

ADMONITIONS FOR THE CONSECRATED

"I write unto thee...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."--[1 Tim. 3:14,15](#) .

IT is one thing to make our consecration to the Lord, to be his and to serve him even unto death, and another thing to carry out that service day by day in all the little details of life. Our Lord's words --that he that is faithful in that which is least would be faithful also in greater things--is well illustrated by the fact that it would be comparatively easy for us to finish our sacrifice by suicide, or even by going to the stake, and a much more difficult thing to day by day hold our sacrifice on the altar in all the little affairs of life--in self-denials, in patience, in perseverance, in brotherly kindness, in gentleness--to receive reviling and revile not again, to be smitten mentally or physically and not to retaliate; this endurance of a lingering crucifixion-death is much more difficult. But we can readily see that the Lord's plan is greatly to our advantage, in the sense that while the consecration evidences a right spirit, will or intention, the gradual carrying out of that consecration tends more and more to develop the character-likeness of our Lord in us. Hence the Apostle urges that we learn to rejoice even in tribulations, knowing that they will work out in us various fruits and graces of the Lord's Spirit, as we receive them in the proper attitude of heart and seek to learn the lessons they teach.

GOOD BEHAVIOR IN THE CHURCH

Recognizing that we are all defective according to the flesh, that none of us come up to the divine standard of perfection, and that our only perfection is that of the heart, the will, we must not wonder if occasionally we have trials and testings, aggravations, one from the other, though it must be the will, the desire, the intent of each to provoke one another to love and good works and not to anger, hatred and evil works. ([Heb. 10:24](#).) For ourselves we must recognize the very highest standard of God-likeness, and as for others of the Body we must be prepared to allow our love for them and for the Lord to cover a multitude of blemishes should they appear to us. And each one, in proportion as he or she follows this course, is pleasing to the Lord, is pure in heart--a copy of God's dear Son-- and, covered with the robe of the Redeemer's merit, is considered from God's standpoint, not according to his imperfect flesh, but according to his perfect-intentioned heart or will. To us, "in the Church" does not signify in a meeting-house, but amongst the Lord's people. Neither does it mean merely when we are assembled together, but it includes all of our dealings with them, every day and all the time. And we all should desire to learn the lesson how we ought to conduct ourselves in or amongst the members of the Church, the Body of Christ, the tabernacle of the holy Spirit amongst men.

Everywhere in the Bible the Lord sets before us perfect Love as the standard, and we must therefore suppose that all who have passed the standard of babes in Christ, and have come to some measure of knowledge of the Lord through his Word and Spirit, recognize this love standard and are seeking to conform to it. We must therefore suppose that the difficulties which from time to time arise amongst such are largely because of imperfect development of knowledge and experience in applying the love standard, as well as because of imperfections of the flesh. Hence the Scriptural exhortation that we grow in grace as well as in knowledge, and that we be more and more filled with the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of brotherly kindness, the spirit of meekness, the spirit of patience--the holy Spirit.

ARE CONTENTIONS NECESSARY?

We reply that they are sometimes, but not nearly so often as they occur. There is just one ground of contention authorized, and we find it in the words, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the [R4008 : page 180] saints." (*Jude 3*.) But since the spirit of contention is everywhere in the Bible reprehended, we must understand the Apostle to mean that only the important points of our faith are to be contended for. We must not give place to any who deny the personality of the heavenly Father, and who would teach in the Church that God is a great big nothing, merely a principle of good; and if there is anything good in the sense of useful in the piece of iron or wood or stone or in any other substance, there is that much of God in it. We must contend earnestly against such vain philosophies, as being not only foreign to the faith once delivered to the saints, but antagonistic to it to the last degree. We must contend also for the ransom, because it is the very foundation of the faith once delivered to the saints --that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that he rose for our justification. This would imply a contention against various false claims, such as that our Lord was not made flesh but remained a spirit being, to whom death was quite impossible--that he merely assumed for a time the human body, pretending that it was himself, and pretending that he died when it died.

