with his wrong, and excluded from the church. Does he have the right of appeal? In all fairness, he must be granted that. But unto whom can he make his appeal? Shall it be made to all and sundry, with charges against the eldership scattered far and wide, to those who have no jurisdiction in the case, and can never have, except as they become busybodies in the affairs of other churches? This is ridiculous to contemplate by men who are sober-minded. Such a

thing would create anarchy, for how will it be possible for those two thousand miles away to judge in a case in which they have no judicial right to sit?

Let the excluded make his appeal to those who are members of the congregation where he was excluded, and there alone! And let that appeal be merely that they call for an unbiased review of the decision of the elders by competent persons who can judge without partiality! The excluded one has been a member of that congregation, and subject to its discipline. It is in that congregation charges originated against him, and there they should be heard. It is there that the appeal should originate! It is sinful and wicked to deliberately attempt to get churches throughout the land to override the scriptural discipline of elders unto whom one has been subject, without first taking all of the scriptural provisions to prove that church unworthy of the confidence of the brotherhood.

That this is not the judgment of the writer alone, we insert another quotation from the same source as the last one quoted: "The question then remains, How and by whom is the right of appeal to be granted? First, let us remember, that the judgment of the church is to be made and expressed by her elders. But the authority of the elders is derived from the members of the congregation. They are the fountain of authority, but not the immediate agents of official action. In the last resort, however, they must hold and exercise the remedy. If the elders have abused their powers, the members are the very persons to know it best. If A has been unjustly dealt with, they, his neighbors, his intimate acquaintances,

his brethren, meeting him in his daily walk, and knowing him in all the more intimate and trying scenes of life—they are the very persons rightly to sympathize with him, and to be ready—often too ready—to render him the benefit of any chance which may be lawful to clear himself of the charge of wrong and to purify himself against an unjust sentence of the elders. They may not try the case on its merits. The men, women and children of a congregation are not to be ordained with official functions, and set as a bench of elders, judging the cases that may come up in the church. This would be fatal anarchy, as has been demonstrated in a hundred cases. It has ruined and will ruin every congregation that tries it. But they may interpose, where they think it necessary, to give one of their number the benefit of appeal. If he deserved it, they will best know it, and I repeat, except under the most extraordinary circumstances, will be most ready to grant the privilege. To this the elders cannot object, because it is the merciful act of their own congregation, towards one for whom they, as tender shepherds, must also feel the tenderest regard. . . . And the party complaining should be content, because, if he cannot trust the vindication of his good name to the neighbors and friends who know him best, and have had most to do with him, this fact is itself *prima facie* evidence against him, and should deter strangers from meddling, simply upon his own one-sided and unsustained importunity in the case.”

If a congregation feels that the chosen elders have acted unfairly toward a brother, or if they even

conclude that there is a question of doubt as to the disposition of the case, they may enter an appeal in behalf of the brother. Before whom should such appeal be made? It is evident that the elders being officers of the church, cannot be tried unofficially. The Scriptures intimate very strongly that the same authority which appointed them, should also hear any charges or accusations against them. Men are selected by the church for this office of elder, but are appointed by evangelists (Titus 1:5). It was to an evangelist that the apostle gave the instruction, "*Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses*" (1 Timothy 5:19). Those who "ordained elders in every city" were likewise to "receive accusations against them." The same Scripture that authorizes the receiving of charges against an elder, also authorizes the preferring of such charges. To argue that there is no Scripture for preferring charges against an elder would negate this direct command of instruction to Timothy.

It may sometimes be expedient and wise to have more than one to hear the evidence and testimony in a case. In such cases, each of the conflicting parties may choose one, and the two choose a third. There is no detailed information as to how the investigation must be carried on. We should make ourselves clear that the one who has been excluded from the fellowship of the congregation cannot bring charges against the elders. His recourse is to appeal to the church from which he was excluded for a review of the case. "So, when a case of appeal arises, it is not

to be left to the caprice or passion, or interested judgment of the party under sentence, to proceed in any way and whether or not as he may choose, but he must ask the privilege at the hands of the brethren, and where he cannot obtain it, it would be meddlesome interference for any other congregation to take any action in the matter." (Millennial Harbinger, November, 1862).

