The Forum: Questions and Answers from Food for the Flock

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The Forum (Jan 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 1, Jan 1955.

Proposition No. 1:

In what sense is Israel a church, and since she is spoken of as such in the New Testament, in what manner is the Christian Church distinguished when compared to Israel?

Investigation:

In a discussion upon so important a subject, it is obvious that three things must be established; first, the meaning of the word church, and this must be derived, not only through etymology, but also from Biblical usage; in second place, some of the features of Israel as a nation must be determined; and, finally, it will be necessary to examine certain characteristics of the Christian Church.

The Word Church:

It is commonly known that our English word Church is not a translation of the Greek word Ecclesia. This may seem unfortunate; nevertheless, the English word has a pleasant meaning most appropriate to its use. The word Church, like the German, kirche, or the Scotch, kirk, means, that which is the Lord's. Some translators use the word "assembly" as a better equivalent of Ecclesia. How precious to know that the Christian Church or Assembly belongs to the Lord. The word "Ecclesia" is a compound formed by the preposition, out, and the verb, to call, and means "to call out."

In the Book of The Acts the word Ecclesia appears in a threefold relationship: nationally, municipally, and selectively. It is used of Jews, of heathen, and of Christians.

It is applied in its national sense to the Jews in chapter 7:37-38, “Moses … that was in the church in the wilderness.” i.e., Moses who was in the called out assembly in the wilderness. It has been pointed out by Dr Scofield that Israel in the Holy Lane is never called a church, but in the wilderness she was indeed a church a called out assembly, called out in Abraham from Ur, (Gen. 11:31-12:3) and later called out from Egypt.

In Acts 19:39-41, it is associated with the municipal gathering of the heathen in the theatre at Ephesus. These had been called out of their homes and places of business by Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen in protest against the preaching of the apostles.

The word is used repeatedly in its Christian relationship throughout the entire book; for example, “The church which was in Jerusalem” (11:22). “The church that was at Antioch.” (13:1).

Israel:

The nation of Israel rests upon God’s call to Abraham, and His covenant with him, (Gen. 12:1-3) in which three terms are specified; first, Abraham was to become a great nation; second, he in this nation was to inherit the Holy Land; finally, through Abraham’s Seed (Gal. 3:16) all nations were to be blessed. The Bible deals with these aspects of Israel’s history; the Pentateuch with the rise of the people from one family through many vicissitudes until ts a band of escaped slaves they are

organized into a nation at Sinai; the remainder of the Bible with their relationship to the Holy Land. Similarly, the Holy Scriptures reveal to us the coming of Abraham's Seed who is Christ, through whom the blessing of Abraham was to come upon the nations. (Gal. 3:14) This remarkable revelation is given progressively; first, God chooses a nation, (Ex. 19:5-6; Num. 24:17) then a tribe, (Gen. 49:10) then a family, (2 Sam. 7:12-17; Heb. 1:5) eventually a woman blessed above all others, (Luke 1:26-32) and through her God sent forth His Son. (Gal. 4:4) Of these concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. (Rom. 9:5) God's major purpose in Israel was to give through that nation a Saviour to the world.

The Christian Church:

There are many characteristics by which the Church is distinguished and through which she is seen a contrast to Israel. Christ is her divine Architect, "Upon this rock, I will build My Church." (Matt. 16:18) The Holy Spirit is her Builder, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:22) The doctrinal foundation upon which she rests is Christ, (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11) and her chronological foundation is clearly stated, "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. 2:21) As far as order is concerned the apostles were first in the Church, then the New Testament prophets, and then throughout the succeeding generations all believers. Let us consider the present purpose of God in the Church. It is a mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and

prophets by the Spirit. That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs (with the Jews), and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel. (Eph. 3:5-6) Let us also look at the future purpose of God for the Church, “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her; that He might sanctify and cleanse her with washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such things, but that she should be holy without blemish.” (Eph. 5:25) To these we must add the eternal purposes of God in the Church “The Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. 1:22-23) The Church is the complementary part of the Christ. The complete and ultimate purpose of God in the Church is that she be the Lamb’s wife; (Rev. 19:7-9) of His flesh, and of His bone, (Eph. 5:30) the sharer of His glory. (Col. 3:4)

Conclusion:

This investigation makes evident God’s major purpose in Israel was, that the nation produce the circumstance of the Incarnation, the channel through which the Invisible God revealed Himself to man in His own exact image, Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, God called the nation out of Egypt, and brought it into the Holy Land. In its called-out state Israel was a church, and as such only provides us with an illustration of the use of the word. The Christian Church, in the eternal purposes, is to be the body which united to the Head forms the Christ. (I Cor. 1:12) She is the filling full of Him who fills all in all. The Church is not the channel through which Christ came but the object for which He came. She is not the medium through which Christ reveals Himself, as much

as she is the object to which He reveals Himself. She has been called out from among all nations to be the sharer of Christ's glory, and of her He says, "My Church."

The Forum (Feb 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 2, Feb 1955.

Proposition No. 2:

In what manner may the doctrine of the gospel be understood in order to embrace its various shades of meaning? Investigation: The word “evaggelion” which is translated into English by our word “gospel” means good news. It is found in both the Greek translation of the Old Testament as well as in the original of the New Testament. A few examples from both sections of the Bible will illustrate its general meaning, in 1 Sam. 31:9, we read of king Saul, “They cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about to publish (to announce the good news) it in the house of their idols.” It is also used in the Greek translation of Psa. 40:10, in regard to the declaring of God’s kindness. In a similar sense it is used in Gal. 3:8, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham.” The good news given to Abraham was, “In thee shall all nations be blessed.”

The English word “gospel” is of Anglo Saxon derivation, and may have been compounded by the one or the other of the following methods: First, by using the word “god” with the probable meaning of good; and “spell” meaning narration or history. If such be the case then actually the word gospel would mean a good story. Second, by using the word “God” meaning God, and “spell” meaning a word. Such a combination would literally result in God’s Word. The Greek and its English equivalent together

suggest that in reality, the gospel is God's Word narrating the good story, and of course, the good story is the story of Christ.

A close scrutiny of the usage of this precious word throughout the New Testament reveals that it is accompanied by several modifiers which apparently manifest distinct aspects of God's good news. For example: we read of the "Gospel of The Kingdom" in Matt. 4:23; 9:35; "the Gospel of God" in Rom. 1:1, and of "The Everlasting Gospel" in Rev. 14:6. In fact there are very many references to this subject, some apparently embracing a divine announcement in the past, some an announcement in the present, and some suggesting the possibility of a further announcement in the future. Let us change this order and consider in first place the Gospel as preached in this present time.

"The Gospel Of The Grace Of God" (Acts 20:24):

A careful reading of the references given will make clear the features of this message:

· Its uniqueness: There is no other in this dispensation (Gal. 1:6-7).

· Its Source: "The gospel of God," (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 1Thes. 2:8).

· Its Theme: "The gospel of Christ," (Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12).

· Its Principle: "The gospel of the grace of God," (Acts 20:24).

· Its Purpose: "The gospel of your salvation," (Eph. 1:13).

· Its Objective: Through it we are called into His kingdom and glory (1Thes. 2:12).

· Its Climax: “Called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (2 Thess 2:14).

“The Gospel Of The Kingdom”:

It is God’s purpose that there be here on earth a kingdom, political, spiritual, and universal. This kingdom is called at times the Kingdom of Heaven, and at other times the Kingdom of God. This kingdom has been predicted in prophecy (2 Sam. 7:16), announced by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-3), offered by Christ (Matt. 4:17), rejected by Israel (Matt. 21:42-46), During the present period it appears in the form of mystery, (Matt. 13), and is now therefore, principally spiritual in its characteristics. Eventually it will be manifested (1 Cor. 6:9-10; 2 Thess. 1:5; Rev. 20:4). It will reach full consumation in the universal and eternal reign of Christ (Heb. 1:7-12). The gospel of the grace of God might be called, in a general sense, the gospel of the kingdom, for by it we are called unto His kingdom and glory; in a more definite and specific sense “The Gospel of The Kingdom” is that good news from God revealing His purpose to set up a visible kingdom of righteousness.

“The Everlasting Gospel” (Rev. 14:6):

In this passage, we read of an angel with an everlasting gospel to preach to them on the earth. From the immediate context it appears not as good news, but rather as a message of judgment. Although its burden is one of reprobation to the earth, indirectly it is good news for poor afflicted Israel. Isaiah states clearly that God’s judgement of the, nations ushers in His

deliverance for His ancient people, “For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come,” Isa. 63:4).

Conclusion:

The gospel is ever good news, this is true in all its aspects, and this also may be obvious, the gospel is always a revelation to the mind and heart of Christ. In the Gospel of The Kingdom, Christ is announced as the Son of David, to sit on the throne of His father David; in the Gospel of The Grace of God, Christ is preached as the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners; in the Everlasting Gospel, Christ is intimated the Son of Man judging and ruling the entire earth in absolute righteousness.

The Forum (Mar 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 3, Mar 1955.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Editor Food for The Flock,

Dear Brother in the Lord.,

The first copy of Food for the Flock reached me a few days ago. I have read it a number of times.

The enclosed comments on the Forum are submitted in a spirit of love, trusting they will be helpful.

The Greek word Ecclesia is used in the Original one hundred and fifty times in the New Testament, in three instances (Acts: 19:32, 39, 41) it is correctly translated “assembly,” but in every other instance incorrectly translated by this unfortunate word, “church.”

In the Tyndale translation of the New Testament, the Greek word is translated rightly by the word “congregation.”

In the New Translation by J. N. Darby (thought highly of and used in the Cambridge University, England) the Greek word is translated “assembly,” and beyond question this is the simplest and the most proper translation.

This is the House of God aspect of the assembly where God dwells by His Holy Spirit. The assembly of God as such is the custodian of the “Mystery of Piety.” In 1st Timothy, where the House of God is seen in its manward aspect the word “godliness” or “piety” is used at least seven times and covers every detail of Christian life.

Yours in the Lord,

T.H.

Dear brother T. H.

We do appreciate your prayers, interest, and letter. Do continue to remember us before the Throne of Grace.

Your remarks upon proposition No. 1, in the Forum have been noted carefully. We thank you for your information regarding the various translations into English of the Greek word ecclesia; thus, church, assembly, and congregation. We have already intimated that the word church is unfortunate. In Christendom it carries with it the idea of a material building; whereas, the words “assembly” and “congregation” definitely refer to the people gathered in a building.

The practice of comparing different reliable translations is excellent but in so doing we ever must remember that Divine Inspiration pertains only to the Holy Scriptures as they were written in their original languages, and that the different translations of the Bible vary in the degree of accuracy. In other words, infallibility, belongs only to the Holy Scriptures in their original manuscripts, but fallibility is connected with all translations. This explains in some measure certain imperfections of the King James translation; nevertheless, many a Christian missionary would praise God if he had a translation of the Bible in the tongue of those he seeks to win for Christ anywhere as good as the King James. In spite of its many weaknesses, through it many of us found, the Saviour, and through it many others were delivered from the confusion of Christendom.

Your remarks upon the House of God opens a vast field before us. Regrettably some have visualized the House of God as a building made up of several rooms, these rooms representing certain assemblies, and these certain assemblies being bound together in a circle of fellowship forming the House of God. Would not a careful and prayerful examination of the references to the House of God throughout the New Testament evince the mistake in such a conception? We need not doubt that the Church is viewed also as a building, but the two figures should not be confused.

We read of the house of David, the house of Israel, the house of Judah. These significant appellatives suggest a household or a family. In Hebrews 3:5 we read, “Moses was faithful in all His (God’s) house.” It is therefore patent that Israel was the House of God in a past dispensation. The suggestion that the House of God referred to in this passage is the tabernacle rests upon a wrong premise; Aaron was over the tabernacle, but Moses was over the entire household of Israel. The House of God is synonymous with the Household of God, and the Household of Faith; in the first we consider the Head of the Household, and in the second, the members of the Household. Would not even a cursory examination of this subject reveal the following definite characteristics?

That All Genuine Believers Are In The House of God: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the House of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?” (1 Pet 4:17-18). A perfect antithesis is formed between the House of God, the righteous; and

those that obey not the gospel of God, the ungodly and sinner. All persons who are not in the one class, of necessity must be in the other.

That There Is Blessed Relationship In The House Of God: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the Household of God.” (Eph. 2:19). Through racial reconciliation in Christ, we are no longer strangers, but citizens together of the same heavenly city, the New Jerusalem; no longer foreigners, but members of the same Divine Household.

That There Is Reality In The House Of God: “But Christ as a Son over His (God’s) own house; whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,” (Heb. 3:6). It takes a life-time of constancy to prove that we are Christians. This verse might be paraphrased; Of whose household We prove ourselves to be genuine children, if we constantly maintain our confidence (faith) in God and the enjoyment of hope in Christ to the end of life. The person who does not abide in faith proves that he never was in faith.

That There Are Privileges In The House: Of God: “And having an High Priest over the House of God; let us draw near… Let us hold fast… Let us consider one another,” (Heb. 10:21-24). As Aaron the high priest of Israel functioned on behalf of the whole house of Israel, even so, does Christ, his great Antitype function today on behalf of the entire divine family.

That There Is Special Mutual Consideration For All In The House of God: “Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we

have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith," (Gal. 6:9-10).

That There Is Authority Over The House of God: "Moses verily was faithful in all His (God's) house, as a servant… But Christ as a Son over His (God's) house," (Heb. 3:5-6) Christ rules over the divine household by virtue of His being much more than a servant, a Son. Notice again, "Judgment must begin at the House of God, (1 Pet. 4:17), and compare this with Hebrews 12:5-11.

That There Is Responsibility In The House Of God: "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. 3:15). Every child in the family must learn how to behave himself lest the Head of the Household administer judgment proportionate to the disobedience.

Once more we thank you for your letter and comments. May the Lord richly bless you.

Very sincerely in Christ

J.G.

The Forum (Apr 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 4, Apr 1955.

Correspondence:

Editor, Food for The Flock,

Dear Brother,

I have jotted down a little on the House of God for you to take from it anything useful to The Forum.

The first mention of the House of God in the Bible is found in Genesis 28, where the House of God is associated with a pillar, Jacob's monument to the grace of God. For Jacob, Bethel became the link between heaven and earth, for there he heard the voice of God. There is a definite reference to this in 1 Timothy 3 in which passage the House of God is connected with a pillar, and with the voice of God, ("Now the Spirit speaketh expressly," (4:1).) The pillar is the Church as a monument drawing the attention of the world to the "Mystery of Godliness." It is the details of this "Mystery" that constitute the testimony of the Church.

The House of God is synonymous with the Household of God throughout the New Testament, and of necessity each reference is to the Church Universal. When the local aspect of the Church is in view it is referred to as the part of one great whole.

The "great house" of 2 Tim. 2:2-21, is neither the House of God nor Christendom. It is a great eastern house from which a lesson is drawn. In such a house there are vessels of gold, silver, wood, and earth; gold and silver vessels to serve the master before distinguished guests;

wood and earth to serve him in the kitchen just as well. Any vessel to be of service to him must be clean.

What is it that defiles the vessel? Sin. “If a man therefore purge himself from these.” To what does the pronoun “these” refer? Not to the dishonourable vessels so much, but to the sins that render them dishonourable. “Depart from iniquity.” “Flee youthful lusts.”

It is true, that when purging ourselves from these sins, we may be forced to withdraw from a disorderly brother, but let it be clearly understood that it is sins not persons that defile, and from these we must purge ourselves to be meet for our Master’s use.

With greetings from us both,

Your brother,

R. McC.

Dear Brother McC.

Many thanks for your thought provoking letter. There will be some who have read the Forum in the March issue who will appreciate having your views on this subject. You have made clear the distinction between what might be called the doctrinal House in 1 Tim. 3, and the illustrative house of 2 Tim. 2. We are saved from much confusion when these are thus distinguished.

We hope that you will give us some help with some of the propositions in future issues.

Very sincerely in Christ,

J.G.

* * *

DISCIPLINE

The study of God’s Word for the purpose of discovering God’s will, is the secret discipline that has formed the greatest characters.

Alexander

* * *

A PRINCIPLE

Ignorance of Holy Scripture is ignorance of Christ. As you deal with God’s word so God deals With you.

Jerome.

The Forum (May 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 5, May 1955.

Proposition No. 3:

Is there any firm evidence to substantiate the idea of the unity (oneness) of the human race? Is the unity of mankind an important doctrine of Holy Scripture?

Investigation:

In many of our modern schools and colleges, much is taught relative to the origin of man. It is asserted that there is proof of the existence of a pre-Adamic man, and it is also taught that the American Indian originated from a different source to that of the European and the Asiatic man; in other words, that all men are the descendants of Adam, and that God “Hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,” (Acts 17:26) is denied.

This is not the place in which to discuss the trends in Anthropology, nor to examine this subject from a purely scientific viewpoint; nevertheless, it can be said, there are many eminent scientists, both Christian and non-Christian, who believe in the absolute unity of mankind. They defend their convictions from physical, anatomical, and physiological facts. In this investigation we are interested only in what the Word of God teaches. Let us consider the Holy Scriptures, and rest upon their Divine infallibility as the final court of appeal.

THE ONENESS OF MAN IN HIS ORIGIN: The Genesis record of the creation of man definitely implies the unity of the human race: “And God said, Let us make man in

our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air… So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," (Gen. 1:26-28). Man is the crowning act of Divine creation; woman is a part of that act, and the whole race is considered to be their descendants.

The Apostle Paul teaches these facts in a most unequivocal statement, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression," (1 Tim. 2:14).

THE ONENESS OF MAN IN HIS FALL: Once more we shall refer to the record of early human history as found in The Book of Genesis. "And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat… unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children… And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life," (Gen. 3:13-17).

Let us again turn to the teachings of the Apostle to the nations, Paul, who declares, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned," (Rom. 5:12). It has been frequently noticed that the last verb in this verse actually reads "And so death

passed upon all men for that all sinned." It is not that all have sinned individually during their life time, but that all sinned in Adam, the head of the human race.

THE ONENESS OF MAN IN HIS UNIVERSAL RUIN: Personal observation here would confirm the teaching of The Bible. The universal extent of death proves the universal extent of sin. How emphatically this is taught in the epistle to the Romans. Notice the frequency with which the little word "all" occurs, "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin," (vs. 9). "All the world… guilty before God," (vs. 19). "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," (vs. 23). The same Apostle affirms it, in even more specific language in chapter 5, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," (vs. 12).

THE ONENESS OF MAN UNDER THE HEADSHIP OF ADAM: This fact is taken for granted by the Apostle Paul as he writes to the Corinthians; he assumes it to be a fact well known to them. He states, "For as in Adam all die," (1 Cor. 15: 22).

THE ONENESS OF MAN IN THE OFFER OF SALVATION: "For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon Him shall be saved," (Rom. 10:11-13).

THE ONE HEAD OF RUINED MAN UNITES HUMANITY IN SUBJUGATION: "What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?… For

in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him… But we see not yet all things put under him," (Heb. 2:5-8). "For the creature (creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption," (Rom. 8:20-21).

THE ONE HEAD OF REDEEMED MAN UNITES HIM IN THE NEW CREATION: Adam in headship is a type of Christ who was to come. While there are comparisons here there are also contrasts. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; (life had to be imparted to him) the Last Adam was made a quickening spirit (a life imparting spirit)," (1 Cor. 15:45). Again we read, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ,"

Conclusion:

That the oneness of mankind is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments has been made obvious by our investigation. That it is an important doctrine in our Holy Faith is likewise patent. Upon it rests our knowledge of the conditions of the moral Universe; our knowledge of the spiritual need of man; our knowledge of the extensive offer of the Gospel, and of the final restitution of creation. Through it in an illustrative manner, Paul affirms the oneness of redeemed man in Christ, for as all men are one in Adam in the Old Creation, so all believers are one in Christ in the New Creation.

J.G.

The Forum (June 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 6, June 1955.

Special:

Certain questions and answers from the Belmar conference:

Question: What is the meaning of the seven stars mentioned in Revelation 1:20?

Answer: It was readily admitted by those who took part that there were numerous interpretations of the seven stars, stretching, on the one hand, from the claims of Christendom that they represent the bishops over each diocese, and on the other hand, to the suggestion by some among the assemblies of God's people, that they symbolize the leading brother in each local church, possibly the correspondent.

A closer scrutiny of the context of the passage revealed the following facts: First, there is a perfect antithesis between the seven stars and the seven candlesticks (lamp-stands). While these may be compared in as much as they both are to give light in the night, yet, they actually stand in contrast the one to the other. The seven stars are in the heavens, and are similar to those who turn many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3), but the seven lampstands are on earth. The seven stars are in the hand of Christ; first, in their security (John 10:28-29), and second, in their preservation, for there they are unlike the wandering stars of which we read (Jude 13). The seven lamps give light and are maintained by human responsibility, (For a parallel see Zech 4.).

In second place it was noticed that in each church among the seven there were two groups; first, that there were those who had ears to hear; second, that there apparently were those who had no spiritual hearing. Here again we have an antithesis that corresponds to the first one.

In third place, there are those who are overcomers in the midst of gross failure and declension, and in this a third antithesis was noticed. It was therefore concluded that the stars correspond to those who have ears to hear, the overcomers, and that the lampstands correspond to those who have no spiritual hearing, and who are not among the overcomers, and consequently must be among the fearful and the unbelieving, (See Rev. 21:7-8).

It therefore became obvious that the seven stars represent that which is real and genuine, those who are truly the Lord's in the midst of profession on earth as seen in the seven lampstands; that is, the seven stars represent the spirit of real and genuine Christianity in the midst of the pretention and hypocrisy of Christendom.

In as much as the seven stars are stated to be the seven angels of the seven churches, it was suggested that, since the word angel is the Greek word for messenger, only the true and genuine, real believers in the Lord Jesus, could be characterized as God's messengers either to the professing Church, or through the professing Church to the world.

The Forum (July 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 7, July 1955.

Correspondence:

Dear Brother G.