We must hold to the faith once delivered to the saints, that our Lord left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, that he humbled himself and was made flesh, and that he did this not as an example, but that he by the grace of God "tasted death for every man"--that he might die the Just for the unjust to bring us to God. This means additionally that we must contend that his death was a real death, the Just for the unjust, else our faith in him as a Savior and Redeemer would depart. Furthermore, if we did not believe that he really died, really gave himself as a corresponding price for father Adam, thus purchasing him and his race, how could we believe in his resurrection from the dead? How could anyone be resurrected from death if he had not gone into it? We must also hold to and contend earnestly for the great fact that God's work during this Gospel Age is the selection of the Bride of Christ--the Church of the First-born-- and that this election, completed at our Lord's second coming, will have its consummation in the resurrection of the little flock to glory, honor and immortality in the Kingdom, as the Royal Priesthood under Christ their Royal Head and High Priest, that as the Spiritual Seed of Abraham they may fulfil the Abrahamic Covenant, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." For all these fundamentals of our religion, including the declaration that sin entered into the world by Adam's transgression and that we are all partakers of his sin and of its penalty, and all need redemption--all these first principles of the faith we must stand for, contend for. To be indifferent to these and to allow error to creep in and to be promulgated, taught in the Church, would be a serious sin and show unfaithfulness on the part of those who had pledged themselves as soldiers of the cross to defend it.

But aside from such fundamentals, the Lord's people should seek to exercise great moderation amongst themselves upon any point of doctrine not clearly enunciated--upon the meaning of any parable not explained in the Scripture itself. Neither should there be any dispute or division as respects Brother Russell or any other brother. Each should be allowed to exercise his own judgment in respect to things not specifically stated in the Word of God. Each should feel a delicacy or reserve about promulgating any doctrine or matter not specifically and clearly taught in the Scriptures, and above all he should be sure never to teach or attempt to teach speculations if he himself is not thoroughly convinced respecting the same. Each one has enough to contend with in the twists and kinks of his own imperfect judgment without having others add to his difficulties by the rehearsal of matters which they admit they do not clearly understand. There is so much in God's Word that is simple and plain and well substantiated that we can talk about and think about, that we are well nigh inexcusable for far-away speculations. The Scriptures declare, "The secret things belong unto God, but the things revealed belong unto us."--[Deut. 29:29](#).

PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE COMMENDED

If some dear brother has a peculiar theory or hobby and feels that he cannot rest until he has presented it to the Church, there should be some opportunity given him to let off steam--even if it would not be advisable to

hear him in the most public manner lest visitors should conclude that his fancies represented the general thought of the Church. But if after he has been heard on some occasion, and it be the judgment of the Church that his theories are unreasonable, unscriptural, he should be content with having given his view; and if he be not content, but desires to ride his theory continually as a hobby, to the annoyance of others and to the interference with the general spirit of worship and progress in study, it would seem to be the duty of the elders to call his attention to the fact, and to remind him that he has been heard, and therefore his urging the matter is in the nature of a contention, not for a fundamental of the truth, but for a theory, and that such contention is reprov'd [R4009 : page 180] throughout the Scriptures as contrary to the will of the Lord and to the good of his people, themselves included, and that therefore they cannot permit the matter to continue.--
[Titus 3:9](#).

The Apostle speaks of those who are "contentious and obey not the truth." ([Rom. 2:8](#).) The intimation is that the contentious spirit or disposition is generally to be found amongst those who are not living up to the spirit of the truth which they have already recognized. They have been attempting to grow in knowledge without growing in grace--in love, in kindness, gentleness, meekness, patience, etc.; and those who are right at heart will be pleased to note this as their difficulty, and to correct the same, because what would it profit us to contend for our theories and cause confusion in the Church of God, and be ultimately reprimanded by the Lord and be unable to pass the examination for perfect love and Christ-likeness, and [R4009 : page 181] therefore be counted unworthy a place in the Bride class! Surely such contentions, such theorizings, are well worthy of the Apostle's reprimand, and well worthy to be heeded by us all.

The Apostle's exhortation that "nothing be done through strife or vain-glory" gives another suggestion along this line, namely, that some have naturally the spirit of strife, and therefore more to overcome along this line than have some others. Some, it is intimated, have a vain-glorious spirit, the spirit of pride and ambition, which gets themselves and others into difficulty. But are we to reject those who are naturally combative, naturally ambitious? Are we to say that they therefore are not of the Body, and cut them off? By no means; rather we should seek to so exemplify the proper course in our own conduct as to impress a lesson upon them and upon all with whom we have contact. Wherever we see a wrong spirit in another our first thought should be, Have I any of that disposition myself? and our first correction should be in our own hearts and conduct. Thus casting the mote or beam out of our own eyes we would be the better prepared to approach our brother with gentleness and kindness, and unobtrusively to render him assistance in getting the better of his difficulties.