It is possible that a local church in the main may feel that the sentence imposed has been just, and they refuse to appeal in behalf of the guilty person. It is not then the right or privilege of any other congregation to accept such a one and to override the only discipline provided for the church on earth. The man, if he has been unjustly treated, can suffer himself to be defrauded, and realize that in the final day he will have all things adjusted to his credit in which he is deserving. But if he begins to slander the elders, with whom he has previously labored, and to attempt to divide the church, or create factionism within it, he shows that he puts personal ambition ahead of God's law, and will be condemned by all thinking people on earth, and by the Lord himself in the last day.

The discipline of a church which has always been regarded as faithful to Christ must be recognized by every other congregation and individual, until that church has been positively and officially proven to be apostate and unworthy. This cannot be done by the circulation of prejudiced and biased accounts by the subject of discipline.

PRINCIPLES OF PROCEDURE

Although the New Testament law, being one of the spirit rather than of the letter, does not outline a specific formula for procedure in every case of discipline, and although the method of carrying out the teachings upon the subject is a matter for the local church to determine, it must be asserted that there are certain very definite principles which govern, and which should be understood in order to offset the possibility of injustice being done. In order to make the best possible use of our space, we shall present this matter in question and answer form.

1. Who is responsible for the discipline of the local church? All official action in the church must be directed and handled by the elders of the congregation. In this, they are the agents of the church in carrying out God's will. *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you"* (Hebrews 13: 17). In the case where a new congregation has been started, and there are no elders as yet, the evangelist who has called the church together is to exercise the oversight, and *"set in order the things that are wanting"* (Titus 1: 5), until men are qualified and appointed to the office of bishop. This would include the assisting of the church authoritatively in the exercising of discipline. Titus exercised such authority in Crete (Titus 1: 13; 2: 15).

2. Is it a qualification of an elder that he be a good disciplinarian? Yes, as we learn in 1 Timothy 3: 4, 5, "*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*" This demonstrates that a man must be able to rule others, and he proves his ability in this direction by keeping his family under control. One who cannot manifest the ability to rule, that is executive ability, is not qualified to discipline the church, and should not be appointed to the office of the eldership.

3. What steps should be taken when a man becomes delinquent in his duties to the Lord? He should be visited by those who are spiritual in an attempt to restore him (Galatians 6: 1). The elders may present his name before a business meeting of the church, and ask for volunteers among the brethren to visit and plead with the delinquent, or they may assign certain ones to see him and report back to the church the attitude of the one in question. The utmost forbearance should be manifested insofar as the church does not become guilty of upholding the sinner in his wrong. Others may be appointed to visit the erring disciple, and admonish him. If he then shows no inclination to do his duty, the case may be presented to the church for definite action. In every case, that it may be the will of the church, it should be asked if there is any SCRIPTURAL objection to the action being taken!

4. How often must one be visited before he is excluded? There is no maximum set by the Word of

God, insofar as we know. He should be admonished and exhorted to do his duty just as long as it appears there is a chance to restore him. We are taught, "*A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject*" (Titus 3:10). If such a man who "*is subverted, sinneth, being condemned of himself*" (verse 11), cannot be rejected until he has been admonished twice, it would appear that this principle should govern us in the general administration of God's will.

5. Does the law of impartiality imply that we must show the same exact degree of leniency in every case? No! We must be governed according to the circumstances of the case. "*And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*" (Jude 22, 23). There is manifestly a difference in the case of a woman who lives within a block of the meeting-house, and whose husband although not a member, urges her to come and be faithful; and a woman who lives five miles from the place of worship, has no way of getting there except as her husband brings her, and he refuses to do that and threatens her if she attempts to go. One is the object of compassion; the other is a subject for more drastic action.

