Articles by Albert P. Upton

Albert P. Upton

First published in Food for the Flock (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Give Attendance to Reading (Part 1) (Nov 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 11, Nov 1955.

—PART ONE—

The ancient conqueror faced the tremendous problem of spreading the fact among his new subjects that their country was under new management. General communications were limited to crude smoke or fire signals and runners, therefore, another means of disseminating the news of the conqueror was invariably practised. This plan involved calling in all the coin of the realm, melting it, then re-issuing it with a reproduction of the new king on one side. The circulation, among the vanquished, of these coins was a continual reminder to the users that they were subjects of the new monarch.

Our Master, the Lord Jesus, Who has liberated us from the power of our old taskmaster, sin, and has brought us out to enjoy “the glorious liberty of the people of God,” has likewise formed His impression, not on our external possessions, but on our hearts. This impression should be made manifest in our daily living.

In addition to saving us by His incomparable grace we are indwelt by a member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Moreover, our Lord has provided us with a series of letters (using human penmen) from His very throne. These are addressed to us as individuals and assemblies. How easy it is, however, for the old nature which is still within us to dominate our lives. How infrequent and spasmodic is our realization of the responsibilities of making Christ Lord in our hearts. While to a degree we

are willingly subject to our new Sovereign, often we lose the sense of the relative values of things temporal and things spiritual.

If the scales of importance are unbalanced in the direction of the temporal things, and these items acquire a sufficiently high degree of significance in our lives, spiritual things become secondary. If this is allowed to continue, such thoughts and practices become habitual, our consciences are dulled and we become less fruitful or perhaps unfruitful. When the importance of temporal things reaches the point of extreme desire and lust, we are in particular danger, and can well be called unprofitable servants.

If we attempt to shelter ourselves behind the excuse that we are living under the period of God's grace, let us not forget what Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 6:12 (Darby), "All things are lawful to me but all things do not profit."

Practising the title of this article is an additional aid to escaping this danger. We are fortunate in having God's Word readily available to us as well as having many commentaries prepared by Godly men.

The attorney's office is frequently lined with books to which he must often make reference because of the limitations of human memory. The doctor, similarly, may refer to his library, although he knows by memory the symptoms of most of the common ailments, he must keep himself informed of the newest wonder drugs and anesthetics as well as the latest in surgery. The engineer must avail himself of handbooks, and must keep abreast of the latest developments in the technological fields, particularly his own. Therefore, Christians, young and old, acquire a good library of Bible commentaries,

subscribe to the best scriptural periodicals, and procure various reliable translations of the Holy Scriptures. A different translation or a comment often will clear the uncertainty and apparent cloud that surrounds a passage of Scripture. It is well also to remember that Scripture complements Scripture. God is a most unusual and unique Writer.

God has given to us a new nature, a membership in a new family, a citizenship in a new country, and a destination and permanent residence in that sinless location beyond the turmoil and chaos of this scene. These blessings become strong incentives to learn more about these possesions which we shall enjoy forever; strong incentives, indeed, to learn more about the gracious Giver of all these mercies.

Often the reading habit has to be acquired. Some of us are born with it, but the usual trend is in the opposite direction. We need to cultivate the urge. We must not overlook the value of searching out the settings of the sixty-six books of the Bible, the relationship of each to the others, the character and background of the human writers, the conditions under which the books were written, and the details of the silent years between the Old and the New Testaments. All of the facts contribute to a greater interest in His Word, and lead to a fuller appreciation of the actual Inspired Writings of God.

May we caution, however, against accepting all statements of all commentaries, and all translations of the Bible, or interjections of secular history as being accurate. Take nothing for granted. “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” Be satisfied that nothing contradicts the Holy Scriptures.

Give Attendance to Reading (Part 2) (Dec 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 12, Dec 1955.