In the interest of sound exegesis I must express disagreement with Brother McC. (in the latest Forum) that the “House of God” is of necessity the Church Universal. The texts of four editors omit the definite article in 1 Tim. 3:15, hence the sense would be a house of God, a Church of God, a pillar and ground.

Considering the prominence of the “doctrine” (9 times) in the epistle, and Paul’s charge to Timothy to combat all forms of false doctrine, the apostle appears to be solemnizing the charge by a statement of the local church’s high position, not as an attention drawer to the truth, but as an upholder of the same. (cf. James, Cephas, John, as pillars. Gal. 2:9).

However, I concur with our brother regarding the great house in 2 Tim. 2:20. Many have perverted this scripture to justify schism. The reading, dishonour, appears to be too strong. It is the negative of honour, “Some to honour and some not to honour.”

Am enjoying the magazine, and am sure it will grow in popularity with the saints as it becomes better known, and the quality of its matter is kept on a high plane.

Greetings and best wishes in our Saviour’s Name,

J.B.

Dear Brother in Christ,

I am writing you a few lines in regard to your notes in the Forum of Food for The Flock, April issue. I trust you will bear with me as this is not written in any manner of criticism, but for my own benefit. What has caused me much exercise is your statement that the “House of God” and “The Household of God” are synonymous terms, and are always used in reference to the Church Universal. You compare Gen. 2:8, with 1 Tim. 3, with regard to the House of God, and the Household of God being one. I can understand that, but 1 Tim. 3, always appears to me to speak of the local assembly. Jacob’s pillar was set up as a witness and a testimony that God’s presence was there. In 1 Tim. 3, we have the House of God which is the assembly of God, the pillar and ground of the truth. If this Church speaks of the Church Universal in what way does the Church which is invisible show the Mystery of Godliness? Is it not rather the local assembly as a pillar that shews forth the truth that God’s presence is there. Then again the word in vv. 14, “These things write I unto you,” brings before us the order in the local assembly of elders and deacons and their work. Is there any Scripture that links elders and deacons with the Church Universal ?

Your brother by grace,

J.C.

Dear Brother C,

Your letter of kindly criticism of our views on the House of God as expressed in Food for The Flock has been received. We most heartily appreciate the spirit in which it was written. We believe in kindly yet candid open discussion. We may all learn from one another.

I think that you have partly misunderstood what I wanted to convey. I did not say that the local church was not in 1 Tim. 3. It definitely is, for we view the function of bishops and deacons in their local capacity. What I did say and mean, was that no local assembly is the House of God exclusively. Each is looked upon as part of one great whole. In this respect I would draw your attention to a principle of interpretation in the New Testament, that is, when the local church is viewed as part of the whole, the definite article is omitted. It is not the House of God, the Church of the Living God, or the pillar and ground of the truth. It is the same principle in 1 Cor. 12:27. No one would ever suggest that the local church at Corinth was the Body of Christ. They were body of Christ in the sense that the local was composed of members of the One Body. In the same way, the local church, Where Timothy was, was House of God in the sense that it was composed of those who formed part of the Household of God.

The House of God is never once found in the plural, although we read of churches of God, hence the impossibility of placing either the definite or the indefinite article before this designation of the people of God with a view to localizing it.

In the March number of Food for The Flock our Brother G. took up the seven places in the New Testament where the House of God is found. The overwhelming evidence from these leaves no doubt that the term, the House of God, could not be localized, but must embrace all of God’s beloved people.

Let us think briefly of the confusion that would exist if the term, House of God, was to be exclusively localized:

We would have to believe that the chastisement of God fell only on believers in the local assembly, (1 Pet. 4:17-18). We would deny relationship to all saints outside the local church, (Eph. 2:19). The high priestly ministry of Christ would have to be localized, (Heb. 10:21-24). Our goodness would be limited to only those in the local assembly, (Gal. 6:9-10). The authority of Christ over all His people would have to be limited, (Heb. 3:5-6); and our behaviour would have to be limited to when we meet in local capacity, (1 Tim. 3:15).

We believe firmly in the local assembly of God's people and value Divine principles of gathering, but we must not and cannot disassociate ourselves from all saints. It is the Church Universal, the pillar and monument of the truth that alone gives a complete witness for God in the world. The Church is not in ruins, "It looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." (S. of S. 6:10).

With warm greetings in Christ,

Your Brother,

R. McC.

Dear Brother in Christ,

I received your letter today and was glad to hear from you. I feel your letter has confirmed my views on I Tim. 3, as the local assembly. Only I did not understand the House of God part. When you explain that the definite article "The" is not there, that makes the difference, I understand that in 1 Cor. 12, Body of Christ, but I did not know that applied to House of God in I Tim. 3. So I am thankful to you for your explanation. I am glad that I

wrote to you, as it is only by asking that we learn these things.

I enjoy Food for The Flock especially articles relating to the Church as I feel we need to be grounded well these days if we are to keep the assembly going on in way pleasing to the Lord.

Thanking you again for your helpful information.

Your brother by grace,

J.C.

The Forum (Aug 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 8, Aug 1955.

In view of letters testifying to help received through the reading of the question raised at the conference at Belmar, and the summarization of the answer given, we submit some more of these interesting questions.

Question: Who are the overcomers of these seven letters to the churches of Asia?

Answer: This difficult question resulted in a thorough and careful examination of a number of salient facts. The discussion was conducted in a profound spirit of reverence for the Holy Scriptures, an esteem for fellow brethren, and an attitude of dependant humility upon the Holy Spirit. In fact each discussion throughout the entire conference was characterized by a lack of the evil moods of dogmatism.

The salient points examined were: First, that the "overcomer" of the Book of The Revelation stands in contrast to the unsaved, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be His God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death," (Rev. 21:7-8). Second, that the basic idea of the overcomer here is that of one who has been redeemed, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," (Rev. 12:11). Third, that every promise to all the overcomers in the seven churches is seen as

common to all the people of God in the eternal state described at the close of The Revelation. To the Tree of Life promised to the overcomer in Ephesus, all have access in heaven, (22:2). Preservation from the second death is promised to those in Smyrna, and it is common to all the saved in Eternity, (Rev. 20:14-15). The new name promised in Pergamos may have its counterpart in the new name of chapter 22:4. The Morning Star promised the overcomer in Thyatira appears to all in Chapter 22:16. The Book of Life seen in Sardis is seen again in chapter 21:27, as embracing the final list of all the redeemed. The temple, and the pillars within it, as seen in Philadelphia is interpreted in chapter 21:21-22. Finally, the throne and the co-rulers referred to in the letter to Laodicea are viewed in their eternal glory in chapter 22:3-5.

This problem was further examined in the light of another of the writings of John, his first epistle. There it is obvious that the over-comer is seen in two aspects, first, the judicial aspect, that is, the believer an overcomer because of his union with Christ, “But whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world… Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5). In second place, the experimental aspect, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one,” (1 John 2:14).

It was the general consensus of all who took part, that the evidence proved the overcomer seen in the seven churches of Asia to be pictured in the judicial aspect, that the overcomer was in Christ, and, therefore, to be

considered synonymous with the seven stars, and those that had ears to hear.

Question: What constitutes a lamp-stand testimony? Could an assembly exist without being a testimony ?

Answer: The first brother from whom an answer was sought, readily admitted his limitations, and added to the two parts of the question, a third, namely, “If the lamp-stands symbolize the professing church why are they pictured as being golden?

The following suggestions were submitted: First, the churches are symbolized by lamps for it is the divine intention that all churches, all assemblies, give light, that is, bear testimony.

Second, in the attempt to answer the questions, “What constitutes a lampstand testimony?” and “Why the lampstand is pictured as being golden?” the symbol of the lamp-stand was examined in its various parts and functions. 1st, the lamp-stand is golden because it represents the divine plan for the church in the world. 2nd, the lamp was for light, suggesting the divine purpose for the church. 3rd, the lamp by a comparison of Scripture uses oil (Zech. 4), and this suggests divine power in the church, the Holy Spirit of God. 4th, the lamps were each upon the stand, the divine foundation for the church, whether universally or locally is Christ. 5th, the lamps are in the plural intimating the divine fellowship intended among the churches. 6th, the care of the lamps in the light of Ex. 24:1-4, Num. 8:2-3, and Zech. 4 suggest the function of the Christian priesthood.

This discussion was concluded by the reading of Rev. 22:5, “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle (lamp) neither light of the sun; for the Lord

God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.” All possibility of testimony closes with the end of time.

The Forum (Sep 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 9, Sep 1955.

PROPOSITION No. 4:

In what manner is the appellation Church of God to be distinguished from that of Church of Christ?

INVESTIGATION:

To the majority of saints the only approach to this proposition entails first an enquiry into any similarity that might exist between them, and then an enquiry into any distinctive feature which might distinguish them.

Similarities: These must be discovered by a comparison of Scriptures, consequently, we must examine the numerous passages in which references are found. Let us commence with the references to the Church of God. We shall endeavour to decide from the context which of the two aspects of the Church each passage deals with.

The local Church: “Take heed to all: the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God,” (Acts 20:28). “Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth,” (1 Cor. 1:2). “Despise ye the Church of God?” (1 Cor. 11:22). “Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth,” (2 Cor. 1:1). “For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus,” (1 Thess. 2:14).

The Universal Church: “For I am… not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God,” (1 Cor. 15:9). “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God,” (1 Cor. 10:32). “Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of

God and wasted it," (Gal. 1:13). "The House of God, which is the Church of the Living God,'" (1 Tim. 3:15). There is some disagreement as to which aspect of the Church is referred to here in this last passage; we give our judgment without dogmatism.

From the comparison of these Scriptures it becomes obvious that the name Church of God is used of both aspects of the Church.

Let us now in a similar manner list the Scriptures which deal with the Church of Christ. This appellation occurs very seldom, but from deduction we learn that in the first three passages on our list, We have the Church of Christ in its Universal aspect. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but My Father which is in heaven… Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church," (Matt. 16:17-18). "Christ is the Head of the Church… the Church is subject unto Christ… Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it… that He might present it to Himself." (Eph. 5:23-27). "Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body sake, which is the Church," (Col. 1:24). The last reference which we shall list is very definitely the local aspect of the Church. "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The Churches of Christ salute you." (Rom. 16:16). From the comparison of this list it is clear that both the Universal and the local aspects of the Church are spoken of as Church of Christ.

There must be a similarity in the use of the appellation Church of God and Church of Christ. There is an interchange of thought for the Universal Church is

Church of God and also Church of Christ. In like manner the local Church is Church of God and Church of Christ.

Divergences: From many Scriptures we know that Christ is the Foundation and Corner Stone of the Church (Matt. 16:17-18; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6), that the Holy Spirit is the Builder during this dispensation (Eph. 2:22), and that God indwells the Church (Eph. 2:22). Would not these facts therefore, suggest that the appellation Church of Christ suggests the structure and stability of the Church, whereas, the Church of God suggests its true character of holiness.

CONCLUSION:

From these observations it becomes very obvious that the local church in its character must be an expression of the Universal, a minature of the entire gathering of all saints in Christ. With the indulgence of our readers I would copy the words of Mr. William Rodgers as they appear in his Notes on First Corinthians.

“This thought of responsibility indeed seems to underlie the use of the expression, “Church of God,” wherever we find it. Usually it has reference, as here, to the responsibility of those who compose it, but sometimes, as in Ch. 10:32, and Ch. 15:9, it suggests the solemn responsibility of all who interfere with that which is the property of God. Because of this, the term is peculiarly suited to the local assembly, since it is in this connection that most of our responsibilities are incurred; but to look on the phrase, merely as a badge to distinguish the local from the universal Church, is to miss the solemn message which the words ‘Of God’ are meant to convey. In some of the passages where it occurs, the local sense, it exists at all, is at least not prominent; and it seems a

pity to tie up the clear distinction which the New Testament everywhere draws between the local assembly, and the whole Church of the dispensation, with a word or phrase; when in by far the greater part of the references to each, no such word or phrase occurs. Moreover, the use of the term (Body of Christ) in Ch. 12:27, where it is clear that exercise of gift in the local assembly is in view, and of ‘Church of God’ in Ch. 15:9, where we may be sure Saul was not too particular as to which assembly his victims were members of, should deter us from making a statement stronger than these passages warrant.”

The Forum (Oct 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 10, Oct 1955.

Proposition No. 5:

In what manner can Paul's use of the word dispensation be explained?

Investigation:

Before looking into the Scriptures where this word is found, it might be well to recall the usual meaning attached to this word. In the conception of many dispensation refers to a period of time in human history marked off by two epochs. We frequently hear about the different dispensations, Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Righteousness.

First, we shall see how the lexicon defines the original word, oikonomia. It is the management of a household, or more specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property. In second place, let us consider the different words used by translators as they render the thought into English. Some use dispensation, others, administration, one or two economy, and the Revised Version, margin, uses stewardship.

Let us now examine the Bible use of the actual word. It is found in Luke's Gospel where the unjust steward's reproof and scheme (chapter 16:1-9) provide an excellent illustration of its meaning: "How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship (dispensation); for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, what shall I do?

for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship (dispensation): I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship (dispensation), they may receive me into their houses."

The apostle Paul uses the exact word four times. He applies it three times to himself, and once to the blessed Lord Jesus. Let us notice the first three. Paul declares that from God he received a stewardship in the gospel, "A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me," (1 Cor. 9:17). He also asserts that he received a stewardship of the mystery, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given unto me to you-ward. How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery," (Eph. 3:2-3). The mystery is that blessed fact, hidden in ages past, that God takes souls out from among both Jews and Gentiles to form His Church. In the third application of the word to himself, Paul explains that he had received a stewardship relative to Inspiration, "Wherefore I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me for you, to fulfil, (complete) the Word of God," (Col. 1:25) Paul, doctrinally speaking, completed the

Canon of Scripture.

In Eph. 1:10, the apostle transfers the picture to Christ. The Eternal Son of the Father, The True Steward properly administer the purposes of God, and head up all things in One. Here all things are seen to be in the hands of Christ.

Conclusion

From these considerations it appears that our word, dispensation, might better be understood as management. Of course the picture provides room for the original proprietor, his manager, and the properties entrusted to the manager for his administration. Paul felt that God had entrusted to him the Gospel, the Mystery, and part of the plan of Inspiration, to be properly administered by him, and he felt that as a steward he was responsible to his Lord.

It might be well to view all the dispensations in human history in the light of Eph. 1:10. A dispensation being more that just a period of time, but being rather a special manner in which God through Christ administered his dealings with man. He administered man for a season under innocence, and then under conscience, today under grace, and eventually, the Mighty Administrator will head up all things according to the purposes of God.

Should others have thoughts upon this interesting word, we would be pleased to hear from them.

* * *

“Epimeleoma”

The office of a bishop, or overseer was, in Paul’s estimation, more than an office. It was a WORK (1 Tim. 3:1), and the principal part of the work was TO TAKE CARE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD (v. 5).

The only other occurrences of the word in the New Testament are in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:34-35). How did the Smaraitan traveller take care of the wounded man? With the utmost gentleness

and devotion. With his own hands he tended the gaping wounds, placed him on his own beast, and took him to a place of shelter. When forced to leave the object of his solicitude, he sees to it that all needed care is provided.

Does anyone feel called to undertake the good work for which an overseer assumes the office? Let him learn from the actions of the Samaritan in the parable the nature of the loving care that he is to exercise among the people of God.

In a word, he is to take care of the church of God in a spiritual sense, as the Good Samaritan did in a literal sense for the man whom he found stripped and wounded on the road.

From H. P. B. in The Bible Student.

Submitted by F. W. Schwartz.

The Forum (Nov 1955)

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

Dear Brother in Christ:

In the March issue of Food for the Flock, you stated that Divine Inspiration pertains only to the Holy Scriptures as they were written in their original languages, and not to the different translations. In the July issue in your remarks on Essential Rudiments, you differentiated between Revelation and Inspiration. Revelation, you stated, is the unfolding of the mind of God to man. Would that not have reference to the original Scriptures ? Inspiration, you said, is the preservation of this Divine Revelation for others. Would that not apply to the Bible as we have it now ? We all recognize the value of the King James Version. Would it not have the effect of undermining the faith of young Christians if we take away the thought of Inspiration from our English Bible as we have it ?

Perhaps a few papers on how our Bible has come to us, and how it has been preserved for us, might be helpful, and make us appreciate the goodness of God in giving us His Word in our own tongue.

With kindest regards,

Your brother by grace,

J.C.

Dear Brother C,

We do appreciate your kind letter. Others also have been received this month, but I feel that the subject you have raised is of such vital importance that a reply to yours

should be made immediately. May the Lord guide us, and yet restrain us in this friendly exchange of thought in regard to the great doctrine of Inspiration.

The statements you refer to in Food for the Flock, are bas-icly true, and would be conceded as such by all sound spiritual scholars, but these statements must never be used to deprive us of our precious English Bible. Thank God for His Word in the language in which we were born. We love and revere it, for as has been already said in The Forum, most of us were led to Christ through it, and have been taught those things which are surely believed among us by its sacred pages.

The will of God has come to us through four different avenues: first, revelation; second, inspiration; third, translation; and fourth, interpretation. Let us briefly, and in the fear of God, consider these:

REVELATION: How the apostle Paul delights to refer to this important fact, “For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ,” (Gal. 1:12). “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,” (1 Cor. 11:23). These two references are sufficient to prove that Divine Revelation is the direct communication of God’s will by Himself, without any instrument, to His chosen servants. Paul’s statement makes clear that the gospel did not come to him through men, the earlier apostles, nor was it the outgrowth of his education in human schools; it came directly from the Lord.

INSPIRATION: How we praise God that in His mercy He has preserved for us that which He revealed to Paul and others. In His wisdom the Lord has done this in writings, in a book. Of the writings of the holy men who received

direct revelations we read, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (by the breath of God),” (2 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, the writings of these divinely chosen human authors of the Bible contain within them the imparted life of God. These writings were perfect, exactly what God wanted, in them there is no deficiency nor redundancy.

TRANSLATION: If it were not for the splendid work of translation very few would be able to read the Word of God. We owe a perpetual debt of gratitude to the men who studied the original languages, and perused the ancient manuscripts, and translated the Bible. The problem that you suggest is, since the original manuscripts were uniquely inspired of God, can we rely upon a translation as being the Word of God. The apostles certainly did. The copy of the Old Testament used by them is known as the Septuagint. This translation was made from the Hebrew to the Greek during the second century before Christ. From the Greek translation of the Old Testament there are some 350 quotations to be found in the Gospels, the Book of the Acts, and the Epistles, and all alike are mentioned as the Word of God. Surely we too may rest upon this fact, that while different translations may provide different shades of meaning to the student, they all are the expression of God’s Word in our own language.

May the richest blessing of the Lord rest upon you.

Sincerely in Christ,

—J. G.

The Forum (Dec 1955)

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

Dear brother C,

In continuing our correspondence regarding our English Bible, let me call your attention to the fourth point raised in the November letter; namely, INTERPRETATION. This is so vital a point that we shall allow the Word of God expressed in our English Bible to speak: “Now we have received… the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God… The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:13-16}.

The conversion of men from every people and tongue, and the formation of churches in every land, are definite proofs that the Holy Spirit interprets God’s Word in whatsoever language it is translated.

The Bible, unfortunately, has become so common that we forget the price paid to produce it in English. Since we have been discussing this subject, I have thought of some of the devout men God used to provide our Bible. One of the earliest to bring the Word of God within reach of the Anglo-Saxon peoples was the venerable Bede, born in 673. He passed his life in study, teaching others, and in prayers. He believed that man’s chief concern should be to make himself useful to others.

Near the end of his life he was deeply anxious about his translation into Saxon of his Gospel according to John. The day before his death his scribe said, “There remains now only one chapter, but it seems difficult for you to speak.” To this he answered, “It is easy, take your pen, mend it, and write quickly.” Late in the evening his scribe again said, “Master, there is but one sentence wanting.” “Write quickly,” said Bede. “Now it is finished,” declared the scribe. “Thou hast said the truth,” said Bede, “Take up my head; I wish to sit opposite the place where I have been accustomed to pray.” The next day while thus seated, he exclaimed, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,” and passed away.

A century or so later, we have the endeavours of King Alfred the Great who ascended the throne in 871. He was a man of virtue and piety as well as a man of letters. He not only attracted men of learning to England, but himself translated the Psalms of David into Saxon, and also several Dialogues of St. Gregory.

In the 16th century, God raised up another man in England whose efforts greatly influenced the style and the language of the King James Version, William Tyndale. During the spiritual darkness of that time, when Bibles were forbidden books in England, Tyndale translated the New Testament. While engaged in this work he found, as he himself said, “There is no room in my lord of London’s palace to translate the New Testament; nay no place to do it in all England.” Tyndale had to leave England for the continent, and there had his first edition printed. Many of these Bibles found their way to England where they were prohibited, and where a number of copies were collected and burned at St.

Paul’s Cross. Later Tyndale revised his work. In the year 1536, he was arrested and condemned as an heretic. On October 6, at Vilvorde, he was led out to the scene of execution. On being fastened to the stake, he cried in a loud and earnest prayer, “Lord, open the eyes of the King of England.” He was immediately strangled, and then burned. The accomplishment and sacrifice of Tyndale must be recognized by all who love and use the King James Version of the Bible, for his translation forms the basis of its New Testament.

Our English Bible has come by way of blood, sweat, and tears. Lives have been offered up to translate it, and lives have been laid down to publish it. May we love and treasure the Holy Volume, and rely more upon its sacred teachings.

Sincerely in Christ,

—J. G.

The Forum (Jan 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 1, Jan 1956.

Dear brother G.

Introductory to the study of a Book of the Bible, especially of an epistle, it is customary and very helpful for the commentator to give the setting and, when possible, the situation that confronted the author of the Book, his probable state of mind, his circumstances, and what he hoped to accomplish by his writing.

However, would it not also be well to point out that back of the human author writing for an immediate audience to accomplish an immediate purpose is the Holy Spirit, unfettered by human limitations, omnisciently aware of the needs of all who shall read the Book, omnipotently able to control every thought of the writer's mind and every scratch of his pen, and omnipresently with all who shall seek His aid in understanding the Book ?