6. What can be done in the case where a congregational record has been neglected for a long time, and there are many names upon the roster of those who have ceased to come, and who have long since dropped out of service for the Master? The first thing that should occur is for the church to realize

that it has been negligent of a solemn responsibility as laid upon them by the Lord. The leaders should summon the church and acknowledge their weakness and fault, and the whole congregation should likewise acknowledge that they have not attempted to restore those who were overtaken in their faults. *Then with humility the leaders should state their desire to bring the congregation into that state which Jesus demands.* If it is impossible for them to fully explain the government of the church, they should request the aid of a faithful preacher, and instruct him that they do not want to conduct a gospel meeting for those outside the fold; rather they want to be taught what they must do as Christians in the discipline of the church. Let such an one spend a week in teaching and let all of the members be present and learn, as the brother *"commits the things he has learned to those who shall be able to teach others also"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

Then let the leaders list the names of those who are delinquent, and let the members volunteer to go and see them, being sure that every name is assigned unto someone. Agree upon a time for another business meeting to discuss results. Assign the names to others at the second business meeting, and then beginning with the most troublesome and flagrant cases, notify them that if they are not present by a certain date to acknowledge their wrong and restore themselves to active service, their names will be excluded from the record. Continue with this procedure until all have been made to realize the seriousness of the Christian profession.

Let everything be done in love, but with firmness. When the church promises chastisement, carry it out. This is not a pleasant task, but if congregations are going to remain in the confidence of Christ, it is a necessary work. *"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby"* (Hebrews 12: 11). Jesus wants a clean church, and he will tolerate no other. *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish"* (Ephesians 5: 25-27). No unpleasant duty becomes easier by a continued prolongation of it. Let us then be up and doing, for if we eliminate the sin from the camp of spiritual Israel, we shall be in a position to go forth against the world in a spiritual panoply of might.

7. Is there not a grave danger of becoming too hasty in discipline? This danger is not a very serious threat to the churches, because it has been our experience that the tendency is generally to the other extreme. The grave danger in putting off the matter, is that we shall not be able to bring about the first object of discipline, that is, the salvation of the erring! It is always possible that a man may become hardened in his acts, which at the first were casual. *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of*

men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8: 11).

It is apparent that if a wolf gets into the flock, we should not stand around and wring our hands, and declaim that we are afraid of getting too hasty in taking action against him. Wolves eat sheep! Paul said, "*Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*" (Acts 20: 29, 30). When men in the church begin to teach harmful and hurtful hobbies, or to advocate false doctrine, the elders must be "*able by sound doctrine . . . to convict the gainsayers*" (Titus 1: 9). There are some men "*whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake*" (Titus 1: 11). Such must be rebuked sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1: 13).

Those who are summoned to a fire, and find persons in danger of being consumed are not so careful about their methods of rescue. There are occasions when we must demonstrate speed if we are to save the erring. They must be "*pulled out of the fire*" (Jude 23). Judgment must be used and common sense employed in all of our actions. We should neither be too hasty, nor too slow. "*Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure*" (1 Timothy 5: 22). The context here has to do with discipline. It is not dealing with appointment of elders but with the hearing of accusations against them, and the rebuke

of those who are wrong in conduct. Therefore, we believe that the "laying on of hands" in this instance has reference to hands of chastisement or punishment. We should neither be so sudden or hasty in this that we are rash and impulsive, and neither must we be so slow and backward, that we become a partaker of the other man's sin by our tolerance of it. We must keep ourselves pure, that is free from the charge of rashness on one hand, or the charge of being too negligent upon the other hand.

8. If discipline is started in the church, when will it end? That is the wrong question in most places. The proper one would be not where it will end, but when it will START! We are not to worry about the outcome of things so long as we are doing the will of God. The only thing we need to do insofar as corrective discipline is concerned is to determine if it is God's will that we keep the church clean, then proceed to do what he has commanded. He will take care of the outcome. I say it to our shame, as a people pretending to be the children of God, that the reason many elders will not try to keep the church clean is because their own lives are such a disgrace they are afraid to approach anyone else on the subject of Christian duty. Let us not forget that the first duty of elders is to take heed unto themselves, and then they must take heed unto the flock. A good place for discipline to begin is where it is said that charity begins—at home! But do not let it, like charity so often does, end there!