—PART TWO—

If you are privileged with a Sunday School class, do not be satisfied with only studying the guide you have been given; study thoroughly the lesson Scriptures before consulting the guide. Moreover, read all you can from reliable writers on the subject, always remembering the fallibility of such commentaries. Study the subjects or chapters that may be the focal points in your Bible readings in your assembly. If the practice is to have a brother open the subject, do not leave it all to him. Even if you do not say a word during the meeting, you will have a better understanding of the message being presented if you study during the week. New thoughts will be acquired, and a fuller appreciation of the Scriptures will be enjoyed. If you are a brother, and are permitted to make a few comments, you may have enjoyed something from your study that you can contribute to the benefit of the others, and further increase the enjoyment in your own soul.

Acquire the habit of asking questions, especially of the Christians in your assembly who know their Bibles, and from ministering brethren who are visiting you. Always compare their answers with Scriptures to be sure that the comments complement and not confuse the subject.

Satan is showing the subtle side of his nature in our day. He has dozens of agents disguised as Christians who are promoting contradictory and blasphemous cultish

beliefs. You may become a target of such misguided zealots who will delight in trapping you through their private interpretations of Scripture. How can you prevent succumbing to this form of Satan's wiles? By knowing your Bible better than Satan's representatives know theirs.

Remember the Lord Himself answered Satan by quoting Scripture. He did not use any other repellent than is available to us. This should encourage us. "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). Particularly if your locality is infested with such trickerous persuaders, you might prayerfully devote time advantageously in studying especially Scriptures in the light of their statements, to learn just what their errors are. You will become strengthened yourself, and by God's help will repel more easily their fiery darts.

Beware also of those who deny the authenticity of Scripture, or those so-called Bible critics who enjoy pointing out supposed contradictions in the Bible. Many make charges from hearsay, and are unable to cite specific cases of which, of course, there are none. There are imagined ones, but no real ones. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," is often applicable in both spiritual and temporal realms.

Perhaps you have heard of rapid reading courses, perhaps you have taken one, or possibly you have read articles on how to read faster with equal or better comprehension. Such methods are of no value in the study of the Holy Scriptures. In reading the Bible, nothing should be scanned, nothing gulped, no

assumptions made, but every word should be read carefully and considered prayerfully.

Remember we are living in enemies' territory. The tempo at which we live is such as to discourage taking the time to study spiritual things. The world lives a paradox. It is in turmoil, expresses a desire for peace and tranquility, yet ignores the Prince of Peace. Some, quite blatantly, antagonistic to spiritual things, conclude by their own diagnosis that there is nothing beyond the grave. Others have a form of godliness only; yet, the answer is available, the only answer to the world's needs, the Word of God. This the world will not accept as the cure for its many ills.

All of these factors influence our lives, often more than we realize, and compete with our good intentions for our attention. Let us not give the world the satisfaction of having enticed us away from our prerogative of using the channels available to us through which God can speak to our hearts.

Let the Psalmist's words be true as applied to each of us, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). Let us also remember Job's declaration, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food," (Job 23:12).

* * *

Feeling our weakness makes room for God, but feeling discouraged makes room for the enemy.

* * *

There is more in Jesus Christ to make us glad than in all the world to make us sad.

His Name (Sept 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 9, Sept 1957.

Albert Upton

All believers find themselves drawn to other Christians because of the “common salvation” which they mutually enjoy. Such association frequently leads to questions such as, “What church do you attend?” And, “How large is the congregation?” Sometimes there follows an exchange of visits to the various places of worship.

These experiences reveal the fact that there are basic differences between places and a marked contrast in general procedure. The reason for such a condition may be explained in the language of The Song of Solomon (5:9). In that passage the bride is asked by certain inquisitive persons, “What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?” In current speech this simply asks, What may be our evaluation of the Lord Jesus Christ? Once we did not esteem Him, but perhaps there has been a change and we hold Him so high that we believe Him to be everything to us, our all in all. If so, this is the important question with us now, Are we interested in full obedience to His principles and plain instructions or do we choose to observe only the things that are convenient to us? If we follow His teaching, we will acknowledge Him as our Head, our Lord in heaven, and collectively we will gather with fellow-believers in His Name (Matt. 18:20), and unto Himself (Gen. 49:10).

With some Christians the big attraction is the denomination, the organization, and the visible leader.

On one occasion, while talking with a Christian acquaintance who was affiliated with a large fundamental group, the writer quoted Bible verses, and explained Scriptural truths relative to church order and procedure. The friend's comment was, "Oh, but when you have a thousand people it is nice to have a leader with you to direct."