Beyond the human writer, guiding, directing, protecting from all error, sometimes if not always teaching beyond the immediate grasp of the writer, is the Holy Spirit. He speaks not alone to the one or more named in the salutation, but as well to readers far distant in space and in time; even to us, and to those who come after.

Yet this Divine Writer in no way obscures or nullifies the human author. It certainly is not as in the deception of Isaac: the hand, the hand of Esau, but the voice, the voice of Jacob. The full flavour of the character of the human writer is retained: indeed, emphasized, amplified, refined. The voice of God truly speaks in the epistle, but it is His voice blended with that of the

human writer, and with the latter it is the voice of experience. Every writer in the Word might say in a measure with our Lord Jesus Christ, “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.” Yet they may need to confess at times with the Old Testament prophets of whom Peter speaks that “not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things” about which they write.

Even as our Lord Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh, so are the words of these epistles the breathings of God through human minds.

Indeed, we might digress to say, if it be a digression, that our gospel in its full scope is far more than a dogma, far beyond the mere tenets of a belief. It is a living reality that can be told out adequately only through human lips and lives. Words alone cannot fully express it. It must be lived. Mental consent alone does not make a convert; but, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Observe, by the way, that our Bible is not a mere table of laws; it is composed of histories, songs, wise sayings, narratives, chronicles, dramas, prophetic utterances, letters both personal and circular. It is the mind of God told out through events and circumstances and worked out in the hearts and thoughts of men.

It must follow surely that the writers of the epistles therein more really, more truthfully express themselves than they could in any other way or by any other mode. The tools of the heavenly Potter, heredity, environment, circumstance, occupation, and the gospel, have moulded their thoughts; consequently, their epistles convey to us

the distilled essence of what they have learned in the school of God.

To sum up; men are men, even though their writings be in the Canon of Scripture, and therefore to grasp their message it is well to know what we can of their temperament, circumstance and purpose, but yet as immediate authors of the Word of God they have been borne along by the Holy Spirit, and consequently the words they have written are His inerrant, efficacious messages to us.

I trust that we shall soon see each other again.

Yours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

D.T.

Dear brother D.

Many thanks for your helpful letter. Your emphasis upon the Divine Author of Scripture is much appreciated. This has not been sufficiently stressed in former letters during the recent discussion, therefore, I have felt that your entire remarks should be published.

It is a fact of Divine authorship that produces in the human heart the expectancy of Divine substance in the Bible. To us a divine writer must communicate divine truth. Moreover, we anticipate in our approach to the Bible that the Divine Author would not only express such truths, but that He would do so by a Divine method. This He surely has done, for He expresses Himself in human language, by human mouths and hands. He accomplishes this with exacting precision and positive accuracy in a progressive manner throughout many centuries. A perfect unity thereby results that makes the Holy Book one precious revelation of God to mankind.

May we personally realize that in the Bible, God is speaking particularly to each of us.

Sincerely in Christ,

J.G.

The Forum (Feb 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 2, Feb 1956.

Dear Brother,

I have been following the discussion with regard to the Church Universal and local in the last few numbers in the Forum section. I would like to answer J. C.'s question in July issue (p. 17) (to which he evidently expects a negative reply), "Is there any Scripture that links elders and deacons with the Church Universal?" Were not the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:28) linked with the Church Universal? Could "all the flock" and "the Church which He hath purchased with the blood of His own (Son)" be anything less than universal? A certain writer has well said, "Did He purchase many churches or just one Church?" As to the flock or flocks, we have the Lord's words in John's Gospel, "There shall be one flock." As the Forum in September (p. 17) takes Acts 20:28 as referring to a local church, I hope you will take notice to this and also draw the attention of your contributors to it. Some notice has also been given to the significance of the definite article in the Greek, so I also draw attention to the fact that both "flock" and "church" in this verse have the definite article.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

E. A. H.

Dear Brother H,

Many thanks for your letter. I regret that through pressure of circumstances it has not been answered earlier. In order that it receive the attention of which it

is worthy I submitted it to one of the other brethren on the Committee, and he has returned to me the following splendid memorandum:

Elders are usually found associated with local assemblies, as in Acts 14:23, “Elders in every church;” Titus 1:5, “Ordain elders in every city;” James 5:14, “Let him send for the elders of the church;” and in 1 Peter 5:1, “Elders who are among you.” The term “elder” can be used in a broader sense, as when Peter and John (apostles) refer to themselves in this way, but this use of the term seems to fall into another category.

The local colouring in the context in Acts 20 would point to a local functioning of the elders, “Asia”, “ye all”, “among you”, “from among your own selves”, “wolves… among you”, “not sparing the flock.”

Elsewhere we read of “one universal flock”, but that does not militate against its use here in a local sense. Peter speaks of “the flock of God… among you” in a local sense, and both in that phrase of Peter’s and the one here in Acts 20, Newberry and Rotherham give “little flock”. This change may not be very significant, but it is interesting.

The term “the church of God” does not necessarily refer to the “Church Universal”, for the expression is used elsewhere with a local connotation, (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). In 1 Cor. 15:9, only a part (at most) of the entire body can be meant, yet the definite article is used.

If some maintain that “the church of God” here is the Church Universal, others take it to refer to the local church. W. E. Vine went so far as to say, “The phrase is not anywhere used of the entire Church, the body of Christ.” It is well to compare the term, “the churches of

God" as found in other passages of Scripture (1 Cor. 11:16), for it is the same as that of Acts 20 only pluralized. Other occurrences of the plural form with the definite article are found in 1 Cor. 14:33; 1 Cor. 16:1; these may be compared with the expression in the singular, referring to a local church, as found in Gal. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Rev. 2 and 3.

In Acts 20:30 the definite article appears before the word "disciples", "the disciples." Whatever significance may be attached to this, it is still a local condition that is in view. Those who would aim to "draw away the disciples" would arise of your own selves."

Assuming that the statement, "Purchased with His own blood," marks the reference as being to the Church Universal, is it necessary to think of the elders' sphere as other than local? Certainly they could not reach all parts of the Universal Church from Ephesus, though whenever contact was made with a child of God they would be ready to help that one.

There are two other points that ought to be noted; first, according to verse 17, Paul called "the elders of the church." Now, if we are to understand the reference to embrace the whole elderhood, in what manner could he include all the elders of the entire Universal Church? In second place, in the letters to the seven churches of Asia there is absolutely no hint of interchurch responsibility.

Our brother has spent considerable thought on this subject, and his remarks should be weighed, for it is only as we compare one Scripture with another that we learn the mind of the Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

J.G.

The Forum (Mar 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 3, Mar 1956.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Brother G,

I have typed out these suggestive details as they have occurred to me. I hope that they will be of value to The Forum.

In the letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2 and 3) we view three aspects of Divine truth. First, there is the historical in which seven literal assemblies are seen, each standing upon its own base, responsible to the Lord alone and yet bound together because of a common relationship to the One, Christ, Who walks in their midst.

Second, there is the practical aspect in which light in thrown upon the problems of church life in order that we may move collectively to the glory of God. For example, the seven lamps blend their light to throw their united rays upon that blessed One in the midst. The Lord presents Himself to each assembly in a way that is calculated to meet its need. He, and He alone, has the plumb line to measure the behaviour of His own. He calls to repentance every church, and holds out a way of recovery for every condition. When an assembly becomes incorrigibly bad He, and He alone, removes the lampstand.

Third, there is the prophetical aspect. There is no doubt that these seven churches were chosen because of their spiritual conditions to represent seven distinct stages in

the history of the professing church from apostolic days till the coming of the Lord. In this prophetic sketch we have what is genuine and then what is but a mixture of good and bad. I submit that the genuine is described in three ways: by the stars, the overcomers, and the spiritual ear. That the over-comers are the saved ones amid a mass of profession is proved by the seven promises made to them, promises that will be realized by all saints. It is an overcoming that will be true of every child of God. See 1 John 5:5-6; Rev. 12:11. Moreover, the overcomer in Rev. 21:7-8, is contrasted with the fearful and unbelieving whose doom is the lake of fire.

The mixture is represented by the seven lampstands. In the parable of the virgins we see ten lamps of testimony, but five had no oil in them; they were spurious. Similarly in the seven churches we read of those that had the doctrine of Balaam, those that were a synagogue of Satan, and of Jezebel, all of whom are enemies of Christ yet embraced in the professing church. They are clearly distinguished from the angels of the churches. In other words the stars represent the Church which is His Body and the lampstands represent the professing church with its mixture of good and bad.

The stars symbolize the true Church in her:

SPIRIT: The word angel suggests spiritual representation (Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15; Luke 7:24, messengers or angels). The true spirit of Christianity is not found in Jezebel or the synagogue of Satan but in genuine believers. The spirit of Christian witness must be traced to what is real among the mass of profession. The light of witness is not only the light of truth but the

light of life. It is truth working its miracle in the lives of those who believe it, and in those lives the Spirit of God manifests the true spirit of Christianity.

CHARACTER: The Lord's people are identified with a Risen Christ, and His Names are called upon them. Is He the Son? They are sons. Is He the Anointed One? They are anointed ones. Is He the Firstborn? They are His brethren. Is He the Morning Star? They are stars to shine for Him in the night of His rejection. Is He the Sun? They are as the sun. They carry the responsibility to reflect the beauties of Him Who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

POSITION: Stars shine in the heavens. The Church though in the world is not of it. She is seated with Christ in the Heavenly places. The Philippian Church is compared to stars that shine down upon a dark world (Phil. 2:15), and "they that turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

INFLUENCE: "Canst thou bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades" (Job. 38:31)? "The Pleiades are bound together with such amazing attractive energy that they draw our whole planetary system and sun around them" (Fausset). Another has said that the harmony of the whole universe can be traced to the sweet influence of the Pleiades. The origin of every philanthropical organization in the world has resulted from the influence of the Church. Picture a world without these if you can. As the light of God's testimony spreads it civilizes all, moralizes many, and saves the few. The witness of the Church on earth saves the world from utter chaos and destruction. The mystery of lawlessness

cannot climax in the Man of Sin while the true Church remains in the world (2 Thess. 2:6-8).

WORKS: The voice of Divine wisdom through the church rings out in clarion call, “Seek Him Who made the seven stars” (Amos 5:8). View the wise men from the East as they are guided by the star to Christ, and learn that the mission of the Church on earth is to attract and guide all men to Christ. Like John the Baptist we are but a voice that cries in the wilderness. His ministry is echoed by the Church, “Flee from the wrath to come;” and “Behold the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world.”

SECURITY: The stars are in His right hand. Do they represent just a favoured few? Nay! “All His saints are in Thy hand” (Deut. 33:3). None shall pluck the feeblest from that hand (John 10:28). There is a close connection between the portrait of Christ in the Song of Solomon chapter five and this one in Revelation chapter one. In the first we read of rings on His hands, the symbol of all authority; in the second, we read of stars in His hand. Behind the commission of the Church in Matthew 28 is the authority of her Risen Lord. Her commanding orders are: to make disciples of all nations, to baptize the converts in the Name of the Trinity, and to teach them to observe all things that are taught in the Word of God. His promise, “Lo, I am with you alway” is her support in the midst of the forces of darkness and wickedness.

Sincerely in Christ,

R. McC.

* * *

“I know enough of flesh to distrust it utterly; I know enough of the blessed God to trust Him fully.”

J. B. Stoney—Quoted by W. Fereday in “Elijah”

* * *

The Lord did not tell Peter to flog the flock, but rather to feed the flock.

The Forum (Apr 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 4, Apr 1956.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Brother G.

I would refer to the letters which appeared in The Forum for February, regarding the sphere of service for the elders. Surely any true shepherd would have a tender heart to care for all the sheep that are the Lord's, seeking to do what he can to feed them, and restore those that are out of the way. The sphere of the immediate responsibility of such an elder, however, would be confined to his own assembly, the "little flock" over which the Holy Spirit has made him an overseer. For their souls he watches, and for them he must give an account. Is this not the thought in 1 Peter chapter 5?

Yours in Christ,

—E. S.

Dear Brother E. S.

Many thanks for your first communication to The Forum. Your remarks are interesting, but before making any reply to your closing question, let us both understand the teaching of God's Word relevant to the relationship among all members of the Church. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, the Spirit of God suggests the proper attitude to be maintained within the Body of Christ. First, there is the recognition of being mutually necessary the one to the other (vv. 21-22), even the weakest member is necessary. Second, there is the mutual esteem to be manifested toward each (vv. 23-24),

honour is due to the apparently less honourable. Third, a mutual sympathy exists, or should exist, toward those in adversity, and toward those in success (vv. 25-26), “All the members should have the same care one of another.” If these three principles were made real practices among all Christians, we, every one of us, would be the keeper of our brother.

In a very special and more specific manner, God has provided capable and spiritual men to watch over the sheep of Christ’s pasture. The New Testament calls such men elders. Yes, it seems clear that 1 Peter 5 teaches the first responsibility of the elder is to the local company of saints with which he gathers. There are one or two significant renderings in the Revised Version, “Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight thereof, not of constraint, but according to God, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock.” The clause rendered by the R. V. “Neither lording it over the charge allotted to you,” is rendered by Mr. Darby, “Not as lording it over your possessions.” The word “possessions” is definitely in the plural number, and, therefore, suggests that there are many possible charges, or, to use your own expression, many possible “little flocks.” Definitely, the flock is the flock of God, but the different possessions, or portions, or charges, have been allotted according to God to the care of under shepherds, and these under shepherds are responsible to God for their own “little flock.”

Dr. Leighton, in his commentary on the First Epistle to Peter, states, “In these words we have: First, the duty enjoined, “Feed the flock of God which is among you,

taking the oversight of it." Second, the due qualifications for the duty, "Not by constraint, not for filthy lucre, not as lording it over God's heritage, but willingly of a ready mind," and as "being ensamples to the flock." Third, the high advantage to be expected, "An unfading crown of glory, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear."

How precious is the figurative language of Holy Scripture! How descriptive the words, "flock" and "shepherd"! They carry a connotation of weakness and strength respectively; a weakness embracing the need of inspection, guidance, defence, and feeding; and a strength embodying the ability to do all these with the tenderest possible care.

The saintly Bernard says, "Had I some of that blood poured forth on the cross, how carefully would I carry it! Ought not I to be as careful of those souls that it was shed for?"

Sincerely in Christ,

J.G.

* * *

A gentleman once took an acquaintance to the upper porches of his house to show him his estate. Waving his hand around he said, "This is all mine." His friend said, "Do you see that little village yonder? Well, there lives a poor woman in that village who can say more than you." "Why, what can she say?" "She can say, 'Christ is mine!'" She was an heiress of the riches of Christ.

* * *

A prisoner at the bar smiled when hard things were said against him. One asked him why he treated the matter

so lightly and he replied, “It is no matter what they say, so long as the judge says nothing.” It is of little importance what others say, so long as God approves.

“Men may misjudge thy aim,

Think they have cause to blame,

Say, “Thou art wrong!”

Hold on thy quiet way,

Christ is the Judge, not they,

Fear not! Be strong!

The Forum (May 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 5, May 1956.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Brother G.

We appreciate the painstaking way in which you discuss from the Scriptures the questions arising in The Forum.

The recent topic, “elders,” is not too well understood by some of us, so while in the City, I thought that I would tell you that there is a number of good sisters who would like an explanation from the Scriptures of the four offices in the Church: clergy, bishops, deacons, and priests.

Thanking you for your help,

Sincerely,

S. E. K.

Dear S. E. K.

Many thanks for your letter and interest in the major subject of eldership. Your request merits quite a comprehensive answer, and it is hoped that it may provoke further inquiry on the part of students of the Word of God. In opening the discussion in these pages on the important subjects raised in your letter, let it be suggested that, first of all, we determine whether or not there be any offices (as the word is understood in Christendom) in the Church.

There are three Scriptures in which the word “office” occurs in the King James version in connection with Church constitution that we might examine carefully

and prayerfully. The first, Romans 11:13, “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.” The word here actually is diakonia, and would be better rendered “ministration” or even “service.” Mr. Darby translates the clause, “I glorify my ministry.” The second Scripture is found in Romans 12:4, “For we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office.” The word here is praxis, and might be rendered by “use” or “work.” The third Scripture is the most important of the three for our present inquiry, 1 Timothy 3:1, “This is a true saying, if any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” This same word occurs In Acts 1:20, and is rendered “bishoprick,” so that it would be correct to render 1 Timothy 3:1, “If a man desire a bishoprick he desireth a good work.” In fact the word “office” is not in the text. To quote from Mr. Darby again, he translates this verse, “If anyone aspires to oversight, he desires a good work.”

In all these cases it is obvious that God does not provide offices to be filled, but services, tasks, and ministries to be performed, and a stewardship to be administered. In Scripture the emphasis is not placed upon position and honour, but upon action and work.

The idea of officialism exists in Christendom, but not in the New Testament. The great ecclesiastical hierarchies that have arisen throughout the history of the professing Church do not find their foundation in the Bible. In this regard we might speak of organized officialism; men who by a majority vote are placed in certain offices for certain periods of time. That there is an absence of any such procedure in the Divine records of the apostolic

Church must be clear to any sincere student of the Word of God.

Assumed officialism: There is nothing more distasteful than a fleshly display of self-assumed importance, a presumed superiority that results in arrogance and intolerance. One recalls the words of the Apostle John, “I wrote unto the church: but Dio-trephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and for-biddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 John 9-10).

Would not the words of Christ rebuke the haughty spirit of officialism? “And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth” (Luke 22:24-27). May the blessed example of the Lord Jesus in His gracious humility inspire us and guide us.

In the will of the Lord, we shall take up some of the other details of your letter next month.

Very sincerely in Christ,

—J. G.

* * *

It is a precious thought that God never gives up His saints, however faulty they may be. At a Bible Reading long ago, while it was being taught that the believer in Jesus, stands in the eternal sunshine of God’s favor, the question was asked, “But what if I turn my back upon Him?” The reply was given, “He will shine upon your back !”

“Elijah the Tishbite”

—by W. W. Fereday

The Forum (June 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 6, June 1956.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear S.E.K.

In your letter you say, “There are a number of good sisters who would like an explanation from the Scriptures of the four offices in the Church: clergy, bishops, deacons and priests.”

Last month some remarks were expressed concerning officialism in the churches of God from the light of what is stated in the New Testament. As promised, we shall continue to seek further explanation from God’s Word upon the subjects which you have raised. Let us commence with the first one.

CLERGY:

The understanding of what is the clergy in Christendom might be expressed as the body of men set apart by proper ordination to the service of God. This special body stands in contradistinction to the laity. While in early Church history there was no strongly marked difference between the clergy and the laity, with the passing of time and the development of ecclesiastical hierarchy a distinction has been made very obvious.

Let us turn together to the Word of God. We shall not find the word “clergy” in the King James Version of the New Testament, but in the Greek it appears in more than one form. Its proper meaning might be expressed by our English words: inheritance, allotment, or portion. Some have suggested that it approaches the idea of

selection, for it is derived from the action of making choice by means of casting lots.

Paul's prison epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians intimate that he was living far above the dreary circumstances of incarceration and that he was even then enjoying the saints portion in Christ.

In Ephesians 1:11, he states, "In Whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance." It has been suggested that here the Holy Spirit is teaching the believers that through Christ they had been brought into the inheritance, into the Divine selection or clergy; and, consequently, formed part of the Divine portion. Through grace believers have been assigned to the inheritance. The Apostle was so thoroughly enjoying his portion in Christ, that throughout this passage he communicates the knowledge that the redeemed have an inheritance in and through Christ, and the Lord has an inheritance in His people. Paul is anxious that they realize something of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:8). Truly the Lord's portion is His people.

By carefully noting Paul's use of the pronouns "we" and "ye" (which must be understood to mean "we" Jews and "ye" Gentiles), it will be easily discerned that all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, have been brought into God's clergy. In his prayer for the Colossians (Col. 1:9-12), he gives thanks, and he hopes that they likewise will give thanks, unto the Father, which made them meet or competent for a share of the inheritance of the saints in light.

These considerations can lead us to but one conclusion, that all God's children of this present dispensation are

members of the Divine clergy, the Divine inheritance, and that in the purposes of God and in the process by which His purposes are accomplished, there is no distinction of ceremonial class in the Church, but that all are one in Christ (Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28).

There is a very interesting word used by the Lord in His message to the church in Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17). “So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”

It has been argued that the Nicolaitanes were a sect that followed Nicolas (Acts 6:5) and that their deeds and doctrines were similar to the deeds and doctrines of Balaam, but the lack of historical evidence to prove the existence of such a sect, forces us to reject as unsatisfactory such an explanation.

The untranslated word, Nicolaitanes means, “Rulers over the laity or the people”, and really is clerisy. It is of clerisy the Lord declares, “Which thing I hate.”

There is no question, that there was, even in apostolic days, a tendency toward a clergy, for Peter, in writing to the elders, says, “Neither as being Lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3).

Thank God for deliverance from the bondage of an official clergy, but let us beware of the danger of an unofficial clergy.

Let us, as the people of God, rejoice that we are among God’s selection, His portion; and rejoice that we have a rich inheritance, both present and future, in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Sincerely yours in Him,

J. G.

The Forum (July 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 7, July 1956.

Dear Brother G.

May I add a little to the important question on the subject of bishops, priests and deacons, that was raised in the Forum by S.E.K.

The first three chapters of I Tim. could be summed up thus: Chap. 1, the Church's doctrine; chap. 2, the Church's intercession; chap. 3, the Church's administration. The bishop stands in relation to its administration, the priest in relation to its intercession, and the deacon in relation to its doctrine and ministry.

Bishops

Three words are used to describe the Church's internal administration: Elder or presbyter, bishop or overseer, pastor or shepherd. Each pair comes from the same word in the original and describes the men who are the leaders in the assemblies of the saints. The word "elder" suggests spiritual maturity, and rules out the inexperienced or novice; the word "bishop" suggests spiritual work, and rules out the carnal; the word "pastor" points to spiritual capacity, and rules out the ignorant.