BEREANS WHO "FIGHT TO A FINISH"

Some of the Lord's dear brethren of excellent heart and noble intention seem to get the improper thought in connection with the Berean studies. They seem to say to themselves, There can be but one right thought on this subject, and that one the truth; and everyone else here should want the truth, and we should contend and dispute on this question if necessary all night and fight the matter until some one gives up and sees that he is wrong. This is an evil thought entirely, and is productive of great discomfort and disadvantage, and a hindrance to spirituality in various classes. On the one hand we are to appreciate more those who do some thinking of their own about a subject than those who do no thinking, and who merely swallow a statement set forth by others. But there is a proper limit to be observed: the Lord has had great patience with us all in our slowness to learn, and surely we should be patient with each other. He lays down line upon line, precept upon precept, and is slow to anger and plenteous of mercy, and very generous toward all those who give evidence of desiring to do his will.

We certainly are not authorized to do less than this in his name and as his representatives. Rather our realization of our own obtuseness in the past should make us very sympathetic with others who are slow to see, slow to hear, slow to understand. Each therefore should be content if he have a reasonable opportunity for presenting his view on any question, and should not attempt to enforce and crowd it in upon another. If

the Editor has stated his view, and one or more do not see the matter exactly so, and the question is not fundamental, then it would be the proper course to let the matter rest there, and to allow the Lord eventually as the great Teacher, through his providences to gradually bring us to where we could the more completely see eye to eye. In this we have the opportunity for learning the lesson of patience and forbearance, brotherly kindness, meekness, gentleness--Love.

"CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE"

If anyone of a contentious mind would set himself about it, he would have no difficulty in provoking in others resentment and evil works; but the Apostle urges, that having the holy Spirit of love dwelling in our hearts, we should consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. We should study one another's natural dispositions from a sympathetic standpoint, with a view to helping each other over difficulties and weaknesses. And how much of this is possible! Frequently it is possible by speaking a kind word, gently, sympathetically, lovingly, to help some dear brother or sister to keep balanced--to overcome some of his or her weaknesses, the expression of which would be injurious to himself as well as to the Church or others. How we should all study this spirit of helpfulness and recognize it as the spirit of love, the Spirit of the Lord! Let us remember that a soft answer, a kind and gentle word, may be helpful and turn away anger, but that grievous words and strife words, cutting words, sarcastic words, are almost sure to stir up anger. ([Prov. 15:1](#).) Let us therefore study more and more to be gentle toward all and kind and affectionate one toward another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.--[Eph. 4:32](#).

Another point upon which forbearance and consideration seem very necessary is in respect to the choosing of leaders. Some very devoted brethren seem to get the impression that they should have no part in electing as an Elder anyone they could not endorse in every particular. We agree that no immoral person should be chosen to eldership under any consideration, and that if an Elder be found to be immoral his resignation should be immediately called for. But usually this is not the ground of difference: the Lord's people would never knowingly choose an immoral person as a standard-bearer or leader in spiritual things. But suppose that in a congregation there be one person whom the majority may consider vastly superior and better qualified every way than any other of their number to be their Elder or leader, and suppose that a minority of the congregation have a liking for the presentations or manners or what not of another brother, and suppose that another minority have a preference for still another brother, or at least a desire to see him brought forward into the public service of the Church, believing that he has talents that could be used of the Lord to his glory. What shall each party do?--fight it out on political lines and say, We have power, and therefore authority to elect our man, and you must either join in this or quit the company? By no means!

This might be "good politics" amongst the worldly, but it would be quite out of harmony with the spirit of love which must govern in the Church. In gaining *such* a victory we might wound one or more of the Lord's [R4009 : page 182] brethren, might offend our Lord, and do ourselves incalculable injury in our race for the great prize. Such a "victory" would be a *defeat* of our real aims and aspirations --a victory for our great Adversary. Are we not to consider one another, and seek not every man merely his own preferences, but seek to build one another up in the most holy faith? The spirit of love would therefore seem to dictate that more than one Elder should be elected in such a case--two or three or more, as the supply of material and the desires of the company could be reasonably interpreted, without violating the general directions of the Lord's Word. A fair and reasonable decision should be such as would be proportionate to the number of the brethren. Some might be found specially well adapted to the leading of one kind of meeting and others to the leading of another kind, and the Apostle points out that we have need of every member of the body, so that the eye cannot even say to the hand or the foot--I have no need of you. The thought we should have in mind is that there is plenty of room for all of the Lord's people to do service.