9. Do we have any right to say that the sin of those in the church today will hold back the church and the truth? Certainly, for that is what the New Testament teaches. *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness"* (Romans 1:18). Strictly speaking, one cannot hold the truth in unrighteousness. If he is walking unrighteously, he is not holding the truth, and vice versa. The term "hold" here means to "hold back, hinder, restrain." Thus we learn that men hold back the truth by their unrighteous and ungodly lives!

By the godly behavior of Christians, even those who will not read the word of the Lord, may without the Word, be won by such righteous conduct (1 Peter 3:1). On the other hand, the unscrupulous acts of those in the church may cause the word of God to be blasphemed, and give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Tim. 5:14).

The greatest enemy that the church has is internal corruption produced by those who *"profess to know God, but in works they deny him"* (Titus 1:16). *"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage"* (Jude 16). Being *"destitute of the truth, they suppose that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself"* (1 Timothy 6:5).

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

It would seem that with the plain teaching upon the subject of discipline as set forth in the New Testament, there could be no objections registered by anyone who professed to believe in the teaching of the apostles. Yet, a great many nominal Christians become incensed when the subject is preached upon, and manifest indignation toward those who are courageous enough to teach the issue without fear or favor. If the objections put forth were merely upon the basis of personal feeling they might be dismissed with little notice in such a book as this, but there are those who seek to prove their objections as valid by the Word of God. Such a course is reprehensible when it makes the gospel record contradictory, and when it seeks to make the Holy Spirit a changeable, vacillating, wavering, personality in its revelation. We cannot therefore permit such false ideas to go unchallenged, and shall take them up point by point for discussion and refutation.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

Perhaps the most frequent objection to discipline is based upon a false interpretation of one of the parables of Jesus. It is argued that inasmuch as he forbade the disciples to root up the tares, lest the wheat also be destroyed, that we ought not to attempt to eliminate the sinners from the fellowship of the church, but let them grow together until the Lord comes and makes final separation. Since this

reasoning has a great deal of weight with the unthinking souls who are ever ready to find some justification for neglect of duty, let us first look at the parable itself.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his away.

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13: 24-30).

There are two laws of the logic of interpretation which must apply in our remarks upon this parable. The first is: No scripture must be interpreted in such a manner as to contradict any other scripture, and where such contradiction appears it is the fault of the interpreter, and not of the scriptures. The second is: Where two passages teach upon the same topic, one of them obscure and the other obvious in

meaning, the obscure must always be interpreted in the light of the obvious, and never the reverse.

If the expression "*Let them grow together until the harvest,*" means that the church is not to exclude from its membership those who are unworthy, then Jesus is placed in the position of flatly contradicting the apostle Paul who said "*Put away from among yourselves that wicked person*" (1 Corinthians 5: 13). Moreover Paul gave the command in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5: 4), so we have the unthinkable idea of an inspired apostle, by the authority of Jesus Christ, teaching just the opposite of what Jesus Christ himself, taught.

Moreover, the scriptures which deal with the subject of discipline are plain and unmistakable in their bearing. "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly," "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," "Deliver such an one unto Satan," "Have no company with him." There is no way on earth by which these statements can be twisted to justify having company and continuing in fellowship with such evildoers. Yet that is exactly what men and women attempt to do, when they interpret the parable in such a way as to keep the wrongdoers in the fellowship. Certainly, whatever the parable means, it must be interpreted in the light of the plain teachings of other passages on the subject of discipline, and it must not in its admitted obscurity be used to interpret those plain passages to mean something which they were never intended to mean.