The work of overseers branches out in two directions: leadership in the assembly and the feeding of the flock. This twofold aspect of their work is joined in 1 Tim. 5:17, suggesting that some among the elders are gifted with leadership, others are gifted to teach while others

combine the two aspects and are counted worthy of double honour.

Their Duties

Let me point out three solemn duties that God enjoins upon leaders: to themselves, to the Church and to the Word of God. First, to themselves: Three necessities are pressed upon elders in Acts 20:28. They are to maintain a good spiritual condition always, “Take heed to yourselves.” Only by sacrificial cultivation of the holy habit of prayer and fellowship with God can this be done. They are never to forget that their appointment is of God, “Over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.” They are always to be conscious of the preciousness of the flock to the heart of Christ, “The Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood.” How precious is the flock to the heart of Christ! How precious should the saints be to us! How gentle, how tender, ought they to be dealt with, and always for their good! Observe how the Divine Trinity is crowded into this one verse, reminding us that any wrong done to the flock goes right to the heart of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Second, to the Church: Their burden is the care of the Church (1 Tim. 3:5). It is interesting to note that the only place in the New Testament where this word “care” is found is in Luke 10:35. There the good Samaritan said to the host, concerning the man that had fallen, “take care of him.” Every assembly is like the inn. The spirit of the inn is found in 1 Cor. 13, the inhabitants are described in 1 Thess. 5:14, and the oversight of the inn is the godly care of all the inmates.

Their authority is to rule or lead in the fear of God, being ensamples to the flock (1 Tim. 5:17).

Their work is to feed the flock and not to tyrannize it (Luke 12:42-45, Acts 20:28). Reverent fear, not slavish fear, must characterize the sheep of His pasture.

Their duty is to watch the sacred trust committed to their care (Heb. 13:17) Account must be given to the Chief Shepherd as to how this responsibility is discharged.

Third, their duty to the Scripture. They are to keep the sacred deposit committed to their trust (2 Tim. 1:14). By sound doctrine they are to teach, exhort and convince (Titus 1:9). The Chief Shepherd rules by His Word and under shepherds must know no other rule.

Their Respect

Three solemn responsibilities are placed upon the saints in relation to godly leaders; the assembly is to recognize such and acknowledge them (1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:24). The door of recognition should always be kept open so that when the assembly discerns the characteristics of a true overseer in a brother, he should be acknowledged by all.

The saints are to obey the overseers, and to submit to godly order in the church (Heb. 13:17). There is, as never before, a spirit of lawlessness abroad in the world, and it is making its appearance in the home and in the assemblies. May our Lord preserve the young people, and the older ones as well, from this lawlessness, and may He give to all of us the true spirit of humility which becomes those who are disciples of Him Who said,

“Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

Dear Brother McC.

Many thanks for your letter. I regret that it is too long to insert in this issue, but, in the will of the Lord, we hope to use more of it later on.

May the Lord bless and guide you.

Sincerely in Christ,

J.G.

The Forum (Aug 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 8, Aug 1956.

Dear Brother McC.

For the benefit of S. E. K. and others we insert the remainder of your letter.

Once more we thank you in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Sincerely in Him,

J. G.

Deaconship

The word “deacon” is from “diakonas.” To ascertain the meaning of the word we may observe how it is translated in our New Testament. In such passages as John 2:5; Rom. 13:4; Matt. 23:11; Rom. 16:1; it is translated “servant.” In 1 Cor. 3:5, Col. 1:7, 1 Thess. 3:2, Rom. 15:8, it is translated “minister.” From these Scriptures we learn that deaconship like oversight, branches out in two directions: it serves the saints in the material things of the assembly and it serves them in spiritual things. While there is a general service for all saints there is a particular service that is distinguished in such Scriptures as: 1 Tim. 3:8; Phil. 1:1; Eph. 3:7; Rom. 16:1. Thus there is a deaconship within a deaconship—a special service in the midst of the general service of all the saints.

The church has the right to appoint its servants to serve it in looking after its material things (Acts 6:3). The Risen Head of the Church alone has the right to appoint the servants who serve the church in spiritual things

(Eph. 3:7). This double aspect of deaconship is seen in Acts 6:4, the deaconship of the Word would be retained by the apostles. Deaconship cannot therefore be limited to material things. That is only one aspect of it, the other aspect is seen in the exercise of spiritual gifts with which the Lord has enriched the Church. Thus Paul describes the exercise both of the preaching and teaching gifts as deaconship (1 Cor. 3:5; Eph. 3:7-9).

Concerning the qualifications of these responsible ministers of God, a period of testing must elapse before such responsibility is entrusted, “Let these first be proved” (1 Tim. 3:10); “but as we were allowed (tested) of God to be put in trust with the Gospel” (1 Thess. 2:4). Men who move in and out of God’s assemblies must be men of principle and character as well as men of gift. The assemblies must not tolerate anyone who fails to carry the dignity that God’s standards demand. When Paul wanted to associate a young man with him in the work he looked for three things; Timothy was well reported of by the brethren (Acts 16:1-3); that meant he was a man of character, he was a man with a knowledge of the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:14,15), he was not an ignoramus. Moreover, he was a man of spiritual gift. It is to be noted that the wives of deacons must have qualifications too (1 Tim. 3:11). The wife of a man very often either makes or breaks him.

Priesthood

Priesthood, like oversight and deaconship, branches out in two directions: as a holy priesthood we enter in, and as a royal priesthood we go out to show forth God’s praises to men (1 Peter 2:5,9).

The burden of intercession is placed upon God's holy priesthood (1 Tim. 2) and as God's royal priesthood they carry the compassion of Christ to the ignorant, and to those who are out of the way. Since all believers are priests, this responsibility falls upon all of us. God has made us a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6). The possessions of the priesthood are described in the three "havings" of Hebrews 10: we have a sanctuary (V 19); we have a Great High Priest, in union with Whom we mingle our praises and intercession (V 21); we have a double fitness through the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit to enter the sanctuary (V 22). In the light of these priestly possessions, the Spirit gives His threefold exhortation in verses 22-24, which is an appeal to the three lovely virtues of the new man: faith, hope, and love: let us draw near in faith, let us hold fast in hope, let us consider one another in love. God's priesthood has a solid foundation in the Living Stone; its temple is a spiritual edifice composed of living stones. In that temple there is an altar, Christ, upon whom the sacrifices of the priests are to be offered, sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. We mention at least four of these: a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17); our bodies yielded in full surrender (Rom. 12:1); our praises flowing unceasingly (Heb. 13:1), and our means given unstintingly (Phil. 4:18, Heb. 13:16).

To recognize any priesthood other than the priesthood of all believers is to deny vital truth. Since all believers are priests, it is obvious that any distinctive dress or title aimed at setting up a priestly caste from the rest of the Church is both superfluous and unscriptural.

Sincerely,

R. McC.

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“Jesus Himself drew near and went with them” (Luke 24:15). So often our Lord is not able to draw near to us, because our conversation is not about Him. The more we speak of Christ, His conscious presence will be enjoyed.

The Forum (Sep 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 9, Sep 1956.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Dear Brother G.:

I am following The Forum with much interest. In many places very little is known regarding elders and their function in the assemblies of the saints. This fact caused me much concern; to the extent that I put these thoughts together and had several thousand copies printed.

You are free, if you see fit to use any part of them, or all.

Am enjoying the magazine very much. Indeed, its ministry is a Scriptural one unto edification, exhortation and consolation.

Yours in Christ, H.P.

My Dear Brother H. P.:

Many thanks for your letter of encouragement, and also for your thoughts relative to the subject under discussion in The Forum. I have selected some of these because they are pertinent to the part of the subject raised by correspondents.

Sincerely in Christ, J.G.

“Elders are not a board of legislators over an assembly, but labourers among the saints. There are various phases to their work:

Pastors: In Acts 20:28, they are told to ‘feed the Church of God,’ which means to pasture, to feed, to nourish, to

support. A pastor's duty is to tend and feed his flock. This involves instruction of the ignorant, visitation of the sick, consolation of those who have lost loved ones, admonition to the disorderly, and last but not least, the restoration of the overtaken ones.

Protectors: As watchmen, (Heb. 13:17) they are to guide and protect the flock from those without seeking to get in, and at times those within seeking to draw out disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30). Was there ever a day when the saints needed protection more than today!

Patterns: In 1 Thess. 5:12, Paul exhorts the Thessalonian believers to 'know them which are over you in the Lord,' literally this means, those who stand in front of you, your leaders in the Lord. Thus elders stand before us as patterns, examples to be followed, leading the flock and not lashing it, directing it and not driving it.

Presiders: The word 'rule' in 1 Tim. 5:17, has the thought of presiding over the flock according to Strong's Concordance. While it is true that overseers have no human authority over the assembly, they have an authority delegated to them from on High. God has given wisdom and sound judgment to His elders, and, truly, if this be the case, they are able to judge among the saints.

Pilots: This word suggests itself from the meaning of the word 'governments' in 1 Cor. 11:28 according to Strong's Concordance. It conveys the thought of steering, pilotage, and directorship in the church. As pilots overseers are to steer the assembly clear of hiding rocks which would surely cause it to shipwreck.

Performers: They are to be labouring brethren in the real sense of the word (1 Tim. 5:17), spending and being

spent in this wearying work, always serving, but often getting very little credit.

Since it is true that Scripture teaches a plurality of elders, who would deny their coming together for prayer and consideration of the spiritual welfare of the assembly? It is all-important that they should be united in their judgment, for a divided oversight means a divided fellowship. Any undue individuality of action, regardless of the fellowship of other elders, will lead to the spirit of Diotrephes (3 John 9).

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Our thanks be as fervent for mercies received, as our petitions for mercies sought.

Thanksgiving is a good thing; thanksliving is better.

The Forum (Oct 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 10, Oct 1956.

The Appointment Of Elders:

Inasmuch as there has been considerable discussion in The Forum in regard to the elders in the churches of Christ, a few remarks might not be amiss concerning the appointment of elders. In Acts 14:23 we read, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on Whom they believed.” Barnabas and Paul appointed a spiritual leadership in the churches of Galatia, a leadership capable of guiding in all church affairs.

Today there exists a variety of opinions in regard to the ordination of elders. There are assemblies which each year elect new elders; there are other assemblies which elect elders for the duration of life or as long as they have the use of their faculties. There are still other assemblies which without any formality invite men in whom they have recognized the capabilities of eldership to assume such work in their midst. It is obvious that the ordination of elders here and at Crete (Tit. 1:5) was not performed by the assemblies at all.

It must also be obvious, that the apostles possessed an authority which they in turn could delegate to their immediate associates that no man now possesses. For example, Paul delivered Hymeneaus and Alexander to Satan, and definitely no one man has the authority to do that today. Moreover, no man would dare to threaten an assembly as did Paul Corinth (1 Cor. 4:21).

The deep and striking implication of 1 Tim. 3 cannot be carelessly dismissed. Verse one according to MSS. might properly be paraphrased, “This is a true saying, if a man have the appetite for bishoprick, he has a hunger for a good work.” The word “office” is not in the text. God does not have offices to fill but tasks to perform. How are we to recognize such brethren with such an appetite? Their character and qualifications are carefully delineated throughout the remainder of the chapter.

The question then arises in the mind, who actually appoints the elders, and how are the Lord’s people to recognize them. The first part of the question might be answered by Acts 20:28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made (hath set or hath appointed) you overseers to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” The second part of the question might be answered by 1 Thess. 5:12-13, “We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” The verb “to know” means to be aware of or to consider.

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Be slow to take new steps in the Lord’s service, or in your business, or in your family. Weigh everything well. Weigh all in the light of Holy Scripture and in the fear of God. —George Muller

The Forum (Nov 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 11, Nov 1956.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Dear Brother G.

“This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood” (1 John 5:6). To what does the water and blood refer? Some have suggested that the reference is to the water and blood that came from the spear-wound in His side, but why would the text say, “Not by water only?” Others link the expression with the Lord’s baptism in the waters of Jordan, and the shedding of His blood at Calvary. A third suggestion is that it goes back to the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), and the water of purification (Num. 19). Through The Forum of Food for the Flock could we have a discussion of this verse in order to weigh the arguments for these explanations and judge accordingly?

Sincerely in Christ,

E. S.

Dear Brother E. S.

Thank you for your letter. We are always pleased to receive questions which force us to our knees in God’s presence and to His Holy Word for careful study. It is impossible to settle many of the conflicting opinions in Biblical exposition, but I am willing to give convictions as one who has obtained mercy, with the request that others do likewise.

You have heard three explanations of this profound statement of John; namely, that it relates to the literal precious blood and water that flowed from our Lord's side when pierced; the literal water of His baptism at Jordan and of His blood at Calvary; and, third, the typical blood of atonement and the typical water of purification in the Old Testament. With no thought of adding further confusion to the subject, but in order that our examination be somewhat extensive, there is the obligation to state that it also has been taught that the water is the symbolic water of baptism, and that the blood is the symbolic cup of communion, and that Christ comes to us in a special manner in the two Christian ordinances.

We do not have sufficient space in this issue to examine all four of these suggestions, but would like to draw attention to the fact that there is much difference at times between interpretation and application. Application frequently is fanciful and speculative, whereas interpretation is basic and realistic. It is difficult for some to ascertain first of all the interpretation of a passage before making any application whatsoever; nevertheless, that is definitely the only safe way to study the Holy Bible for a clear understanding of the will of God.

We must, therefore, discover first in our examination what is merely an application and what is clearly an attempt at interpretation.

In doing this we must accept the rule that interpretation is a literal understanding of God's Word, and that application is more or less speculative and allegorical. In looking over the four suggested meanings of this

statement of John, it would appear to me that the first two are literal, and that the last two are an allegorizing of the word of the Apostle. No matter what pleasure one may derive from the last two applications, we must search the first two for the direct meaning of the text. With reliance upon the Holy Spirit, we shall seek to do this in our next issue.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Dec 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 12, Dec 1956.

Dear Brother E. S.

In our previous letter we looked at four decidedly different interpretations of 1 John 5:6. We suggested that two of these were not actually interpretations but applications: These were; first, that the “water” and the “blood” referred to the blood atonement (Lev. 16), and the water purification (Num. 19); and, second, that the “water” and the “blood” referred to the symbol water of believer’s baptism, and the “blood” to the symbol cup of communion in the Lord’s supper.

Since it is a firm conviction with us that the Scriptures must be interpreted first literally apart from any allegorizing, we proceed to examine the remaining possible interpretations.

The premise upon which this interpretation rests is the work of Christ for cleansing and acceptance. Christ died to procure these and when His heart was pierced, the literal sign of a broken heart was noticed, “Forthwith came there out blood and water.” The water, we are told, was the indication of acceptance before God because of His death.

According to verse 8, there are three witnesses on earth which are in perfect agreement, the Spirit, the water, and the blood. We might inquire into the subject of this unanimous witness. To us, the statement of this testimony is simply this, “This is He that came.” We might paraphrase the passage thus: This is He Who came (appeared) according to the testimony of the

Spirit, of the water, and of the blood. The premise therefore on which the interpretation should rest is the personal appearing of Christ in the world as the object of victorious faith.

Christ appears in the world not in incarnation only, but in public demonstration. What are the two epochs which mark off His public appearing in the world? His baptism and His death; therefore, since He came “by water” this must refer to His baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; and “by blood” that must obviously refer to His death through which He glorified the Father. What a triumph over the world! The expression, “Not by water only, but by water and by blood”, might well be construed to mean that He did not come as His predecessor John, who came only with water or baptism, a confession of sin and its domination, but with no victory over it, that is without blood. The Lord Jesus came by water; He fulfilled all righteousness, and His baptism declares the perfect sinlessness of His life, His complete victory over the world. He came also by blood, for He triumphed over the prince of this world (Eph. 2:2, John 16:11); He overcame him in death (Heb. 2:14-15), and thereby secured, not only deliverance for Satan’s captives, but victory for them over the world.

These thoughts are submitted, not in the spirit of dogmatism, but in the hope of being helpful. We shall be very pleased to hear from you again, and from any other brethren who wish to contribute to this matter.

The Forum (Jan 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 1, Jan 1957.

Dear brother G:

I would like to hear what you see from the Word of God on the ministry of women in the light of Acts 1:14; 12:5; and 16:13; Rom. 10:9-16: 1 Cor. 11:5; and Titus 2:4.

I certainly would appreciate help along this line, either in Food for the Flock or a personal letter from you.

I would also like to hear what brother Robert McClurkin has to say on this subject.

Hoping to hear from you, and thanking you for help received through the magazine.

Yours in Christ,

J. W.

Dear brother J. W:

Many thanks for your letter. In any discussion of the subject presented in your letter, only that which is Scriptural and really helpful will be considered. We trust that other brethren will feel free to take part in this matter. Brother McClurkin has already been requested to submit his own convictions upon the subject.

By way of introducing your problem, let me state a few observations relative to the Scriptures to which you make reference.

Acts 1:14. This verse does not mention public ministry particularly, but rather association in prayer. There are certain translators who render this verse, “These all

continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with their wives, and Mary" etc. Alford, nevertheless, points out that there were actually more than wives present. One ancient manuscript, the Codex Bezae, adds that there were also children. One thing is certain, the association in prayer of wives, other women, and children, does not imply that all prayed audibly. At the general prayer meeting of every assembly all present are associated in the prayers, yet, time does not permit that all pray publicly; there are brethren as well as sisters who maintain silence, praying only in their hearts. This Scripture could never provide a foundation for the practice of public prayers for sisters in mixed congregations.

Acts 12:5. Prayer in this passage is united congregational prayer, but this does not suggest that every member prayed audibly. It merely proves that all hearts should pray when the congregation is led by Spirit-guided persons. At every assembly prayer meeting the church prays; the audible voice is expressing the sentiments of all present. There is nothing in this passage to indicate that the sisters then acted in an unusual and public manner. The thought here is simply that, in the crisis during which James had been slain and Peter was the next intended victim, the entire church at Jerusalem strained and stretched itself, for such is the meaning of the word earnest, in prayer. To them Peter's case appeared desperate.

Had space permitted in this issue, I would have discussed with you the threefold ministry of the Christian woman in the New Testament as prophetess, deaconess, and instructress, for all these are excellently exemplified in early Church history. In the will of the

Lord this we shall do in our next letter, and in so doing we shall examine some details of the other Scriptural references in your letter.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Feb 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 2, Feb 1957.

Correspondence:

Dear brother J. W.

I do trust that it is in a prayerful and dependent attitude that we continue our investigation into the Scriptural ministry of Christian women. Before looking into certain positive activities in their work, let me make a few statements relative to the third reference you made to The Book of Acts.

Acts 16:13: Inasmuch as this passage does not treat of any matter relative to church order, we forbear spending much time upon it. It was Jewish tradition and practice that only when ten men were resident in a locality could that locality have a synagogue. It is evident that there were not sufficient men in Philippi for this. This is the exceptional city in which there was no Jewish opposition against the preaching of the Apostle Paul. Nevertheless, there was an informal meeting place near the city where Jewesses and Gentile women proselytes met on the Sabbath for the appointed Jewish prayer service. Paul's custom, where ever he went, was to present the gospel to the Jew first; therefore, in this passage, we find him at the Jewish women's prayer meeting.

As suggested in our last letter, Christian women are seen in early Church history as occupying very important places. Let us notice at least one of these:

The Prophetess:

A prophet in the New Testament is not necessarily a fore-teller but rather a forth-teller. The Greek root word means “to speak forth.” This gift so important to the infant Church was temporary in nature, and eventually passed away (1 Cor. 13:8). Its function was to communicate the Word of God in the period before the Canon of Scripture was completed. We know how God gave a message directly through the prophet Agabus (Acts 11:28). In the church of God at Corinth there were several prophets, men who were inspired of God to communicate His will in those far away pre-Bible times. The ethical control of such prophets is given in 1 Corinthians 14.

Philip the evangelist had four daughters which possessed the gift of prophecy. They were women of purity and gift. At this point of our investigation we are not occupied with where these four godly women exercised their gift, but simply with the fact that they possessed this spiritual faculty; they could communicate God’s mind to God’s people.

From Papias, a disciple and friend of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple and friend of the Apostle John, we learn that Philip and his four daughters moved into the Province of Asia where these pious women were highly esteemed by the Church, and where they gave much information regarding events and persons belonging to early Christianity. It may be that Luke gathered information from them.

Am sorry that space does not permit us to go further into our subject this month.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Mar 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 3, Mar 1957.

Correspondence:

Dear Brother J. W.

Some remarks should now be made relative to deaconesses and instructresses.

The Deaconess

There are three salient points to which some Scriptural reference may be applied.

Their Moral Qualifications. It certainly appears that the Holy Spirit had these in mind when He gave, through Paul, the moral qualifications required in deacons, “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience …Even so their wives.” This verse actually reads, “Even so must the women.” These are the female servants or ministers which stand in contradistinction to the male servants or ministers. The moral qualifications required must be met by both brethren and sisters who are engaged in the ministry of temporal things in the churches.

Their Work. There are two Scriptures which reveal a sevenfold ministry for spiritually minded women, a ministry greatly needed among the assemblies of the saints. The elderly woman as a mother is to be “Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted,

if she have diligently followed every good work." (1 Tim. 5:10). Then to this list might be added two other aspects of the ministry of the deaconess, "Teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their children, To be discrete, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:3-5).

Their Example. "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant (deaconess) of the church which is at Cenchrea: … she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also" (Rom. 16:1-2).

The Instructress

It is interesting to notice that Priscilla is jointly mentioned in Acts 18:26, with her husband in the Scriptural enlightenment of Apollos. Let us notice some of the characteristics of this spiritual instructress.

Her Christian Knowledge. She along with her husband, knew the way of the Lord more perfectly than a brother to whom the Lord had entrusted the gift of utterance.

Her Christian Decorum. It was as a married woman in company with her own husband, in their own home that she assisted in the Biblical instruction of Apollos. She was above suspicion when this brother, a stranger, was entertained and taught by her.

Her Christian Devotion. Her name appears in that list of the heroes of the Church in Romans 16, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks" (Vv. 3-4). The figure of laying down their necks upon the executioner's block shows their loyalty even unto the risk of life itself.