In speaking to the woman at the well of Sychar, the weary Stranger, the Lord Jesus, said, "Ye worship ye know not what" (John 4:22). His words, unfortunately, apply to many today who simply follow customs and traditions without knowing the principles that are given in the Word of God.

The Son of God, among His other high offices, is declared to be the Head of the Body, the Church (Col. 1:18). Does our Lord receive and enjoy His supreme pre-eminence among those groups who demand a human head? Would the charge of "Not holding the Head" apply to them (Col. 2:19)?

The writer is not presenting these thoughts with the intention of being supercritical of others. The purpose, rather, is to provoke serious thinking and to stimulate further interest in God's principles of church gathering, and to help those who are faced with the question, "Where ecclesiastically should I be?" Let us study more fully what God has to say on the subject.

More than activity, form, and tradition God desires simple obedience to His Word. Remember the emphatic statement of Samuel to Saul, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). Surely we should be most interested in learning His will and in doing it.

Let us consider the typical case of the Israelite. Having been redeemed out of the bondage of Egypt, fed and protected through the wilderness journey, he is brought into the Promised Land to raise his own produce in its fields. As a means of showing his appreciation for all God's goodness to him, he offers the first of that produce (the offering of firstfruits) to the Lord.

His place of worship was not left to his own choice. He received instruction in the form of a command, "Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there" (Deut. 26:2). In this act of worship the individual Israelite functioned as the actual offerer, and as he set down his basket of first-fruits before the altar, he confessed his background, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." The Israelite himself, and not an officiating priest spoke these words after which the firstfruits were offered and he individually worshipped God (V. 10).

Scriptural principles would lead to a similar practice today. When Christians are gathered at an appointed place around the Lord, brethren are led one by one to review their past, their sinnership, and, as it were, the hole of the pit from which they have been digged. Such reflection calls forth appreciation from all the hearts for all that has been done for them. This response, whether audible or silent, rises to God from each individual rather than through any intermediary who may stand before the congregation to direct and to function in a selective capacity. According to 1 Cor. 15:20-23, Christ is our firstfruits, and as we through our praise present

Him back to God we heartily exclaim, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift” (2 Cor. 9:15)! This is the privilege of all believers because we are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices by Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 2:9).

In gathering, congregationally, to show forth His death till He come, there should be nothing that would appeal to the senses, for we are not concerned with the physical, but with the spiritual, for “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

The divine principle of church gathering is given to us by the Lord Himself, “Where two or three (whether it be in a home, a hall, a chapel, a store-building, or a barn) are gathered together in My Name (not under a man-ascribed title which signifies a denomination, cult, or sect), there am I in the midst (not a titled visible leader, but the Lord Himself is the centre) of them” (Matt. 18:20).

Because believers in Christ are a needy people, they meet together at times to make supplication to the Father. They pray that their needs may be met and that their testimony, both collective and individual, may be blessed and strengthened. This is known as a prayer-meeting.

The Bible reading or the ministry meeting is the collective gathering together of the saints to study the Word of God or to hear it ministered by those to whom God has entrusted a gift for teaching or ministry.

The Scriptural church or assembly, constrained by the love of Christ, has a compassion for the many of all ages who know not the Saviour and who are travelling to a

lost Eternity. Gospel meetings, family Bible hours, and Sunday-schools are therefore conducted for the proclamation of the gospel.

The pattern laid down in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles show that the early churches were engaged in united prayers, the study of the Holy Scriptures, and the sounding forth of the gospel of God's grace, as well as the weekly breaking of the bread.

What a contrast is found today in the functions and facilities of modern Christendom which stimulate fleshly pride through accomplishment, acquisition, association, eloquence, and display. Such things are all to perish with the using.

If you are in any doubt concerning your ecclesiastic association, if you learn more of Christians who gather only to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, search the Scriptures and enquire for yourself as to what is God's purpose for you, and as to what is man's perversion of that divine intention. Remember the Word of God liveth and abideth forever; we should, therefore, live with it and by it as long as we are here below.