It is amazing to us to know that there are members

of the churches of Christ who will deliberately ignore all of the teaching on the subject of withdrawal of fellowship just to protect their friends from the chastisement of God; but it is even more amazing to know that they will try to enlist God in such an unscrupulous project, although by so doing they must make him contradict himself, and appear as a double-minded personality. We should think twice before we ever begin to oppose the plain teaching of the Bible; but we should think a good many times before we begin to make the Bible contradict itself. What right have we to criticize the skeptics and agnostics, if we fall into the same category, in our mad scramble to find some justification for setting aside the unpleasant duties which are imposed upon us as children of God?

There isn't a thing in the parable of the tares that even remotely hints at keeping evildoers in the fellowship of the church. The parable does not deal with church discipline, and has no connection with the topic. Careful attention to the interpretation of the parable as given by Jesus himself would thoroughly convince anyone, that such is the case.

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of the world.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

And they shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13: 36-43).

Observe that Jesus said, "THE FIELD IS THE WORLD!" This parable has nothing to do with righteous and wicked men growing up together in the church, but on earth! Why was the parable given then? Remember that there were some of the disciples of Jesus who thought that when men opposed their Savior or the development of the church, that they ought to kill those men, and get rid of them. This parable was given to show men like James and John that the disciples of the lowly Nazarene, could not weed out the wicked from the earth.

"It came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village" (Luke 9: 51-56).

Because this spirit existed among the disciples, Jesus showed by the parable that in the great field of the world, those who are righteous and those who are wicked must grow together, side by side. If we attempt to rid the world of all the sinners, we may at the same time root up part of God's grain. They must grow together until the harvest, at which time the angel reapers will make the final separation, and the tares will be cast into the furnace of fire, while the wheat is being brought into the granary of heaven.

This is in line with all of the other teaching on discipline. We are distinctly taught that we are not to judge those without the church, for them that are without God judgeth (1 Cor. 5: 12). Our duty is only to exclude those who are impervious to the teaching of the Christian life after they have become members of the One Body. Beyond that we have no authority, nor should we seek any. We have no right in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ to attempt to subjugate men in the world by the carnal weapons of this life. Obedience to Christ must be voluntary, and if we go into a city where the gospel

has not been preached, and men turn their faces from us, we should not seek to destroy them by fire, but merely go to another city. The parable of the tares has no application to the discipline of the church.

WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE

Another common objection which we hear is that, "God has told us not to judge our brethren." In view of this, it is urged that we cannot exercise public discipline without judging, so we are powerless to do anything to the incorrigibly wicked in the church. Here again, those who register the objection, seek to place scripture against scripture, and make God defeat his own purpose. Let us examine the facts.

It is true that Jesus said, "*Judge not that ye be not judged*" (Matthew 7: 1). To what did he have reference? Certainly he was not in this statement opposing the judgment of the civil courts upon offenders of society, for God hath appointed or ordained civil governments as his ministers to attend upon this very thing (Romans 13: 1-4). He could not have been condemning the idea of brethren judging in the cases of dispute which arose among other brethren, because the apostle plainly taught, "*Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?*" (1 Cor. 6: 5).

Jesus could not have had reference to the judging of a sinner in the congregation, by the church through its duly appointed officers, for this is also commanded. "*Do not ye judge them that are within?*

... *Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*" (1 Cor. 5:12, 13). He could not have been referring to the forming of private judgment concerning false teachers, who hypocritically seek to impose upon us, for we are commanded to determine by their fruits what they are (Matt. 5:15-20). This necessitates judgment!

Moreover Jesus plainly said that we were to judge. *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment"* (John 7:24). Now since we are told to judge righteous judgment, and in another place are told to judge not, it is apparent that the latter has to do with the kind of judgment. The command to "judge not" is limited, modified and explained by other scriptures, and we thus conclude that it means we are to "judge not with unrighteous judgment." Let us see if this is borne out by the facts.

In the verses succeeding the command to judge not, we read, *"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."* Now if our judgment was righteous we certainly should not be worried if we receive the same judgment. A man who uses an overflowing measure of generosity is not going to object if he gets paid back in kind. It is only the man who uses an unfair judgment or measure, that need be concerned if he is judged and measured accordingly.