Her Christian Subjection. In several Biblical references we find Priscilla's name mentioned before that of Aquila her husband. This has been taken by many to suggest that she had a knowledge and an ability superior to those of her husband, but here, where it is a matter of instructing another, Priscilla is given the secondary place, and her head and husband is given the place of honour.

How wonderful it would be to see sisters who, like the prophetesses, deaconesses, and instructresses of the early Church, sought to serve the Lord and to glorify His Name. They, like their early Christian sisters, would be of incalculable benefit to Church life and testimony.

In reply to your request brother R. McClurkin has sent some very thought-provoking notes. We shall insert these in our next issue.

Very Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

* * *

During the dark days of the struggle for liberty in Italy, most of the people looked upon Garibaldi as their great deliverer. Prisoners, hurried away to loathsome dungeons, would be cheered as they passed along the streets by friends whispering in their ears, "Courage! Garibaldi is coming!" Men would steal out at night and chalk on the walls and pavements, "Garibaldi is coming." And when the news of his approach to a city was announced, the people would break into a rapturous shout, "Garibaldi is coming!" He came, and when he came they regained their freedom never to be enslaved again.

But some One far greater than Garibaldi is coming to God’s soldiers to rescue them. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming, and then there will be such happiness as we can scarcely imagine! Do you belong to the Lord Jesus?

—E. Goreham.

* * *

Life is made up of building and battling, and we can fulfil it only as we put both concerns into the hands of Christ, the Master Builder and the Mighty Conqueror.

The forum (Apr 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 4, Apr 1957.

Correspondence:

Dear Brother G,

In reply to the inquiries regarding the ministry of our sisters, it is well to remember that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 teaches that the principles which should guide us in this matter are the same in both the Old and the New Testaments, “As also saith the law.” That which was commanded by the Lord in this regard in the Old Testament is likewise commanded by Him in the New Testament.

Let us look at the subject in three ways: first, the indispensability of our sisters; then, their suitability; and, finally, their responsibility.

Their Indispensability

“Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man (in creation), even so is the man also by the woman (in birth), but all things of God (1 Cor. 11:11-12). Our sisters are indispensable in turning Christian homes into little sanctuaries for God. The wife is the equal partner with her husband in the sharing of the joys and sorrows of life. They are called “heirs together of the grace of life”, and their united prayers sanctify the home for God (1 Pet. 3:7). The word “hindered” in the expression “that your prayers be not hindered”, means “to break up the road,” and suggests the blocking of the pilgrim’s progress. Mutual love and

reverence are the balancing factors of a happy home (Eph. 5:33); and the family altar is the greatest preservative of its security (Job 1:5).

Their indispensability also is seen in their being fellow-members of the Body of Christ; there they enjoy equal privileges and bear equal responsibilities. God has placed each of us in the Body to function for His glory.

Their Suit Ability

There are significant lessons in the Word of God regarding the manner in which we are to meet in church capacity (1 Cor. 11:1-14). Men are to meet with uncovered heads and women with covered heads. In this God wishes to impress upon us three profound truths; namely, the subjection of the Church to the Risen Head, the Headship of Christ over all, and the glory of God resting on the Christian assembly. The head of the woman is the man, hence she covers her head. In doing so man is symbolically put out of sight. Every fleshly activity in the assembly therefore has its rebuke in the covered head of the sisters. The Head of every man is Christ; his head therefore must be covered. In the uncovered head of the man, we are to read the aim of the Divine Spirit to unveil Christ to every heart. When there is obedience to the Divine order the glory of God rests, like the pillar cloud of Israel, upon the assembly of the saints (1 Pet. 4:14; 1 Cor. 11:15). This latter Scripture teaches that whatever helps a Christian woman to discharge the duties of modesty and submissiveness is seen in her long hair and the veil.

Their Responsibility

Let us now look at the service of our sisters in the three avenues of service which are open to them.

1. The exercise of the prophetic gift: This embraces an oral ministry (1 Cor. 11:5; Acts 21:9). In the public assembly where men are present our sisters are to remain silent. There are three reasons given in Scripture for this prohibition; namely, the order of creation, the transgression of Eve in Eden (1 Tim. 2:11-15), and the nature of the whole economy of God in both the New and the Old Testaments where no prominence ever is assigned to the woman in the presence of the man. Consequently, the prophetic or teaching gift of women must be used when men are absent. Their gifts find an outlet among children (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). What splendid opportunities in the field of child-evangelism to mould young minds and hearts by the Word of God! Their gifts find an outlet among their own sex, either in the mission field abroad or at home (Tit. 2:3-4). In many countries women can be reached only by women, and God has His instruments for every need.

2. The exercise of deaconship: What Pheobe’s service was we are not told, but, in communications between the churches of the saints, it appears she had important business to do on behalf of the church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). The assemblies of Rome were exhorted to assist her in the discharge of those duties. There are many ways in which the sisters may serve the Lord and His people. Noble women ministered unto the Lord of their substance. Chapter 16 of Romans gives us a list of saintly women who succoured the early pioneers of the

gospel and exposed themselves to dangers on behalf of the work of the Lord.

3. Their service in the home: In this regard we read, “She shall be saved in child-bearing (not from death, but from disobedience which was the transgression of Eve), if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety” (1 Tim. 2:15). The context of our chapter shows that Eve left the place that God had assigned to her, and in the absence of her husband she acted independently of him and brought dishonour on the name of God. Women who do not keep their place, but usurp authority over the man, are the true daughters of Eve. In contrast to Eve, Sarah kept her place of subjection. Christian women who do the same are called the daughters of Sarah so long as they do well (1 Pet. 3:6). To do well is to continue in faith, love, and holiness; that is, to keep right with God, to keep right with others, and to keep right with ones own conscience. To those Christian women whom God has blessed with children, the very act of raising those children for the Lord, would save them from the transgression of Eve who stepped out of her place. There are many beloved saints of God who can trace their conversion and the subsequent moulding of their Christian character to a mother’s touch.

Perhaps, in the will of the Lord, later we shall submit other thoughts upon this important subject.

Sincerely,

Robert McClurkin.

The Forum (May 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 5, May 1957.

Correspondence:

Dear Brother G,

I would appreciate if you would send me the name of the translation which you used in coming to the conclusion that the words, “Even so their wives,” should read, “Even so must the women.”

Darby nor Young seem to agree to this.

Yours in Christ,

G. M. M.

Dear Brother M.

We are pleased to receive your letter of enquiry. We thank you for it in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is always gratifying to discover that a deeper interest has been created in the minds of some of God’s people through the reading of Food for the Flock, for one is frequently saddened by the lack of genuine exercise in the Word of God among those who profess to be not only Christians, but students of the Bible.

We shall list a few translations and the authorities from which they have been taken before making any further deductions.

“Women in like manner grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (The Englishman’s Greek New Testament).

“Even so, (lit) women (i.e. deaconesses it behoves to be) venerable, not devils (i.e. thrusters through) not drinking, stedfast” (Concise Critical Comments. Robert Young LL.D.).

“The women in like manner grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (New Translation. J. N. Darby).

“Deaconesses, in the same way must be sober minded women not slanders, but in everything temperate and trustworthy” (The New Testament in Modern Speech. Weymouth).

“The women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (Alford).

Of course, the literal translation of the word “women” is not in itself conclusive proof that the deaconess is meant. In this case we must examine the passage by the Law of Context.

First, we should consider the old question that has been raised about this portion of Scripture. Why should the Apostle in the middle of writing on another subject interject an admonition about women? The Apostle here is definitely writing about the moral qualifications of deacons which subject it is clear he continues in verse 12; therefore, it is more logical to consider Paul as covering the whole subject or deaconship as performed by males and females alike rather than to conceive some reason why he should depart from his subject to deal with another entirely different matter.

In second place, if this verse is to be applied to the wives of the deacons, why is there no corresponding admonition to the wives of the bishops in the preceding paragraph?

Finally a third consideration leads us to conclude that, since we have examples of bishops among the churches (Phil. 1:1) and a statement here as to their required moral qualifications and, since we have examples of deacons among the churches (Phil. 1:1) and a statement here of their required moral qualifications, we should expect that, since we also have examples of deaconesses among the early churches (Rom. 16:1; Phil 4:2), we must have some statement regarding their moral qualifications.

From these considerations it seems obvious that the entire statement covering deacons is applicable also to deaconesses. Women possess the highest, the noblest, and the most generous qualities which can be used for the Lord, but frequently, they are tempted to use the tongue as a defensive or offensive measure against any supposed antagonist. The Spirit of God demands godly self-control in all who would follow the example of the deaconess of the church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1).

Let us remember that while we usually think of the seven men chosen to take care of the monies in the early Church (Acts 6:1-6) as deacons, they are not so designated. The term “deacon” is not applied to any specific work. It appears so general a service that it embraces almost any task for the Lord not definitely named. The word is usually translated either “minister” or “servant.” In the light of its usage in the Scriptures, it is most descriptive of the great variety of duties our sisters may perform for God.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (June 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 6, June 1957.

Dear Brother W.

In referring again to the subject of your letter, the ministry of women, there are one or two points which I feel ought to be clarified before we close this discussion.

Brother McClurkin, in his letter published in the April issue, gave us three reasons why our sisters are to remain silent when men are present; namely, the order of creation, the transgression of Eve (1 Tim. 2:11-15), and the nature of the whole economy of God in both the New and the Old Testaments where no prominence ever is assigned to the woman in the presence of the man. May I suggest a fourth reason; namely, the command of the Word of God, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law” (1 Cor. 14:34).

Frequently we have been told that the verb “to speak” used in this passage means “to chatter” or “to babble,” and that at Corinth the women had been acting improperly, sitting in the assembly whispering or chattering the one to the other, and that Paul was merely rebuking their irreverence without making any reference whatever to oral ministry. Definitely such is not the case. The verb “to speak” is the common word used in the New Testament signifying “to utter aloud.”

Is it not as unseemly for men to whisper or gossip in the assembly of the saints as for women? Surely such a

breach of etiquette should be rebuked not only among the women, but also among the men.

Let us examine in the light of the context the clause, “Let your women keep silence.” This clause in one form or another occurs three times in this passage. First, “If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter let him keep silence in the church” (1 Cor. 14:28). Surely this statement does not mean that the man, who in the early Church was possessed of the gift of tongues, was to stop chattering, but rather that he was not to exercise his gift where and when he could not be understood.

In the second place, we read, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace (let him be silent)” (1 Cor. 14: 29-30). The meaning here is so obvious that no explanation is needed.

As the man endowed with the gift of tongues was to remain silent when no interpreter was available, and as the brother endowed with the gift of prophecy was to remain silent until an appropriate time, so the woman is ever to be silent in the churches.

It would seem that the Apostle uses “the law” here to refer to the books of Moses, the Pentateuch, and that he has God’s charge to Eve in mind, “Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16).

That God has so commanded silence upon our sisters ought to be sufficient for every spiritual person in the churches of the saints, for such an authoritative word demands obedience.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (July 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 7, July 1957.

Correspondence:

Dear brother W.

There are one or two other important and interesting points which we ought to consider before finally closing our examination into the ministry of our sisters in the Lord; for example, some are confused by the fact that all distinction is lost in Christ, even the distinction between male and female, and that, consequently, the sister should be equal to the brother in the Church. Another point has been raised in a letter from a brother, which letter unfortunately I have mislaid in my travels, and that is the position of the Christian wife in the home. Space does not permit that both of these aspects of our subject be investigated in this number, so we shall confine our inquiry to the first of these points.

In some evangelical circles the sisters are invited to take public part in congregational meetings, and in certain denominations they are ordained to the ministry, all because of their equality in Christ to their brethren.

The biography of a certain Church leader, which although very spiritual and in many aspects of Bible truth very sound, explains that he believed in the ordination of women to the ministry because in Galatians 3:28, so he claimed, lay the great charter of human equality, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Let us examine this premise, for no matter how clear the logic may seem, if it rests upon a wrong premise it can only lead to a wrong conclusion.

Should this Scripture be called the charter of human equality? Would it not more properly be applied to Rom. 3:22-23, “For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”? Here surely we have human equality.

Galatians 3:28, thank God, reveals to us the spiritual and eternal equality of all believers in Christ. In Him all racial distinction is lost, “there is neither Jew nor Greek;” all social distinction is lost, “there is neither bond nor free;” all natural distrinction is lost, “there is neither male nor female.” These indubitably cannot be applied in the Church or in the world. The very Apostle who wrote the Epistle to the Galatians claimed in the world and in the Church his racial origin, “Of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5); his national status, “a Roman” (Acts 22:25-30); and his earthly citizenship, “A Jew of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a citizen in no mean city” (Acts 21:39).

Moreover, the Scriptures teach that a social distinction does exist among believers in Christ, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling” (Eph. 6:5). Again, we read of social distinction, “Submit yourselves to kings, as supreme: or unto governors” (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

That natural distinction remains as long as we are in this body of humiliation is obvious from many Scriptures. The Word of God speaks of wives and husbands (1 Pet. 3), and of women and men (1 Cor. 11:1-16).

As long as time endures and men and women remain in the flesh, the very distinctions that are done away in Christ remain in the Church and in the world; we must, therefore, adhere to the Word of God acknowledging that God has one sphere of service for our sisters, a more private but not a less important sphere; and another sphere for brethren.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Aug 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 8, Aug 1957.

Dear Brother W.

There is another point in the subject you suggested for discussion. Reference was made to it last month; it is that of the position of the Christian wife in the home. Unfortunately, I have lost the letter from the brother who raised this matter. His question was, “Is it Scriptural for a Christian wife to pray with her husband when alone in their own home?” We shall have to consider this in the light of the Scriptural status of the married woman.

In what better manner could a Christian wife help her husband than to join with him in prayer? Surely this is what Peter means, “Likewise, ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). Let us notice three things in this statement.

1. DWELLING TOGETHER: The words “Dwell together” which are not found elsewhere clearly cover all the relationships of marital life. In this, true love obliges man to honour his wife. This is a specific application of Peter’s earlier exhortation, “Honour all …, Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.”

2. HEIRS TOGETHER: What a glorious hope a Christian husband and wife possess! They are joint heirs with Christ Jesus, and sharers together of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

3. PRAYING TOGETHER: “That your prayers be not hindered.” The pronoun “your” being in the plural must make reference to the prayers of both the husband and wife. According to some MSS. the verb form here is very strong, and has been rendered, “That your prayers be not cut off or stopped.” Where there is not that reciprocal love that dwells together, hope that anticipates heirship together, and faith that results in praying together any act of intercession is unavailing.

Let me copy here an exhortation from an old writer, “Now the breach of conjugal love, the jars and contentions of husband and wife do so leaven and embitter their spirits that they are exceedingly unfit for prayer …Those who pray together should not only have hearts tuned within themselves in their own frame, but tuned together; especially husband and wife, who are one; they should have hearts consorted and sweetly tuned to each other for prayer.”

Sincerely

J. G.

The Forum (Sept 1957)

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

Dear sister M. T.

We appreciate your letter. We do well to cry to God to save us from the influence of demons. How little we know of their power! I have read the tract you sent, and noted carefully the paragraph that you underscored.

The New Testament teaches that heathenism under the dominion of Satan worships both him and his angels as the power behind their pagan gods. (1 Cor. 10:20-21). It also teaches that evil spirits are behind the errors of Christendom (1 John 4:1-4). From this passage one assumes that evil spirits control false teachers. The following principles are deduced from John's warning:

RESTRAINT: "Beloved, believe not every spirit." The Christian must be cautious at the approach of teachers of novel things.

RESPONSIBILITY: "Try the spirits whether they are of God." In the early Church there were those who were specially gifted in this, "To another…discerning of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10). There is need of spiritual discernment capable to detect the evil spirit behind the false teacher.

RECOGNITION: In Scripture demons are referred to under different appellations which reveal their character and activity.

· Their character: "Evil spirits" (1 Sam. 16:14. Acts 19:12-16): Demons are wicked malignant spirits.

· Their purpose: “Spirits of error” (1 John 4:6. Isa. 19:3; 29:4): They seek to pervert any truth.

· Their method: “Seducing spirits” (1 Cor. 12:10. 1 Tim. 4:1): Demons pervert the truth by seduction.

· Their operation: “Spirits of divination, wizards” (Acts 16:16), seductive work, they possess an unusual power to predict future events and to reveal hidden facts.

· Their deception: “Familiar spirits.” In order to accomplish their error, they so familiarize themselves with the dead as to be able to impersonate them, and thus display the spectacular.

RELIANCE: Thank God for the power of the Lord Jesus Christ! When here He cast out many demons and healed their victims. We also thank God for the power of the Name of the Risen Lord, “Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour” (Acts 16:18; 19:12). Our only hope of preservation from so mighty a foe lies in the power of our Lord Jesus. May we ever rely upon Him alone; not upon our own ability or wisdom.

Sincerely in Christ,

—J. G.

* * *

Hudson Taylor at the age of 16, in Argyll Street, Glasgow, wept as he considered the multitudes on their march to a lost Eternity. His compassion resulted in consecration, his sorrow in sympathy and service. The condition of the multitudes today still cries for compassion to those who have ears to hear.

* * *

The Bible is the Word of Life. I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves; and read not little snatches here and there, but long passages, that will be the road to the heart of it.

The Forum (Oct 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 10, Oct 1957.

Dear Brother G.

It was good to hear from you, and I rejoice with you to know believers are being helped through the ministry in "Food for the Flock."

Thank you for the two letters giving the two reactions to the articles on "Demonology." Believers (at least some of them), seem woefully ignorant of the limited power of both the devil and evil spiritual beings over true "born again" men and women. Christ Jesus our Lord fully accomplished the work for which He was manifested. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Therefore, now all spiritual powers (both good and bad) are subject to Him, "Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Pet. 3:22). As the Only Begotten of God He is able to keep His own from the evil one. "We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He Who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18 R.S.V.).

I replied to Miss S.'s letter, and I see on re-reading your letter that you would like to see a copy of my reply; I am sorry, I did not keep one, but I am sure that she would let you see it.

I say it kindly, but the tract on "Demon Obession" is far from being based on Scripture. I would like to see your reply to Mrs. T.

Sincerely yours,

E. J. Tharp

The Forum (Nov 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 11, Nov 1957.

Dear Brother G:

My son brought home a pamphlet on baptism given to him by a professing Christian. I was shocked to find that it taught that baptism is a work of regeneration. To me this was a denial of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ. It seemed to me that the writer had no clear conception of the difference between baptism by water and baptism by the Spirit. Would you be kind enough to deal with this question in the Forum?

Yours by grace,

J. S. R.

* * *

Dear brother R:

It is no wonder that many young believers, and older ones as well, are confused by the Babel voices of Christendom. So frequently human opinion is taught as if it were divine truth.

Your conclusion regarding baptismal regeneration is perfectly correct. Such teaching is a disparagement of the finished work of Christ. We know that it was impossible for the dying thief who believed to be baptised; nevertheless, he went directly to be with Christ.

It is interesting that we have no record of the baptism of Peter and some of the other Apostles. I do not assume that they were not baptized, but call attention to the fact

that there is no record. From this we must conclude that for them baptism was secondary to faith in Christ, and quite apart from their salvation.

The differences between the baptism of the Spirit and the baptism of water are fundamental. We might notice a few contrasts: the baptism of the Spirit was accomplished without human responsibility; the baptism in water results from human responsibility. The baptism of the Spirit was an act of divine power; the baptism of water an act of human obedience. The baptism of the Spirit is common to all believers in the Church; obviously, the baptism of water is not, although it should be. As we shall see, the baptism of the Spirit was performed by Christ; whereas, baptism in water is done by some servant of His.

Let us examine the teaching of God's Word on the subject, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles" (1 Cor. 12:13). The attention should be called to the fact that the preposition "by" is actually "in." The Holy Spirit is the element in which all believers have been baptized, not the baptizer. It is the Lord Jesus Himself Who baptizes as is evident from Matt. 3:11.

Now when did this wonderful act take place? Very definitely it was future when John the Baptist spoke, but it was past when Paul wrote the Corinthians, "For by (in) one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). When it took place the body of Christ was completed, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is (the) Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). This surely must refer to the baptism of the

Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), for since then, God looks upon the body of Christ as being complete. We do not add members to a body, that would be evolution, although we add stones to a building. The Lord uses both of these figures in regard to the Church. The first points to the act by which the Church is seen complete in Christ; the second points to progressive acts by which the Church is seen in its gradual development throughout time.

When a person accepts Christ, he enters upon the good of that one baptism of Pentecost, and as a stone is added to the building.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

Dear Brother Tharp,

I have inserted this letter from you in this issue of “The Forum” because it emphasizes the supremacy of our Lord Jesus; the accomplishment of His power on the cross; and the full extent of His authority as He now is, risen and glorified in heaven.

Your application of this particular rendering of 1 John 5:18, is valuable. How necessary it is for each to rely implicitly upon His power and authority! The more we realize that we are confronted by the force of the rulers of darkness, spiritual wickedness in high places, the more readily will we cast ourselves upon the Lord. Thank God! We are those “who are kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation” (1 Pet. 1:5).

On behalf, not only of those who have written in, but, also, on behalf of the many who have spoken of help

received through your articles, I would thank you in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Sincerely in Him,

J.G.

* * *

If you find yourself beginning to love any PLEASURE better than your PRAYERS, any BOOK better than the BIBLE, any HOUSE better than the HOUSE OF GOD, any TABLE better than the LORD'S TABLE, ANY PERSON better than CHRIST. — take alarm.

The Forum (Dec 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 12, Dec 1957.

Dear Brother J. S. R.

You state in your letter that you are shocked by certain ones who teach that baptism is a work of regeneration, asserting that such teaching is a denial of the efficacy of the blood of Christ. How true!

A review of this teaching proves how unscriptural it is.

Rome teaches that the image of God, after which man was created, corresponds only to his religious faculty, and that sin merely robbed him of this. The result of his wrong decision in Eden has weakened his will, consequently, he requires, not a resurrection out of spiritual death (Eph. 2:1), but a support to help him in weakness, a tonic to reinforce his feebleness, for he still possesses the ability to turn to God. In baptism, so Rome declares, original sin is remitted; therefore, regeneration is not needed. Original sin being removed, the original divine image is restored.