When the Apostle points out the qualifications of an Elder he mentions the ideal, just as our Lord mentions the ideal to us all when he says, "Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven." We cannot be like the

heavenly Father fully, completely, but we can have him as our standard or pattern to which we are striving to attain. Similarly, few elders may come up to the standard of qualification mentioned by the Apostle, but these qualifications should not be overlooked by any in their expression of a choice, or rather in their expression of what they believe to be the Lord's choice in the matter. "Forbearing one another in love," says the Apostle. O, how this forbearance and consideration of one another's preferences, tastes, views, would help to make us all more and more like the glorious Lord himself, and how it would smooth many of the wrinkles and difficulties, and bring peace in every little company of the Lord's people! We are not thinking of nor striving for the kind of peace and quiet that prevails in the graveyard or which prevails in the sleeping room, but the kind which the Lord would approve amongst those who are awake and alive and thoroughly consecrated to him, and forbearing and considering one another because of their love for the Head and for all those who are seeking to walk in his steps.

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"LOVE SEEKETH NOT HER OWN"

All of the Lord's people should gradually come more and more to be ashamed of a self-seeking spirit and disposition and to appreciate more and more the spirit of love, which thinks not of personal interests but of the good of others, especially those of the household of faith. If a brother thinks that he has some talents which he would be pleased to use in the Lord's service in the Church, it is proper for him to be on the alert for opportunity to use these, but also proper for him to avoid imposing himself or his services on the Church. While glad to serve the Church freely, without money or price, while glad to give time, strength, energy and every talent to the service of the Truth, the spirit of meekness as well as the spirit of wisdom should hinder him from crowding his services upon the Church more than the latter could appreciate. Better go gently, and trust to the Lord to guide and to eventually indicate who shall serve the Church and to what extent they shall serve and in what capacity. This, the Lord's way, the Scriptural way, will be found to be the wisest one--any other course will sooner or later bring difficulty to all concerned.

"WHOM THE SON MAKES FREE"

It is difficult for many of us to keep balanced respecting our personal liberties: we are largely influenced by the customs and practices of those surrounding us, and need continually to hearken to the voice of the Lord in his Word. Because in Babylon it is customary that nothing should be done without ordination, a feeling sometimes creeps in amongst those less developed in grace and truth that is somewhat in accord with that: the feeling, for instance, that no meetings must be held except as they are appointed by the Church and conducted by one of the elected elders. There are advantages coming from a recognition of the oneness of the Church, and the appointing of meetings when and where they may be most helpful and to be led by those esteemed to have superior qualifications. But we must never lose sight of the fact that neither the Lord nor the apostles placed any limitations upon the liberties of individuals, and hence we may not do so. Note our Lord's words--"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." ([Matt. 18:20](#).) That promise is as true today as it ever was, and places no restriction upon any of the Lord's people.

If, therefore, any of the Lord's flock feel that their best spiritual interests are not served by the arrangements already made by the Church, they are fully at liberty to start a meeting that will be more helpful to them--any kind of a meeting not in conflict with the provisions of the Scriptures. In case of such a necessity seeming to present itself to any, our advice would be that they seek to appoint such meetings at a time and place that would not be in conflict with the appointments of the general congregation. If then it be desirable, as we hold that it generally is, that the Church should take a general supervision of such matters, it should recognize its responsibility and appoint a sufficiency of meetings and of the desired kinds, and under such leadership as will meet the necessities of the dear people--that all may be fed, that all may be strengthened, that all may progress, and that all may be maintained in unity of heart and in love and fellowship and cooperation.

This may be as suitable a time as any for mentioning again, what has already been emphasized in DAWN STUDIES, Vol. VI., namely, that in our opinion the Lord's dear flock grow most in grace and strength where testimony meetings and Berean classes and [R4010 : page 183] DAWN studies are given quite a prominent place amongst their meetings. In these social gatherings, especially in the meetings devoted to testimony, prayer and praise, the dear friends have opportunities for getting into sympathetic touch with one another, which is most helpful, and which binds them more together in the bonds of Christian love than perhaps any other meetings could do. In the Allegheny Church these meetings are held every Wednesday evening, and are eight in number, in various parts of Pittsburg and suburbs. The average attendance for last quarter was more than one hundred and fifty, and the influence going out from these meetings is, we believe, excellent. How glad we would be if all the dear company who are able would attend them and partake of their refreshing influences. Many, we are sure, if obliged to choose one kind of meeting only would vote for the testimony meeting, or else that the testimony feature be made an important part of some other meeting. Let us remember that this is much of the kind of a meeting described by the Apostle in the early Church, as "When you come together."--[*I Cor. 14:26*](#).

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