We continue, *"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eyes, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou*

say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Observe then that it does not condemn the seeing of a mote in a brother's eyes; nor does it condemn the removal of such. It merely condemns such observation and attempted removal when you have a much larger impediment in your own vision, through hypocrisy. The expression "*Judge not,*" has reference to the unrighteous and hypocritical judgment of those who are doing the same things they condemn in others.

It is perfectly possible that a great many congregations are not in condition to judge the evildoers at all, because they are guilty of the same things. If the leaders and elders attend public dances, if they play cards and gamble for penny stakes, if they drink beer, etc., it is understandable why they should hesitate to judge others. To all such, we merely say with Jesus, "Ye hypocrites, first cast the beam out of your own eyes!"

"Therefore thou are inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2: 1). The condemnation here is not for judging, but for judging when guilty of the same things as those whom you judge. *"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God" (Romans 2: 3).* It is necessary that we judge them

that are within, when they begin to walk contrary to the teaching of God, but we must remove the sin from our own lives so that we shall see clearly, and not judge with warped or biased minds. Judgment must be not according to the appearance, for it is true that "appearances are deceiving," but it must be based upon facts and true testimony, and all of the facts must be before us, lest we make a false judgment by only partial knowledge of circumstances. This is the teaching of God's Word, so let us be governed thereby.

WHAT WILL THE WORLD THINK?

Many congregations are deterred in doing their duty by a fear of what the people in the world may think. It appears that a great many are more interested as to what those of the world may think about them, than they are as to what Christ may think about them. They refuse to do the will of the Son of man, fearing what the sons of men may do to them.

We have emphasized before, and do so again, that it makes no difference what the world may think about us, as long as we are obeying what the Savior has commanded us to do. "*Blessed are they that do his commandments*" (Rev. 22: 14). We have nothing to fear as long as we stand with the Lord. "*Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you*" (Deut. 20: 3, 4).

Brethren argue against corrective discipline on

the basis that the people of the world may circulate false reports concerning the church, and undermine its influence; they feel that people will be driven from it, and that no one will want to be attached to an institution which excommunicates from its membership those who are unworthy and unjust. We believe all such reasoning is based upon false premises, and is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God, and to human experience.

Who would want to become a member of the church if in so doing his state was not changed? Who would want to be attached to an organization of a spiritual nature where there was no spirituality? The main reason given by many for a refusal to become interested in the church is that it has too many hypocrites in it. While that is no excuse for one to remain out of it, it does definitely demonstrate that the people outside expect that the church shall be intolerant of sin, and refuse to have within its borders those who do not live up to their profession.

Thinking men and women want to have fellowship with the pure in heart and morals. They do not want to be intimately associated with those who are disgraceful to their calling. The church should not conceal the fact of its discipline, and while it is always to be regretted that the occasion for such arises, it must also be remembered that the fact that a church keeps itself free and clean of sin is the greatest advertisement it can have.

When Ananias and Sapphira were excommunicated by direct action of God, the result upon the world was favorable, "*and believers were the more*

added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." The world cannot justly blame the church for doing what the Lord has commanded, and if they unjustly blame the church, the church will be blessed. *"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you"* (Matt. 5: 11, 12).

HOW TO AVOID PUBLIC DISCIPLINE

Is there any way by which a congregation can avoid the exercise of public discipline? Yes! If every member will discipline his own life, the life of the church will be free from the saddening task of excluding those who have been connected with it. If those who have been raised to walk in newness of life, will walk in that newness, no difficulty can or will arise to mar the peace of the church. The discipline of the members of the Body of Christ is for those who will not mortify their own members upon the earth. The church will not need to withdraw from those who withdraw themselves from worldliness and sin. It will never need to exclude one who excludes evil passion from his own heart. It will never need to put away those who have "put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9).