Campbellism teaches, “I am bold to affirm that every one of them, who in belief of what the Apostles spoke, was immersed, did in that very instant in which he was put under the water receive the forgiveness of his sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Immersion and regeneration are Bible names for the same act.”

An examination of New Testament baptism will uncover the falsity of these dogmas.

New Testament baptism is the testimony of regeneration, not the condition for it. Instead of being a crutch for human weakness it symbolizes:

The death and burial of Christ: “Buried with Him … Christ was raised up from the dead” (Rom. 6:4). Baptism symbolizes Christ’s death and burial.

The believer’s spiritual death and resurrection: “Buried with Him in baptism … risen with Him” (Col. 2:12). The believer in baptism shows what transpired at conversion; what was judicial in God’s purposes became experimental, death to sin and the world and life unto God.

The believer’s union to Christ: “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ” (Rom. 6:3). As Israel was baptized unto (into) Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2), and thus identified with its leader, the believer is identified in baptism with Christ.

The physical burial and resurrection of the saints: “What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?” (1 Cor. 15:29). This passage shows that if there is no future resurrection there should be no baptism now.

Baptism is subservient to the gospel: Paul says, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). Baptism follows faith: “Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Baptism follows the reception of the Holy Spirit: Peter said, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” (Acts 10:47).

Sincerely in Christ.

J. G.

* * *

All my life has been so fickle, sometimes I could not trust, but when I could not trust then I reckoned on the faithfulness of God. —Hudson Taylor

The Forum (Jan 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 1, Jan 1958.

Correspondence

Dear Sir,

Have enjoyed reading, through the kindness of others, recent copies of Food for the Flock. The most recent issue, December, was the best I have seen. Its emphasis on the personality of Christ appealed much in this day of Modernism.

The statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation was both concise and comprehensive, but am wondering what S. O. M. means by his closing remarks that Jesus Christ is the greatest miracle. Does he suggest that it is miraculous that when Jesus was surrounded with corruption He resisted it and refused to sin?

There are some who hold that, but did not think that your Committee would subscribe to it.

Very truly,

C. C. J.

Dear C. C. J.

Many thanks for your letter. We are pleased that you have found Food for the Flock interesting and pleasant reading. Should you become a monthly subscriber you would enjoy its excellent spiritual ministry regularly. Moreover, you would learn exactly the doctrinal status of this Committee and magazine. We believe in teaching the whole Word of God as the Holy Spirit illuminates and as He enables.

Being well acquainted with S. O. M. I assure you that he does not hold the erroneous teaching that the Lord Jesus could have sinned, but did not. A careful re-reading of his doctrinal statement would, I believe, clarify this point.

The miracle of Christ is not that He exhibited infinite resistance to sin, and therefore refused to commit; but, rather, that when in an environment of sin, corruption, and death, those had no effect upon Him for He was impervious to them, that such was His intrinsic holiness He was immune to sin.

The Epistle to the Hebrews places special emphasis upon the holy, sinless nature of Christ, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15) Sin was not a temptation to Christ, but He was tested during life by the sinless effects of sin; as for example, weariness (John 4:6), poverty (Matt. 22:18), thirst (John 4:7), anguish (Mark 14:32-34), and, of course, pain.

As the High Priest of His people Christ is declared to be “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26). These give us a progressive revelation of Christ’s intrinsic holiness, His absolute immunity to sin. He was holy in His birth, harmless in His life, undefiled in His death, separate from sinners in His burial, and made higher than the heavens in His exaltation.

There is an excellent statement, copied from whom I cannot recall, with which I must close: “Christ was not merely undefiled. He was undefilable; and, yet, such is the mystery of His person, such the perfection of His

manhood in company with the Godhead in Him. that the temptation was as real in Him as was the undefilableness."

"In Him was no sin" (1 John 3:5), He was without the principle of sin; "Who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), without the experiential knowledge of sin; "Who did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22), without the practice of sin.

Sincerely,

J. G.

The Forum (Feb 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 2, Feb 1958.

Dear Brother G.

I have just completed reading the December issue of Food for the Flock, and must say there is much in it to lift the heart to God. The article on “Myrrh” and the other one on “Our Lovely Saviour” present pictures of the Lord that thrill the soul. The beauty of it is He is all ours, to love, to enjoy.

Those who teach and practise infant baptism argue that before a child is old enough to decide for Christ this baptism places him in a sphere of security. Could you discuss this in The Forum, and also answer the question, “What Scriptural justification have we for saying that children who have not reached the age of accountability will go to Heaven if they die in innocency?”

Yours in His service,

G. D. R.

Dear brother G. D. R.

We appreciate your kind comments on our December issue. It is a joy to be of some assistance to God’s people.

You have actually opened for discussion two quite comprehensive subjects, two subjects that need much prayerful consideration.

Infant baptism is an insidious error very prevalent throughout all Christendom. Let us think over some of the arguments used to support its practice.

1. All Roman Catholics and certain Protestant denominations hold baptismal regeneration, and one form of this belief assumes that there is saving value in the ritual, therefore, the infant should receive this benefit.

2. Many in denominational circles believe that baptism is somehow connected with the Old Testament rite of circumcision, and that as a Jewish child is circumcized when eight days old, even so all children should be baptized.

3. There are others who conclude that infants were present in the five households which were baptized as recorded in the Book of Acts.

4. Still others believe that in baptizing their children they are claiming a promise from God, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy” (1 Cor. 7:14). This surely is inductive reading of this Scripture….

Let us notice:

1. There is no command given by either Christ or His Apostles to baptize children.

2. There is no example of the baptism of infants in the history of the primitive Church.

3. The Word of God makes faith a prerequisite to baptism, and this is impossible in a baby (Acts 8:37; 16:31; 18:8).

4. The New Testament gives neither directly nor indirectly any instruction for its administration.

5. The very symbolism of believer’s baptism refutes the practice. In baptism we express in symbol form the experience of the soul in regeneration; namely, that of death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

The baneful influences of infant or household baptism are many because it imparts a false security. Many are deluded into thinking that by it they became children of God, that by it they were committed to the arms of Jesus. Moreover, it hinders simple faith in the Saviour for the remission of sins. Furthermore, it corrupts the Word of God by displacing Divine silence by the ordinances of men.

Sincerely in Christ

J. G.

The Forum (Mar 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 3, Mar 1958.

Dear G. D. R.

The second paragraph of your letter asks, “What Scriptural justification have we for saying that children who have not reached the age of accountability will go to Heaven if they die in innocency?”

We understand what you mean by speaking of babies dying in innocency, but let us remember that there were only two human beings who lived in innocency, Adam and Eve before the Fall. Every child born since has been born in sin and shapened in iniquity (Psa. 55:5). Moreover, “The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born speaking lies” (Psa. 58:3).

Naturally, people are anxious to know at what age children become conscious of right and wrong behaviour. As far as one can discover there is no general age for such moral awakening to cover all cases. It would appear to vary in children, and to be changed by the different degrees of intelligence as well as by heredity, environment, and other contributing factors. Some children may discern between good and bad when only four or five years old, while others, because of mental deficiency, never attain this capability.

Shall we consider four important elements that would lead us to accept what your question embodies, that children are safe should they die before they have reached the years of accountability?

The Character Of God

God's judgment upon guilty Sodom provides us with a very illuminating statement. Abraham said to God, "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

Abraham here is not speaking of spiritually saved and lost; he is speaking of God's governmental dealings with those who lived morally right in contrast to those who lived wicked lives. Since God differentiates in His moral government, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right and differentiate between a child without a moral consciousness and a child already possessed by such light? The very nature of God is such that He would differentiate between the two. Isaiah records, "There is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Saviour" (Isa. 45:21).

The Intimation Of Christ

"Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:2-3). It is obvious that the Lord Jesus had in mind here the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom (Col. 1:13).

The argument is clear; if proud man must humble himself and in the simple confidence of a child must trust God for salvation, then a child must already be in that condition until he becomes conscious of sin and follows its dictates. This he definitely will do when he

reaches the consciousness of sin in the world because of the sinful nature he has inherited.

It might, therefore, be said that a child is safe because God in His righteous character takes into consideration moral immaturity in view of

The Work Of Christ

Here we must contrast the work of Christ in saving children with His work in saving adults.

When speaking of the salvation of Zacchaeus, Jesus said, “This day is salvation come to this house, … For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Three things are evident here. Zacchaeus was lost in the past; Christ came that way to seek him out, and having found him, saved him. Such is the way of salvation of all conscious sinners.

In Matthew’s Gospel 18, the Lord Jesus is speaking with a child in the midst of the group around Him. He speaks tenderly of little ones whose protective angels always have access to His Father’s presence. Then He makes the same statement used concerning Zaccheaus, but with this modification, “For the Son of Man is come (Here Christ omits the words ‘to seek.’) to save that which was lost.” Here there are only two factors to consider, the coming of the Son of Man and the saving of the child. The very example that Christ had with Him demonstrates that the Good Shepherd does not have to seek little ones in the pathway of sin, “Jesus called a little child unto Him.” Instinctively and immediately the child responded.

Biblical Examples

David had a baby son that died. During its fateful illness, he mourned for his child, but after the little one had passed away, David said, “Wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23). David the saint who rejoiced so in divine forgiveness, (Psa. 32) when he had served his generation fell asleep, and went to the place where his child was.

A less convincing example is seen in 2 Kings 4. When Gehazi asked the Shunammite woman whose child had died, about her family, he enquired, “Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.” It was well with them as parents in life for they now knew God; it was well with the child in death for he was now with the Lord, but since her child was a child of promise and recompense, he felt that she might still claim him as such. She apparently knew that, since the babe was given through the prophet, in resurrection he would be restored through the prophet.

We hope that others may supplement what we have suggested, for this is of keen interest to all parents.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

* * *

The spiritual state of a Christian is as much indicated by what he refuses as by what he chooses.

* * *

When a Christian worker delivers a message which he knows is the message of God, the peace of God fills his heart, and he cares neither for the praise nor the blame of anyone.

* * *

Not they that eat most, but they that digest most are the most nourished. Not they that get most, but they that keep most are richest. Not they that read most or hear most, but they that meditate most are the most nourished and enriched spiritually.

The Forum (Apr 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 4, Apr 1958.

Promotion In The Sunday School

Question: Should a Sunday School teacher keep the same children in his class year after year; or should a Promotion Day be held annually, at which time all the pupils are moved up a grade as in Day Schools?

Answer: Children form very definite likes or dislikes for their teacher when they remain together for any length of time. As a result, one class may grow too large while another dwindles away to almost nothing. A system of annual promotions will avoid this because a pupil will tolerate his dislike for a poor teacher in the hope of being moved to a more desirable class at the end of the term.

On the other hand, even if a child forms a very close bond of affection and admiration for one particular teacher, he will not resent being placed in another group because he is accustomed to this procedure in the Day Schools.

Another argument in favour of promotion systems is that most teachers have an aptitude for teaching only a certain age group. As children advance into a state of higher mental maturity and spiritual knowledge, continued progress is only possible when they are brought under the influence of a teacher who is suited for handling that advanced group.

Q. B. A.

Dear Brother,

Why, in Matthew 10:1-6, where Jesus called His 12 disciples to Him and sends them out, is not Luke mentioned? Could it be possible that any of the men mentioned there was Luke under another name? Could it have been that one of these 12 dropped out later and Luke have taken his place?

The 12 were told to go only to the lost sheep of Israel, but Luke was very intimately linked with Paul all through Acts.

While this is not a fundamentally vital question, still it puzzles me and I would be very glad to have an answer if possible.

R. C. S.

The Forum (June 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 6, June 1958.

Correspondence:

Dear Brother,

Why, in Matthew 10:1-6, where Jesus calls His 12 disciples to Him and sends them out, is not Luke mentioned? Could it be possible that any of the men mentioned there was Luke under another name? Could it have been that one of these 12 dropped out later and Luke have taken his place?

The 12 were told to go only to the lost sheep of Israel, but Luke was very intimately linked with Paul all through Acts.

While this is not a fundamentally vital question, still it puzzles me and I would be very glad to have an answer if possible.

R. C. S.

Dear Brother:

The April issue of FOOD FOR THE FLOCK was delivered yesterday and I have been reading its messages with interest. In his letter to the Forum, R.C.S. asked why Luke is not mentioned in Matt. 10:1-6 where Jesus called His twelve disciples.

Evidently this reader has a mistaken idea that Luke was one of the twelve, but a careful reading of the New Testament will show that he is never included in the list of Apostles. Furthermore, Luke is introduced to us only after Paul began his missionary travels. In Luke’s

writing of The Acts, he uses the third person in describing the actions and activities of the disciples — “they, them”. When Paul set out from Troas, however, he must have taken Luke with him (Acts 16:11), for the writer from that point on uses the pronoun “we”, as though he were himself one of the party.

To further support the argument that Luke was not a Jew but a Greek, he is referred to as the “beloved physician”. Generally speaking, the Greeks were noted for their scientific knowledge and it is recognized that they laid the foundation for medical science as it is practised today. Previously the sick were treated by witchcraft or superstition. The Romans were the leaders in political knowledge and advancement, while the Jewish forte was religious knowledge.

I would also point out the contrast between the style of John and Luke in their writings in the Gospels. John speaks as one who had seen and heard, one who was an eye-witness; e.g. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Luke, on the other hand, gives “a declaration of those things most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1). Under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, he sets in order the events of which those who were eye-witnesses had given testimony. Luke himself, obviously, had not been with the Lord Jesus during the time of His public ministry, but had received and believed the testimony of others.

Q.A.B.

My dear Brother, Thank you for your letter.

In reply would call your attention to the fact that in Matthew 10:1-6, Christ is calling and commissioning His 12 Apostles (V. 2). Luke was not an apostle in the specific sense. No, he does not appear in this list under another name.

Luke, in all probability, was a Gentile, and first appears in Bibical history as a matured man, a physician. His earliest contacts with Christianity which are left on record began at Troas (Acts 16:6-11).

It has been suggested that the man seen by Paul in the vision was none other than Luke, saying, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” If this assumption is correct, then Luke was a Christian before this event, and was serving the Lord in Macedonia, but felt the need of the help and the presence of the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul.

Luke is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament (Col. 4:14, 2 Tim. 4:11, Philm. 24). Nevertheless, he is the author of the Gospel that bears his name and of the Book of the Acts. Such was his humility that he hid himself in these two great historical records, the history of the Christ and the history of the early Church. Little wonder that Paul called him, Luke the beloved physician.

Sincerely in Christ.

J. G

The Forum (July 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 7, July 1958.

Would you please distinguish between the Day of Christ and the Day of the Lord? We are also interested to know what are the principle events of the former. Any help that you can offer on this somewhat difficult subject will be highly appreciated.

Dear brother G.

There are four great dispensational days or periods of time which are marked off by great epochs in the history of our race.

The Day of Man: This is that period of time in which we are subjected to the opinions or judgment of our fellowmen (1 Cor. 4:3, Marg.). Very often these opinions are wrong, and we are misjudged. This day has lasted for nearly 6,000 years. It is characterized by a silent heaven and a groaning earth.

The Day of Christ: This particular day begins with the resurrection and the rapture of the saints and extends to embrace the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This period is called the parousia or the presence of our Lord with His own in the heavens.

The Day of the Lord: As a prolonged period of time, this begins with the unleashing of the providential judgments of God on earth described in the seven seals, seven trumpets, and the seven vials of wrath. It extends to Christ’s visible descent to the earth, the judgment throne of Matt. 25, the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus, and the Great White Throne (Rev. 20).

The Day of God: This name designates the great Eternal State, God's sabbatic rest, the repose of all redeemed creation in God.

The Day of Christ will be in the heavens, the Day of the Lord on earth. The Day of Christ will be His judgment of the works of His own, the Day of the Lord will be the utter destruction of His enemies. The Day of Christ is His visible presence with all His saints in the heavens (1 Thess. 3:13), and that means not one saint will be missing, the Day of the Lord is the manifestation of His presence to the world. The Day of Christ will determine our position during the Kingdom in view of the degree of our faithfulness to Christ now, the Day of the Lord will gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend or are offensive.

In relation to this subject, let us distinguish three words, for this will help us to a clearer understanding of the truth of the Second Advent of Christ. These words are; the parousia or His presence with His saints, the apokalupsis or the unveiling of this presence, and the epiphanea or the shining forth of this presence in all its glory. His apokalupsis may be first to His saints (1 Cor. 1:7, 1 Pet. 1:7), and then to the world (2 Thess. 1:7).

Let it be clearly understood that there are not two Second Advents. When our Lord leaves the Father's throne, He is descending to earth, but He stops in the heavens for a short time to receive from the earth His own. His visible presence with His saints is called His parousia (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1; Jas. 5:8). His apokalupsis to the world is rendering visible that which had been formerly invisible, and the epiphanea is the shining forth of His presence

before all the world (2 Thess. 2:8). In this very passage it is called the epiphanea of His parousia, and results in the destruction of the whole antichristian system.

Yours in our Lord,

R. McC.

The Forum (Aug 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 8, Aug 1958.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Dear brother in Christ,

I've read Food for the Flock with great interest. I have a problem which I hope and pray someone there may be able to write a sermon on; it is a doctrinal subject.

From time to time, the question is raised as to whether or not music is permitted to be played in an assembly.

Some in the assembly say it is not doctrinal, and others that it is against God's word, although I personally do not see it that way.

Can you please answer this question for us? It means a great deal to us all.

Thanking you, Yours in His service,

M. C.

Dear brother C.

In reply to your letter regarding instrumental music in assembly halls, we would like to say that this subject cannot scripturally be placed in the category of doctrine. Whatever our differences may be on this question, it has nothing whatever to do with sound or unsound teaching.

It may help us all in our decision relative to this matter, if we learn to distinguish between principles laid down in the Word of God, and methods of practice. There are divine principles laid down in the Holy Scriptures for the regulation of the collective gatherings of the saints.

These are found particularly in Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Corinthians 11-14. By these Scriptures, we are taught that the source of all gift is in the Father, its authority is in the Son, and its effectiveness is through the Holy Spirit. Moreover, in these chapters we are taught that the spirit in which gift is to be exercised is humility, the measure of each gift is faith, and its adornment is love.

From these divine principles, we may discern the features of the New Testament Church. These are, broadly speaking, an equality of brotherhood that is undivided by clergy or laity; the universal priesthood of all believers; the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit of God, dividing to every man severally as He wills, and flowing through them all to the glory of God; the liberty for the exercise of all God-given gift; the maintenance of Scriptural discipline and order as becometh the holiness of God's House.

God has given definite legislation for principles; He has given none for methods. Principles never change and are binding upon all the Lord's people in every age; methods may and do change. God has left no legislation for the building of Gospel Halls, the use of hymn books, the order of our gospel meetings, the formation of a Sunday School, etc. These are methods which we adopt to carry out divine principles in our testimony before the world. That which is to govern us in the use of methods is: Does it maintain the dignity of God's assembly? Does it transgress on divine principles? We should shun the use of any method that is not in keeping with the dignity and principles of God's dwelling place.

There are some assemblies that have adopted methods which, in our judgment, have lowered that dignity. This is grieving to the Spirit of God, as well as to the spiritual among the saints. Whatever our differences may be in the matter of methods, we should never allow them to become so great as to divide the people of God. The grace of God should have room to work among us. An unbending will in matters for which there is no “Thus saith the Lord” is a danger to the unity of God’s assembly.

Sincerely in Christ,

R. McC.

The Forum (Sept 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 9, Sept 1958.

Beloved Brethren,

I confess that I feel incompetent to answer the inquiry as to what are “the old paths,” and what does the Scripture teach concerning them? I say that I feel incompetent, because I cannot find such an expression in the New Testament, and as that is where one must look for instruction in regard to Church matters, I am non-plussed by its absence in these Scriptures as well as by the use to which this expression is put in current assembly literature.

Of course, there are two references to old (or ancient) paths in Jeremiah, but these are addressed to Israel in her apostasy. But, who would be so misguided, so uncharitable, as to malign assemblies of God as being apostate? Admittedly, some things have come in about which we are not happy, yet, there has not come to my attention one company, one assembly, that is in departure from the fundamentals of our Christian faith, and apostasy certainly means such a departure.

Lacking a “Thus saith the Scriptures,” we use our God-given wisdom in the light of our knowledge of His Word, as also do the “old path” adherents.

“Old paths”! How far back does one go in history to find them; fifty, seventy-five, one hundred, or more years? Since the truth of gathering in New Testament simplicity was recovered early in the nineteenth century, there have been a diversity of paths from which to choose. Who is to be the judge of which is the right one? It

seems to me to depend on whether I feel like the Corinthians, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas.”

Suppose one suggested going clear back to the beginning. In Acts 2, we read, “They were in the temple daily,” and “They broke bread from house to house.” One can anticipate the mental reaction on the part of some; they would say, “We cannot do those things, for you see that was a transition period; and we, therefore, cannot go by that.” Consider, then, the days of Paul’s activities. Would Corinth be the pattern of an “old path” assembly? If not, would Colosse, or Philippi, or Galatia? None of these apostolic churches conformed to the design set up by the self-appointed arbiters. An examination of Church history throughout the succeeding centuries offers no better examples.

Therefore, we are forced to the conclusion that the expression “old paths,” as currently used, is a schismatic shibboleth, created to exclude certain preachers and assemblies from a defined circle of fellowship.

We are admonished in Heb. 13:7 (margin) to “remember your guides, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow.” Consequently, we readily acknowledge those who pioneered the U.S.A. and Canada with the gospel fifty, sixty, or more years ago as being in the right paths. They moved into a town unheralded, unknown, and often unwanted and they moved on into other districts. I judge this to be the scriptural path regardless of nomenclature, “old,” “new,” or otherwise. Such is the evident pattern in the ministry of the Apostle Paul: “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel not where Christ was named, lest I

should build on another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). "Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other mens' labours …To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand" (2 Cor. 10.15-16).