In view of this fact all of us need to be watchful and alert. The bishops of each congregation are instructed, "*Take heed unto yourselves*" (Acts 20:28). The proclaimers of the gospel are told "*Take heed unto thyself*" (1 Tim. 4:16). The Book says, "*Let every man take heed*" (1 Corinthians 3:10). The apostle said, "*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*" (1 Cor. 9:27). If we bring our bodies into subjection, it will not be necessary for the Body of Christ to bring us into subjection. If we chastise

ourselves, we will not be chastised, or as the Book declares, "*For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*" (1 Cor. 11: 31).

1. No member of the church could ever be excluded for gossip and backbiting, if all would discipline their tongues according to the Word of God. "*Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*" (James 1: 19). "*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile*" (1 Peter 3: 9). "*Speak not evil one of another, brethren*" (James 4: 11). "*Speak evil of no man, be no brawlers, but gentle, showing meekness unto all men*" (Titus 3: 2).

The tongue is a power for good or for evil, depending upon how we use it. With his tongue Moses gave courage to the children of Israel in their darkest hours; and with the same tongue uttered those words which barred him from the promised land. "*They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips* (Psalm 106: 32, 33). "*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be*" (James 3: 10).

Miriam lifted up her voice in praise to God, when the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt. "*And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and the rider hath he thrown into the sea*" (Exodus 15: 21). Out of jealousy, she later lifted up her voice against Moses, "*Hath the Lord indeed spoken*

only by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?" As a result, the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, *"and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow . . . And Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again"* (Numbers 12). How many times in these days have we seen whole congregations held up, not for seven days, but for years, by the gossiping tongue of some jealous woman who is a member? *"If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain"* (James 1:26). *"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body"* (James 3:2).

2. No member of the church would ever be disciplined for fornication if all would control their thoughts, and banish passion and the lust of the flesh from their hearts. *"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof"* (Romans 13:13, 14). We are to FLEE these things. *"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart"* (2 Tim. 2:22). *"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body"* (1 Cor. 6:18).

We must DENY these things. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all*

men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2: 11, 12). We must ABSTAIN from these things. "*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul"* (1 Peter 2: 11). We must CRUCIFY these things. "*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"* (Gal. 5: 24). "*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience"* (Colossians 3: 5, 6).

We must learn how to possess our bodies in honorable fashion, and sanctified to the Master's service. "*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God"* (1 Thess. 4: 3-5). Every Christian should remember that a lustful act is generally preceded by immodest speech, and this is always the result of immoral thoughts. Keep your minds pure, and it will be easy to keep your bodies pure.

"Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are things which defile a man"

(Matt. 15:18-20). Keep away from those places and things which kindle and inflame inordinate desire. No Christian can attend modern dances with their half-clad bodies, their sensual music and their suggestive movements and come away unsullied. It is disgusting to hear some half-converted, worldly-minded, sin-compromising member of the church stand up and argue that there is no harm in such. If the church had to depend upon such people for its existence, it would have disappeared long ago.

Satan is on the alert to capture as many people as he can, appealing unto the lust of the flesh through the lust of the eye. Cheap magazines with the sex-inflaming stories, their pornographic photography, their sordid bedroom scenes, their behind-the-screen confessions, these are portrayed upon every corner and in every drug store and news-stand. The Hollywood movies, unquestionably one of the greatest of the modern menaces to modesty, send forth the glow of their twinkling lights in every community. How sad it is to see some bleary-eyed, nodding, sleepy soul sitting in the church pew on Lord's Day, unable to read the text of God's Word, because is so tired from seeing a late show. This hypocritical, diabolical, devilish desire to be like the world, saps the spirituality from the church, and makes the fruit of the spirit turn to ashes, like the fabulous apples of Sodom. God have mercy upon the pitiable spectacles of men and women who call themselves "children of God" and are spiritual skeletons, nourished only by their mad craving after the pleasures of the world. "*Keep thyself pure.*"

3. There would never be a member of the church excluded for sowing discord among brethren, if all remained in their proper place, and paid attention to their own affairs. *"He loveth transgression that loveth strife"* (Proverbs 17: 19). *"It is an honor for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling"* (Proverbs 20: 3). *"He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips"* (Proverbs 20: 19). *"And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things they ought not"* (1 Timothy 5: 13).

"These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6: 16-19).

4. There would never be a member withdrawn from for insubordination were it not for pride and stubbornness. If all of the elders in the church would conduct themselves as examples to the flock, and all of the flock would be willing to submit themselves to authority, there would be no strife or contention caused by ambitious and pretentious men. Humility would settle most of the problems of the church in these days.

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it

with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13: 17). "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Hebrews 13: 7). "Yea all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the humble" (1 Peter 5: 5).

Let us, when reviled, revile not again! Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad when men persecute us, say all manner of evil against us falsely for the sake of Christ, and evil entreat us. *"If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed"* (1 Peter 5: 16). Let us glorify God on this behalf and count ourselves happy that we can bear the reproaches which men heap upon us. Let us not strive for control or authority over our brethren, but rather let us all, seek to serve under our great Master.

God's chastening hand is ever upon us for good. When he punishes us with the rod of his mouth, the revealed Word, it is *"for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness"* (Hebrews 12: 10). It is difficult for us to understand sometimes why we must suffer as we do. *"Tempted and tried, we're oft made to wonder, why it should be thus all the day long; while there are others living about us, never molested though in the wrong!"* We can trust him implicitly though, even when our cherished plans go awry, and our hopes are bedimmed, and our dream castles crumble into fragments.

Trees are pruned that they might become more lovely and serviceable. The bleeding of the limbs

where the shears sever the foliage is soon forgotten, in the verdure which spreads its delightful shade. A. B. Cooper tells of going to a chrysanthemum show, where he saw some wonderful blooms. He asked the exhibitor, "How in the world do you manage to produce such marvelous blooms?" "Well, sir," he said, "you see we concentrate all the strength of the plant on one or two blossoms. If we were to allow the plant to bear all the flowers it would, not one of them would be worth showing. If you would have a prize bloom, you must be content with one instead of a score. Cooper adds, "And thus God cuts away our useless blooms of self, and popularity, and comfort, and ease, and pleasure, and wealth, and success, that he may bring to perfection the exquisite white blossom of holiness and make the immortal spirit 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.'"

Periodically the ships which ply the ocean must be brought into dry dock and the barnacles scraped off. Sometimes tons of these adhere to the surface of the vessel, and impede her progress through the waves. So it is with the ship of life as it plies through the frothing waves of the sea of time. We pick up habits which hold us back, we develop thoughts which hinder our journey to the blest harbor of eternity. We must divest ourselves of these detrimental influences and free ourselves from the weights which slow us down. Discipline accomplishes this and gives us a new lease upon spiritual life.

Harold S. Laird records an event which took place one day as he was in the forest. "Sitting on a fallen

tree trunk in the woods, I observed a large black ant crawl leisurely along. Interested in seeing what the insect would do I dropped a piece of cracker near it. The falling fragment scared the ant and it started away. I blocked its way with my finger. It started in another direction, and again I blocked it, and finally succeeded in guiding it to the crumb, which it immediately seized and began to devour avidly. Doubtless that ant thought the blocking of its chosen path a great hardship. It may have been rebellious, wondering what that great big creature was trying to do, whereas it was simply a move of a higher intelligence to guide it to something more beneficial than the end of its chosen path."

Let us then, not lose faith in God. Regardless of the turmoil and strife of the world, let us seek to do His will without wavering. If we will maintain the touch of his hand on ours, then the way will never become so dark but what we shall be safely guided home. Let us pray for each other that we may be pure and holy in his sight. Let us purge out of our hearts all envy, malice and rancor; let us keep our bodies a clean dwelling place for the Spirit of God. When a brother is overtaken in a fault, let those who are spiritual restore him. When it is impossible to restore those who go astray, let us then prayerfully, tearfully and sadly take that step which will be for their good in the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.