Do those who rally to "the old path" standard follow the example of their fore-runners? How many there are who make a beaten path between assemblies; a week here, a few nights there, south in the winter, and north in the summer! The movements of these appearing as if they were playing at follow the leader, and in these movements they indulge until "the old paths" become old ruts. The tragedy of all this lies in the fact that they are content to stay in these.

The New Testament gives ample instructions to godly overseers for their guidance. Doubtless, it is ignorance of God's Word or spiritual indolence that impels some to require a badge or a label on preachers.

We are warned to guard against: teachers of false doctrines and perverse things, disorderly busybodies not walking in the truth, division makers, and ministry that is not to the edification of the saints, but apart from these or other scriptural disqualifications, the Holy Spirit gives us this precept: "Because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of (from) the Gentiles. We ought therefore to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers (co-workers) to the truth" (3 John 7-8).

What has been said must not be construed as minimizing the importance of commendation (by letter or other dependable means) or as hinting that place should be given to anyone whose activities are not wholly confined

to assembly fellowship. The “take heed” (beware) of Acts 20:28, to the Ephesian elders is definitely necessary today, and Paul’s commendation “to God and the Word of His grace” must be followed assiduously if we are to maintain the integrity of the assembly position, but circles of fellowship should not be recognized, much less fostered.

Sincerely,

J. B.

The Forum (Oct 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 10, Oct 1958.

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Many of us are greatly disturbed by the amount and the increase of evil speaking among us. Homes have been saddened and hearts have been broken by evil reports that seem to spread so easily and so fast among the saints. Would this be the cause of much of our barrenness and confusion and destructive to so much of the joy of Christian fellowship? Would you kindly bring the light of the Word of God to bear upon the evil of an uncontrolled tongue?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

W. McG.

Dear brother W. McG.:

We are afraid that an unsanctified tongue is sadly indicative of an unsanctified heart. We believe most assuredly that this is the cause of much of our sorrow, confusion and impoverishment in the assemblies of God’s people. It is a sad fact that a faculty so noble as speech could be used in the nefarious business of trafficking in the character, reputation and good names of fellow saints. For our warning, I would draw attention to three aspects of the unsanctified tongue in the Book of Proverbs. They are the talebearer, the slanderer and the backbiter.

The talebearer or whisperer: He grasps at every rumour or hearsay and, without waiting to ascertain its truth,

begins a self-assumed mission of circulating the injurious report.

Concerning this form of evil speaking the Word of God says, “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the uttermost parts of the belly.” “A talebearer revealeth secrets.” “Where no wood is, the fire goeth out; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.” There is one positive command that every young preacher (and older ones too) should take to heart, “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.” He who engages in this dreary mission is running contrary to the Word of God. Another has said solemnly concerning this evil from which so many godly saints suffer, “Thou idle gossiper! travelling from house to house retailing thine unholy wares, trafficking in character, reputation and happiness; thou violator of confidence! Unveiling domestic life within whose sacred precincts unguarded friendship admitted you; thou keen anatomist! Visiting abodes for no other purpose than to dissect the character and the doings of each family — while your own dreads most of all the knife and the probe — what are you but a moral epidemic that walketh in darkness, spreading around you desolation and death, over whom angels might weep and demons do shout and whom every pious and well-regulated mind shuns as it shuns the sting of scorpion or a breath of the plague” (Dr. O. Winslow).

The slanderer: He is not just an idle gossiper, but the inventor or propagator of calumny itself. Does such know that, in destroying a reputation or when staining a good name, he is manifesting the very nature of Satan? The Word of God says, “He that uttereth a slander is a fool,” and “Whose privily slandereth his neighbour him

will I cut off." The one who engages in calumny must be prepared to forfeit his fellowship with God. Slander is clothing malice in words for the purpose of destroying another. I quote from the same writer as above: "Envious of a rival, resolved upon shading the lustre, or bent upon the total extinguishment of a star circling in a wider or brighter orbit than his own, he either coins or gives currency to a lie injurious to the character of a public servant of Christ, or the reputation and happiness of some individual moving in the quiet and unobstrusive walks of usefulness. Is there not death in this unhallowed use of the tongue? no slaying power in that false report, that base insinuation, that cruel surmise, that 'Soft buzzing slander that eats an honest name'?" Most assuredly! The treacherous moth is not a more insidious and dangerous foe to the beautiful fabric it secretly and slowly destroys, than he whose tongue is sharper than a sword, — 'Cutting honest throats by whispers'!" It has been truly said that against slander there is no effectual defence. Nothing is easier than to invent a slander, and nothing more difficult than to annihilate it. It generally selects for its victims the most good and worthy, as the birds peck at and destroy the best and the loveliest of the fruit. There is no fouler foe than he who deals in it. Like the Indian, it dips its arrows in deadly poison; like Judas, it betrays the innocent with the kiss of perfidy. Assassination is its employment, the guiltless its victims and ruin its sport. A thousand fall beside it and ten thousand at its right hand, so unmercifully and deeply wounded as often never to recover from the anguish of heart it has occasioned."

"The slanderers,

Whose hearts are gall—whose tongues are fire

With souls too base for generous ire—

With swords too keen for noble use—

Whose shield and buckler are abuse."

The backbiter: He is the one who utters behind backs what he dare not say to the face of the one he seeks to injure. By a shrug of the shoulder, or a nod of the head, he can put one under a cloud of suspicion. What he says has been heard on good authority! By half truths and twisted stories, he seeks to destroy a good name and take away a fair reputation. He is not only a moral coward, but a plague among God's people in that he separates friends. Such, the Word of God says, shall not abide in God's tabernacle. Let all such be told that their mission is absolutely distasteful, and their presence unwanted. "As the north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."

"Poor souls with stunted vision

Oft measure giants by their narrow gauge;

The poisoned shafts of falsehood and derision

Are oft impelled 'gainst those who mould the age."

Perhaps, before closing, I should say a little about the wholesome tongue. Both death and life are in the power of the tongue. We have seen its power for death; death to our spirituality, our joy, our peace, our usefulness, our fellowship. Let us view its power for life. "The wholesome tongue is a tree of life." It reflects the character of the Lord Jesus. The law of kindness is in such a tongue, and there is also dignity for, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." It lifts

the fallen and cheers the sad, “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.” “Pleasant words are as the honeycomb;” sweet to all who hear them. They spread sunshine and cheer wherever they go. All marvelled at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. Oh! to be more like Him, with speech that is with grace, seasoned with salt. O Lord, purify these lips with the coal from the altar of Calvary, that they may speak only what is true, kind, and good, in order that they may speak to edification, to exhortation, and to comfort among Thy people. That they may be a balm to the weary, a cheer to the sad, and a hope to those who are out of the way.

Yours in the Lord,

R. McC.

The Forum (Nov 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 11, Nov 1958.

Dear Brother G.,

The July number of FOOD FOR THE FLOCK has just come to hand, and the Forum subject (The Day of Christ and the Day of the Lord) has interested me. Perhaps the following remarks may lead to a more complete investigation:

(1) When thinking to "distinguish" between the two expressions enquired about, it is well to bear in mind that, not only two, but a variety of expressions is employed with reference to the future time of judgment, both in relation to Christians and in relation to the world. That time is called:

(a) "The day of Christ" (2 Thess. 2:2. R.V. — "the day of the Lord").

(b) "The day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10).

(c) "The day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

(d) "The day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14).

(e) "The day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

(f) "The day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

(g) "The day of judgment" (1 John 4:17).

(h) "The day of His wrath" (Rev. 6:17).

(i) "The day" (1 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 10:25; 2 Pet. 1:19).

(j) "That day" (1 Thess. 5:4; 2 Thess. 2:3; 2 Tim. 1:12, 18; 2 Tim. 4:8).

This variety in the terminology favours the thought that the day is one, though variously described in different connections. Generally speaking, “the day of Christ” is used with reference to the judgment of the saints, already caught up into the air to be with the Lord; whereas “the day of the Lord” is more used with reference to judgments poured out on the earth. But the period of time is the same: it begins at the coming of the Lord.

If the day of Christ and the day of the Lord were essentially different, what would be the meaning of “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”, where both are combined? And would not the Apostle be chargeable with ambiguity when he writes “the day”, if different days could be understood?

(2) The day of the Lord is said to come “as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10), and the same is said about the coming of the Lord (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39, 40; Rev. 3:3). This definitely links the two together. The coming of the Lord is the event which introduces the day of the Lord.

(3) With regard to the words parousia (coming or presence), apokalupsis (revelation or unveiling), and epiphaneia (appearing or manifestation), it is to be observed that all three are used with reference to the same coming of the Lord for which we, His Church, are waiting — the coming which is “our blessed hope”. Compare, for example:

Parousia:1 Cor. 15:23, 1 Thess. 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1.

Apokalupsis 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13.

Epiphaneia:1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13.

(In Titus 2:13 it should be noted that the blessed hope is the glorious appearing, as indicated by the fact there is only one article for the two nouns.)

It does not therefore seem permissible to use these terms as though they distinguished between different events.

Yours cordially,

—A. S.

The Forum (Dec 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 12, Dec 1958.

Dear Brethren,

I have read your recent articles on “The Old Baths.” I appreciate your Scriptural approach to this matter. Could you give us further light on the exact interpretation of the passage in Jeremiah 6?

A Brother in Christ.

Dear Brother in Christ,

“The Old Paths” of Jeremiah chapter 6 are moral, not ecclesiastical. Four of these paths are described in chapter 2:2-3, as kindness, love, obedience, and holiness. These moral qualities picture souls in the beauty of first love. The Lord said to Israel, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness … Israel was holiness unto the Lord.” Departure from these virtues results in a forsaking of God as the source of all our joy and the satisfaction and rest of our weary souls (2:11; 6:16).

The complaint of the Lord against the church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7) is the exact counterpart of His complaint against Israel. Said He to that church, “Thou hast left thy first love.” That church was ecclesiastically correct, but morally and spiritually incorrect. So serious was this lack that our Lord threatened it with extinction.

Would to God that we might all walk in moral suitability before God, in the beauty of first love to Christ, and in the drinking from the fountainhead of the virtues of

kindness, love, obedience, and holiness. There would be no boasting about walking in “The Old Paths,” but a humble reflection of the image of Christ.

Let brethren who make high church claims test themselves by the unerring balances of the sanctuary; yea let all of us put ourselves under the search-light of God’s holy Word. “The Old Paths” are paths of uprightness, trodden by men and women of the highest character (Prov. 2:13); they are paths of pleasantness and peace, not paths of depression and division (Prov. 3:17); they are paths of mercy in contrast to paths of cruelty and oppression (Prov. 25:10). Moreover, they are paths of righteousness, straight paths where moral crookedness is unknown (Psa 23:3. Matt. 3:3); they are paths directed by the Lord, and not by certain men who would, in their pride, assume an ecclesiastical lordship over their brethren (Prov. 3:6).

Thank God for all who in fellowship with God, walk in the midst of the paths of judgment (Prov. 8:20).

Yours in our Lord,

R. McC.

* * *

A LETTER FROM KOREA

September 18, 1958

Dear…

As you probably know, I arrived in Korea on the 14th of last month. I am working as Chief Clerk in the administrative section. I am pleased with my assignment and feel that I will probably be more satisfied here than I would be in most other places in Korea. Korea has very

little to offer in the way of modern conveniences and as a result we are dependent on the Army for almost everything. The people here are very poor. Most of them seem to be underfed and they have very little to wear. The average Korean lives in such a state of filth and stench that it would make most Americans sick just to see it. There is plenty of room here for Christian work. I have found the people very curious and eager to learn. I am in almost constant contact with them in my work here in the office and feel that I have made some definite progress in teaching two of them about Christ. I still have plenty to learn, however, and find that I am the greatest obstacle I have to overcome. I pray that the Lord will be able to use me in some way.

I have missed my wife very much since I left and I have greatly missed being with the Lord's people, at … It was there that I came to Christ and so, naturally, … has a special meaning for me. I was very much at home there for over a year (it is still home in a way) and it was there that I received some of the most valuable instruction and fellowship in the Lord that I think it is possible for a Christian to receive, especially one who has just been born into the family. I know that I cannot be proud of an exceptional accumulation of knowledge — I never have applied myself to study as I should have, but I also know that because of being in fellowship with the Christians at … that I now have a better knowledge and understanding of Scripture and the Lord than most Christians who are not in the Assemblies. I have not gone far, but I feel that I have something which is solid and will last and grow throughout the rest of my life. I am grateful to you and everyone at … who contributed so much to the welfare of my soul. I have never ceased

to be amazed at my salvation. I know that a human being is not naturally prepared for the tremendous change that occurred in me that night I accepted Christ. I was not immediately aware of a great change. It has been a constant revelation to me. Sometimes I feel that it is almost too much and I wonder if I can really go on forever with it becoming more beautiful. It was a tremendous price my Saviour paid for me. There is a tremendous distance between where I am now and where I was before. It is a little frightening to look back, but how wonderful to know that I can never return!

I miss very much being gathered with the Lord's people around His table. There is a blessing and joy there that I do not believe can be found anywhere else. I have not been able to find an Assembly over here. I am in an awkward location and travel is purposely discouraged. We do have a very good Bible study group every Sunday morning in the Library. The teacher is a Christian who is sound in doctrine from what I can see. He has asked me to take the class Sunday morning. I welcome the opportunity to work — I need it. He will be going home in January and I hope to have the class completely then, unless of course, someone else shows up who is more qualified to teach.

I am due to leave Korea on the 16th of August next year. I am counting the days until I get home. What a joy that will be! It will be wonderful to see you all again. Thank God for everyone there. Please remember me in your prayers. I think of you every day and wonder what you are doing. I know the lord is blessing your work for Him. Please write to me if you can find time and let me know how things are with you and the Assembly.

Love,

* * *

Sweetest rest and peace have filled me,

Sweeter praise then tongue can tell.

I am satisfied as well.

The Forum (Jan 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 1, Jan 1959.

Correspondence:

Dear Brethren,

The question of arranging speakers for annual conferences has become a controversial issue amongst us. Could you give us some help as to what the Word of God teaches? Would 1st Corinthians 14 have any bearing upon the subject?

Your brother in Christ,

G. R.

Dear Brother G. R.,

The question of arranging or not arranging speakers for annual conferences is the responsibility of each assembly alone. As the Holy Scriptures are silent on legislating for these occasions, each assembly must act before the Lord for the best interests of the saints.

There are two types of what may be called “closed ptatforms” represented among us. In the one, the assembly invites men whom they know to be gifts from the Risen Head of the Church to minister for the edification of the people of God. In the other, it is intimated that a certain type of preacher, described by a somewhat ambiguous term will be welcome. All other brethren, no matter how gifted or Godly, are refused the platform.

It is not unscriptural, and no principle is infringed when speakers are arranged to bear the responsibility of

ministry at a Christian conference. Each assembly has its own special events as well as its own local functions. No one thinks it is contrary to Scriptures in arranging teachers for the Sunday School, Evangelists for the gospel service each week, or one or two brethren to conduct a series of meetings. Why should it be thought unscriptural for some assemblies to arrange for a number of gifted men to come for two or three days of ministry?

You mention the order of 1st. Corinthians 14; this is a description of a local assembly met in church capacity where the local gifts function before the Lord. If this applies to a special event such as a conference as some contend, then any local brother has the same right and liberty to act irrespective of the presence of other visiting gifts; in fact, there would be no necessity for the presence of visitors at all. It may be that assemblies do possess men of outstanding ability who follow a secular profession. Nevertheless, there are men who by divine calling and approval are distinguished as gifts to the Body as well as to the local assembly (Eph. 4:11-13). God has His universal gifts as well as His local gifts. He has fitted men for countrywide evangelism, others for the exhortation of the saints in general, and still others for the proper unfolding of the teaching of the Word of God in a larger sphere. It is the failure to distinguish between things that differ that confuses the saints, and creates irritation among them.

From the very beginning of the assembly movement, many of the Lord’s people who gather in His name alone never have considered it contrary to divine principles to arrange speakers for a conference. Why then should brethren be harassed by the cry of “Departure,

departure?" The procedure of arranging conference speakers has been the practice all over the world for over 130 years, and subscribed to by the most godly and intelligent men among us.

This reply is longer than I intended, but in the next issue, we should like to quote the opinion of Mr. J. N. Darby who was one of the great pioneers in the recovery of divine truth.

Yours in the Lord,

R. McC.

Book Review

A recommendation in these book reviews does not necessarily endorse every work written by the authors cited, nor does it necessarily confirm all that is advanced in the books under survey. Bible students must learn to prove all things and to hold fast that which is good. All human authors are finite, and only can be followed as they strictly adhere to the Holy Scriptures. We recommend only such books as are considered, in spite of natural limitations, profitable to Christian life, development, and testimony.

GREAT NEGLECTED BIBLE PROPHECIES, Merril F. Unger, Scripture Press, 434 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, 111. U.S.A.

The Apostle Peter declares that prophecy is as a light that shineth in a dark place. Dr. Unger, in this small volume, directs that light upon a number of dark biblical predictions. He discusses several somewhat involved problems with candour, logic, and an authority that arises from an intimate acquaintance with the Word of God and a deep understanding of the subject.

The four great prophecies examined in this work are:

Ezekiel's Vision of Dry Bones and Israel's Restoration; Ezekiel's Temple and Millennial Worship; The Judgment Seat of Christ and the Trial of the Believer's Works; The Olive Tree (Romans 11) and Israel's Future.

Such matters as the national and individual salvation of the Jew, the believers' sins at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the restoration of animal sacrifices during the Millennium are investigated, and helpful solutions are offered.

Price $2.50, Christian Book Room 853 Bloor St. W. Toronto, Canada.

The Forum (Feb 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 2, Feb 1959.

The Arranged Platform

Dear brother R.,

I wish to add more to what was said in the last issue of Food for the Flock regarding the arranging of speakers for conference platforms. If elders in an assembly want to leave the platform open, as it is called, that is their right, but they must in so doing assume the responsibility of seeing that the saints are not distressed by unprofitable ministry or by undignified behaviour on the part of men who do not know their own limitations. To assume that everyone who gives his whole time to the work of the Lord has the right to the platform, is to manifest an ignorance of Church truth. When elder brethren are not prepared to discharge their duty in this respect, then, for the protection of the saints, men should be selected who are able to feed the people of God. In so doing there is no disparagement of divine principles, but, rather, a simple acknowledgement of the gifts which the Risen Head of the Church has fitted for the edification of the Body of Christ.

I promised you the opinion of J. N. Darby on this subject. We know that he was only a humble servant of Christ, yet, he was one of the pioneers of the simplicity toward Christ we seek to practise. Moreover, he paid a price for coming out to the name of the Lord Jesus.

In his letters, Vol. 2, page 109, he asserts his complete independence to act under the Lord, and, if for the glory

of God, to enter into an arrangement for ministry. His statements are as follows:

“When I go to teach I go individually to exercise my gift… if this be denied, the authority of Christ and the liberty of the Spirit (are denied), to substitute for them the authority of the assembly.

“The Lordship of Christ is denied by those who hold these ideas. They want to make the assembly or themselves lords. If I am Christ’s servant let me serve Him in the liberty of the Spirit. They want to make the servants of Christ the servants of the assembly and deny individual service as responsibility to Christ…

“There is full liberty. Paul takes Timothy; Apollos will not go where Paul wishes; and Barnabas gets Paul to come (to Antioch); and if they were preaching or teaching, why should not those gifted, now? And if Paul and Barnabas were guided by the Spirit, why may not, in their measure, teachers be guided now? Who sent Titus to Crete or left Timothy in Ephesus? They will say it was apostolic authority. Be it so; but do not let them pretend it is contrary to the liberty of the Spirit in those who serve. Paul went into the synagogue as his manner was; it was an arrangement. He separated the disciples and discoursed daily in the school of one Tyrannus. This was arranged, and a lecture. Did this destroy the liberty of the Spirit? I am perfectly clear that all this is an attempt of the enemy to destroy the liberty of the Spirit, and the authority of Christ over His servants, and introduce another authority into the Church of God.”

Sincerely in Christ,

R. McC.

Men may misjudge your aim,
Think they have cause to blame,
And say that you are wrong.
Keep on thy quiet way;
Christ is the Judge, not they.
Be not afraid, be strong!

The Forum (Mar 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 3, Mar 1959.

The Very Low Standard Of Ministry Today

Dear Brother G.

I have spent nearly half a century among the assemblies of God on this continent. As I recall my earlier days, and the tone and standard of ministry given by the men of God who then moved in our midst, I can only deplore, in this regard, the sad degeneracy that is now evident.

Recently, I have listened to preaching that was shallow, schismatic, and boastful. Can nothing be done to restore the type of ministry that once characterized the so-called “Brethren Movement”? The expository work of early brethren was the greatest blessing of God upon the whole Church in the last century. “How are the mighty fallen!”

Yours in the Lord, J. G. L.

Beloved Brother,

Your letter has touched upon a theme that is causing many of our older Christians in fellowship among the assemblies both concern and exercise.

A paraphrasing of Eph. 4:11-13 may reveal to us the true purpose of ministry: “And Christ gave to the Church gifts as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints in order that they accomplish their ministry of edifying the body of Christ, till we arrive at the unity the faith teaches and intends, and at the full knowledge of the Son of God, and at the

perfection of the one New Man (Eph. 2:15), the full measure of the stature of the Christ."

The Recognition of the Gifts

There is much lack of discernment in the proper appraising of spiritual gifts, and their different functions in the Church.

Some may find it necessary to do what the Spirit of God sought to do when, through the Apostle Paul, He wrote to Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee" (2 Tim.1:6), and to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. 4:17). Frequently, the men who are really gifted by the Lord are reticent, while others are bold. An elderly brother in a rather boastful manner, said, "If I had received the many opportunities that some of the younger brethren now have, I would likely have developed some gift of my own." His elderly wife who was sitting listening said, "But, Father, you did not really need any gift, for you have the gab."

Gift means more than just the ability to talk, or even the desire to talk and preach. Consequently, when gift is stirred up and becomes apparent, it should be recognized. Moreover, this means that we distinguish the gifts and their functions.

The Employment of the Gifts

The wrong use of gifts may arise from the improper detection of their character. Sometimes the evangelist is used when the teacher might be more correctly employed. Frequently this mistake is seen at annual conferences. At conferences where the so-called open platform is practised, sometimes it is merely a matter of

every man in the Lord's work taking his turn, and, at times, this involves as many as 12 to 14 different speakers. Everyone speaks irrespective of either the type of gift or the measure of grace.

At conferences where a more cautious approach is used, and arrangements are made, a similar disrespect of gift is sometimes noticeable; evangelists are appointed to minister to the saints and teachers are arranged to preach the gospel. There is a definite need for heavenly wisdom in these matters. A man's ability and limitations should be appraised in the presence of God.

The Commendation of Gifts

There are certain principles in the New Testament to govern the matter when a gift is to be commended to full-time service for the Lord.

It has been asserted that any system is only as strong as its weakest point. It is taught in the New Testament, and theoretically accepted by the assemblies, that the Lord imparts the gift and the Holy Spirit separates that gift to the work of the Lord (Acts 13:1-7). On these assumptions, we commend brethren to both the foreign field and the home field.

There is no question but this principle is both scriptural and idealistic; nevertheless, one wonders at times if the method by which this principle is carried out is scriptural. In the minds of many, a small assembly of 12 or 14 has as much authority to commend a brother as has an assembly of 300 or 400. If the example of Timothy is taken, it will be found that there were certain actions in which there were both deterrents and directives. (Acts 16:1-3). There are major factors

associated with Timothy's going out into the Lord's work. First, "Him would Paul have to go forth with him." An experienced servant of Christ saw the spiritual value of this young man. Second, "Which was well reported of the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." Two churches likewise saw character and ability in Timothy, and concurred in the commendation.

From these observations, it seems clear that the quality of ministry among us would improve if gifts were properly recognized, properly employed, and when God directs that an assembly commendation be given, that this be done with caution.

There are also some practical suggestions that one might offer. For example, it would be well if some would eliminate the so-called concordance sermon from their preaching. Generally speaking the concordance sermon is the complete giveaway of a lazy thinker. Another type of preaching that has made our meetings distasteful to many, is the allegorical interpretation used by certain brethren. By this means the Scriptures can be made to mean anything. We all have heard from time to time some of the most ridiculous applications of the Word of God. Jacob's offering of the bribes to Esau is used as a picture of the sinner offering his good works to the Lord. Esau by some stretch of imagination becomes a picture of the Lord. Only recently, we heard of a sermon based on Judges 19 in which the old man which welcomed the stranger and his concubine into his home was made a picture of the Lord Jesus welcoming the sinner into salvation. What nonsense! Think of the dishonour done to the Lord by using such a wicked old man as a picture of our Holy Lord Jesus! This old man eventually offered

his daughter and the stranger’s concubine to the lustful men of his city.

The standard of ministry in the assemblies will not be raised until men who have 24 hours of the day at their disposal, apply themselves to a diligent searching of the Scriptures, and until they engage in real expository and doctrinal preaching.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Apr 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 4, Apr 1959.

The Book of Daniel

Dear Brother,

I have been studying the Book of Daniel lately. I am a little confused at the divergence of opinion as to who the Antichrist will be. Some say he will be the Roman prince, the first beast of Revelation 13; some, the King of the North or Syria; and, others, that he will be Judas Iscariot. I would be grateful for your help on the matter, and also on some books you might be able to recommend on this subject.

Your brother,

M. A. R.

Dear Brother M. A. R.,

Many consider the two most valuable works on the Book of Daniel to be those of William Kelly and A. C. Gaebelein. Together these form a splendid commentary upon this difficult prophecy.

Yes, there is a divergence of human opinion as to who in the prophetic picture will be the Antichrist. This, in itself, should save us from too much dogmatism. Considerable reflection upon this subject has led to the conclusion that the second beast of Revelation 13 is the Antichrist. It appears that Daniel 11:36-40. Zech. 11:16-17. John 5:43. 2 Thess. 2:8-10 and Rev. 13:11-18 all refer to the same evil person. From these passages, it is gathered that he may be a Jew who will readily be received by the Jews of Palestine, and that he, possibly,

will not appear in full power until after the destruction of the Papacy by the Western powers whom she, the Papacy, has deceived (Rev. 17:16-18). The Antichrist, the Jewish false Messiah, will have opportunity then to unite Judaism and Christendom under one head. All will be commanded to worship the first beast, the ruler over a ten king kingdom. The world will eventually see an empire similar to that of Constantine in which Church and state unite to destroy all opposition. During the Great Tribulation, all who refuse the mark of the beast will be appointed to destruction. The Mystery of Iniquity will be climaxed by a trinity of evil: the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. This climax will not be reached, however, until after the true Church is removed from earth (2 Thess. 2:7-8).

I would point out that the Ten King Empire of the West will be the friend and the protector of the Jewish nation, but the deadly enemy of all true believers from among both Jews and Gentiles.

The great Northern Confederacy is the enemy of the entire Jewish nation, and is the rod of God’s anger by which He will punish His ancient people. At Armageddon, both confederacies will join in battle for the possession of Palestine, but neither will attain the prize for the Lord Himself will descend with the armies of Heaven to destroy both of these evil forces and to take possession of the Holy Land for Himself and His people (Zech 14).

Yours in the Lord,

R. McC.

The Forum (May 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 5, May 1959.

Christian Baptism

An Important Question:

Is the baptism mentioned in Acts chapter two Christian baptism? In our assembly some are upsetting God's people by teaching that it is distinctly Jewish, and that it has nothing to do with the Church. They, also, suggest that it was essential to the salvation of the Jew at the beginning of the Christian era.

An Instructive Reply:

This type of teaching is not new; it is the echo of Dr. Bullinger who taught that there are two gospels and two series of instructions in the New Testament, one for the Jew and the other for the Gentile. He limited baptism and the Lord's supper to what he erroneously called the Jewish Church. He contended that throughout, especially, the first seven chapters of the Book of Acts, we are on Jewish ground; in fact, his ultradispensationalism went so far as to leave us with a Bible for today composed only of Paul's prison epistles.

Let us notice three important points.

1. The commision of our Lord given to His Apostles is against such teaching for it asserts that there is only one gospel. No matter what appelation may be used to describe it in the Word of God, it is always the same gospel. A comparison of Matt. 28:18-20 with Acts 1:8 shows that the same gospel which was preached in

Jerusalem and Judea was also to be preached to the ends of the earth. In fact, the gospel taught by our Lord and recorded by all four Evangelists is the same as the gospel we proclaim today to all mankind. Paul contended vigorously in Gal. 1 for the doctrine of one gospel for said he, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him he accursed.”

2. There is only one Christian baptism. Would our Lord, before His ascension, give His commission to preach the gospel and baptize the converts in the name of the Divine Trinity, and then after His ascension give another command (no where recorded in the Scriptures, but surmised by some) so absolutely contrary to that first commission? If in Acts chapter two Christian baptism is not meant, what is meant? It certainly is not John’s baptism for that ended when John was cast into prison; moreover, it was no longer necessary after Christ had been manifested to Israel.

To insist that the baptism practised in Acts two was essential to the salvation of the Jew is to contradict the whole doctrine of salvation by grace through faith as this is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. A careful reference to the contents of Romans chapter four will convince one of this. Furthermore, to say that baptism in Acts chapter two was for the purpose of severing a Jew from his association with a nation which God charged with the death of Christ and, therefore, has nothing to do with the Gentile is only a half-truth. We ask, are we not all guilty of the death of Christ? Does not our baptism disconnect us from the world that God charges with the death of His Son? Is it not the symbol of every believer’s identification with a rejected Christ in

His death, burial, and resurrection? Most assuredly, to be baptized is the command of God for both Jewish and Gentile converts, and this act has exactly the same significance in both cases. Pentecost teaches that God broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile to make of the two one new man, so making peace. Why does the school of ultradispensationalism insist on interposing into the Book of Acts what God had abolished at the cross of Christ?

3. There is only one line of teaching for all of God's people. Paul makes it perfectly clear that the ministry of Christ in the Gospels is for us (Acts 20:35. 1 Cor. 9:14. 1 Tim. 6:3-4). Some have the mistaken idea that in the progress of doctrine each unfolding of truth annulled what went before. On the contrary, in the making of the New Testament, each unfolding of truth added to what went before and thus enlarged the vision of saints to the unsearchable riches of Christ. Dr. A. T. Pierson has well said, "There is not only harmony but progress in doctrine; truths found in germ in the Gospels are historically illustrated in the Acts, doctrinally unfolded and applied in the Epistles, and symbolically presented in the Apocalypse." —R. McC.

The Forum (June 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 6, June 1959.

Dear brother G.

I do value and appreciate your Food for the Flock… In particular your reply to J. G. L. in March issue … We must read and study daily…

We humbly suggest that you should direct us regularly by a nice collection of wise suggestions…

Please add more methods and manual instructions on the employment of our gifts.

Warm Christian greetings,

D.T.M.

Beloved Brother,

We agree that it is most unfortunate that so few are going in for expository teaching among the assemblies of today.

At your suggestion, we might point out for those who are exercised, a few scriptural principles relative to deeper study of the Word and to teaching.

It is commonly recognized that all spiritual gifts come from the same source, the Divine Trinity (1 Cor. 12:4-6), and that each gift as it functions has for its objectives; first, the acknowledging of Christ as Lord (V. 3); and, in second place, the edifying of all saints (V. 7).

Consequently, all Christians should know the true features of real spiritual ministry. These features may be

detected in the threefold result: edification, exhortation, and comfort.

Edification educates the mind in the art of right thinking. Exhortation controls the conscience in the art of right acting. The ministry of comfort sustains the heart in a proper attitude toward God in all the adversities of life.

It is interesting to notice how the first three gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, link themselves with an expository ministry. We read, “To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit.”

Wisdom may be considered as the applying of truth to some particular circumstance; knowledge, the acquiring of a broader apprehension of truth; and faith as the believing the truth of God, the resting upon its infallibility.

It has been suggested that wisdom in a special way is needed by the pastor; knowledge, by the teacher; and faith, by the evangelist.

From these facts and suggestions it becomes apparent that to engage in a ministry characterized by these features, one must spend much time in the presence of the Lord in perfect reliance upon the Holy Spirit. There must be an application to the Word of God, and to the best means of communicating to others what is thus gathered in the sanctuary.

Six salient points related to methods of teaching are noticed in the preacher of Ecclesiastes (12:9-11).

Constancy: “He still taught the people knowledge.” He was conscious of their need and sought to meet it.

Consequently, he was constantly gathering fresh knowledge to impart to his listeners. He saturated his mind regularly with the Word of God. Similarly, the Word must be studied and absorbed regularly and systematically. There must be a digging for the treasures of truth which lie below the surface of the text.

Consideration: “He gave good heed” (or pondered, R.V.) what he studied. He endeavoured to find the proper meaning of things.

Of Ezra and his associates, we read, “They read in the book in the law of God distinctly (pronounciation) and gave the sense (elucidation), and caused them to understand the reading (interpretation).” We must ever remember that knowledge is communicated only in the degree that it is first personally understood.

Composition: “And set in order.” There was in the mind of that ancient preacher a composite arrangement of his material. It is this fitting together in sequence of subject matter that enables one to teach effectively. Moreover, a discourse thus presented is more easily understood by the listeners.

Illustration: “Many proverbs” were devised by that preacher, and we may rest assured, were used by him to illustrate and clarify his subject.

Application: “The preacher sought to find out acceptable words … even words of truth.” A message to be accepted by the people of God must be couched in language understood and appreciated by them. It must be delivered in a way that appeals to them.

Objective: The wise preacher had a twofold objective before him. First, “The words of the wise are as goads.”

That is, they are to prod and arouse the hearers from sluggishness to action. In second place, “The words of the wise are as … nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.” Surely, this suggests a ministry that edifies. As nails fasten parts firmly together, even so does a spiritual expository message.

There is an additional consideration we might add, variety in ministry. All must come from the same source, the One Shepherd Who gives abundant pastures for His sheep. God-endowed teachers are like masters (school masters) of assemblies and they guide the saints into the unsearchable riches of Christ. They are like the Kohathites to whom was entrusted the furniture of the tabernacle, they know exactly where everything properly belongs.

May these suggestions provoke further exercise relative to the character of ministry in the assemblies today.

Yours in Christ,

R. McC.

The Forum (July 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 7, July 1959.

QUESTION: Were the men who took part in the crucifying of the Lord eternally saved because of His prayer “Father, forgive them…?” (Luke 23:34). Since there is no evidence of either repentance or faith on their part, could there be salvation?

ANSWER: To the second part of this question the answer is a definite “No!” Neither then nor now was there ever salvation for any soul apart from “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

However, the prayer of the Lord was answered — in the sense that the judgment of God was not then and there poured out upon those responsible for the crucifying of His Son. To say, as for instance Krummacher does, that the prayer “embraces the whole register of sins” is, we judge, a mistake. It had reference only to what was being done at the time: “ … what they do.” True, this was the crowning sin of the ages. No crime could have been more atrocious. But it was committed in ignorance — at least in ignorance of its true character and import. And the Lord’s prayer for forgiveness relates itself to this ignorance: “Forgive…for… they know not what they do.”

The word translated “forgive,” while it frequently has reference to the BLANKET forgiveness of ALL sin in the life of one who trusts Christ, has not always that meaning. One occurrence of it is in Luke 13:8, where the thought seems to be closely akin to what we have here.

The owner of the fruitless tree would “cut it down.” But the vine-dresser pleads, “LET IT ALONE” this year also … if it bear fruit well: and if not, then thou shalt cut it down.” The word rendered “let … alone”is the same as is rendered “forgive” in the passage we are considering. Clearly the vine-dresser is not suggesting a permanent letting alone of the tree (an eternal forgiveness), but a temporary respite, for if the tree did not “this year” produce fruit, he agreed that it still should be cut down. The crucifiers of the Lord received a similar respite. In Acts 3:17 we find Peter saying to them “ … through ignorance ye did it,” and calling upon them now to repent, that their sins might be blotted out. But they are left in no doubt that, if they do not now repent, judgment would still be their portion. They had been “let alone” or “forgiven” heretofore that they might be pursued in grace and be given the opportunity of facing the issue, no longer in ignorance, but with full knowledge of what was involved.

Stephen’s prayer, as he was being stoned to death, is more or less parallel to the Lord’s. He prayed “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Note, “THIS sin …” It goes without saying, of course, that they were not forgiven all sin or saved eternally in answer to Stephen’s prayer! And the Lord’s prayer had a similar limitation.

Paul’s words in 1 Tim. 1:13 may also be compared. After admitting that he had been “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,” he adds “I obtained mercy, because I did it IGNORANTLY in unbelief.” The mercy he speaks of is seen in the fact that, though so fiercely opposing himself to the Lord and His people, he had not been summarily cut off in his sins, but was, as the hymn-writer would put it, “Preserved by Jesus when his feet

made haste to hell" —preserved that he might yet be shown the enormity of his sin and be given the opportunity of turning from it, in faith, to the Saviour.

— F. W. Schwartz.

The Forum (Aug 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 8, Aug 1959.

Vol 5:8 (Aug 1959)

The Forum

CORRESPONDENCE:

Dear Brother,

In the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16, what is the chief lesson that the Lord was teaching His disciples? How were they to make to themselves “friends of the mammon of unrighteousness”? In the clause, “When ye fail”, what is meant by “fail”? How can the friends of the mammon of unrighteousness receive you into everlasting habitations?

Yours truly,

J. C.

Dear Brother J. C.,

There are two parables in Luke 16; the first, that of the unjust steward, spoken to the disciples (V. 1); the second, that of the rich man (Vv. 19-31), spoken to the Pharisees (V. 14).

Both of these parables deal with human foresight in making provision for the future. The steward, although unjust in that he failed in his office, was prudent in that he made provision for his future. The rich man, although apparently of noble birth, failed in foresight; he made no provision for his future.

There are certain difficulties arising from the first parable. For example, the steward is called unjust and yet he is commended; he reduces the debts owed his master by which his master might easily have sustained further loss. The commendation that he receives creates a certain problem as does the application made by the Lord to His disciples.

We must understand that the steward is called unjust only because he wasted his master's goods not because of the method he used for the making of friends.

The steward is commended for making friends, not by the Lord Jesus, but by his own lord, his employer.

The parable must not be taken to suggest that the steward was acting in a fraudulent manner, but rather to suggest that although he reduced the debts owed to his master, he made up the full amount out of his own means. It was this sagacity that his lord commended.

The Lord Jesus suggests that His disciples ought to follow the example of the prudent steward and provide for the future. As he, the steward, used his own means to make friends of his master's debtors so the disciples should use their means, "the true riches," spiritual wealth, to make spiritual friends, even from out of the world. This they could do by proving the value of their faith by good works, even by the proper use of their money, the mammon of unrighteousness. This charitable ministry is to be done in the present in order that when the disciple "fails", comes to the end, they, the friends made on earth, may receive him into everlasting dwellings.

I trust that this explanation may be of some help to you. Many thanks for your question. We shall be pleased to hear from you again.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Sept 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 9, Sept 1959.

Question: In praying for the sick, should the procedure described in James 5:14 be followed today?

Answer: It is not our purpose to discuss at this time the merits or the demerits of what is called faith-healing, but, rather, to point out the proper interpretation of the above mentioned passage.

James, the Lord's brother, wrote to a people who had grown careless in the things of God. This led to lethargy and to sin among them. He anticipated that because of their carelessness and sin God's chastisement might fall upon them in the form of bodily sickness. This would fall upon those whose sin was of such a character as to bring reproach upon the testimony of God. In the midst of the chastisement, when sin is brought home to the conscience, it results in confession of guilt and in restoration of the soul to God, then follows the healing of the body. We submit four lines of argument from this chapter in James to establish the correctness of the above premise.

Sickness, in this chapter, is definitely associated with sin as will be noticed in verses 15, 16, 19, 20. Dr. Vincent in his masterly work, "Word Studies," makes this comment on (Verse 15): "Literally the words read, "If he be having committed sins, i.e. in a state of having committed, and under moral or physical consequences of transgression." James says, "Confess your faults … that ye may be healed" (V. 16). "He which converteth the sinner (the sinning saint) from the error of his way shall save a soul

from death (premature physical death), and shall hide a multitude of sins."

The choice of words made by the Spirit of God to describe the sickness is indicative of chastisement for sin: "Affliction" (V. 13) means suffering evil. God says, "I create evil," not sin, of course, but the punishment of sin. The question in verse 14, "Is any sick among you?" means to be weak or wanting in strength. But the word "sick" in verse 15 is altogether a different word, and means to grow faint as in Heb. 12:3. It is descriptive of one falling out of the Christian race.

The example of Elijah: When Israel had sinned, Elijah prayed and the chastisement of God fell upon them. When they confessed and put away their sin, Elijah prayed again for them and the chastisement was lifted, and the nation was restored.

The calling of the elders: Is it not the privilege of any saint to pray with a sick one? Why are the elders specifically mentioned? Are they not the representatives of the assembly present to hear the confession of the sin that has brought such reproach upon the testimony of God? They then pray for the restoration of the body and God hears their prayer and answers it.

How are we to look at the anointing with oil in our day? The Word of God describes the anointing with oil in three ways: first, in a ceremonial way, as in the anointing of the prophet, priest and king in Israel. We do not think that this ceremonial aspect has any connection with this passage of Scripture. Second, it is used in a medical way (Isa. 1:6. Luke 10:34). The principle laid down in James 5 makes reference to agencies available for the healing of the body, and instructs that they be

used, for God will bless them. In third place, it is used as the symbol of the refreshing influence of the Divine Spirit in the soul of the restored saint (Psa. 23:5). It is the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isa. 61:3). Sheep, after battling with the elements during the day, are refreshed in the evening by the anointing oil, and thus their strength is replenished in the presence of the Shepherd.

God's dear people are exposed to the storms of temptation, and many suffer defeat; nevertheless, each may say, "He restoreth my soul." The Lord heals the wounded conscience, and the Holy Spirit imparts the assurance of restoration to the soul. Then, in the presence of the Shepherd, the strength is replenished to battle again, and to live victoriously for His glory.

R. McC.

* * *

The prayers of the Apostle Paul which have been left on record reveal much of his own temperament and character.

Obviously he was UNSELFISH, for among them there are few requests for personal blessing. He was much more interested in others than in himself.

Each prayer reveals that he was deeply SPIRITUAL. He knew God, not only in a doctrinal way, but in an experiential way.

Paul's heart-breathings before the Throne of Grace reveal that he possessed a comprehensive understanding of the needs of God's people and was most SYMPATHETIC.

The striking BREVITY of his prayers indicate his real confidence in God. There were no vain repetitions in his intercessions.

The Forum (Oct 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 10, Oct 1959.

QUESTION: What is the difference between the two descriptive titles used of Christ, the Only-begotten Son and the Firstborn or First-begotten?

ANSWER: As the Only-begotten, Christ stands in a relationship to God from which all others are excluded; He is God's unique Son. As the First-begotten He occupies a relationship into which others are brought (Rom. 8:29). The first speaks of priority, the second of supremacy. In the first we see the very essence of the Divine Being; in the second, the divine pattern to which all the redeemed are to be conformed. Five times John speaks of our Lord as the Only-begotten (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18. 1 John 4:9). In these Scriptures we see His co-equality with the Father and the Divine Spirit as the Eternal Son of God. Five times the Epistles speak of Him as the Firstborn or the First-begotten (Col. 1:15, 18. Rom. 8:29. Heb. 1:6. Rev. 1:5). In these passages we see His supremacy in creation in the past. He is Creator (Col. 1:15); His supremacy in resurrection in the present, He is the First-begotten from among the dead (Rev. 1:5); and His supremacy in glory in the future, He is the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

R. McC.

QUESTION: What is the difference between Christ as the image of God and Adam of whom we read that he was made in the image of God?

ANSWER: The able expositor, Barlow, has clearly expressed it thus: “In Christ it is as Caesar’s image in his son; in Adam it is as Caesar’s image on his coin.”

The word “image” as applied to Christ suggests three things: similitude, representation, and manifestation. The glory of God that filled the tabernacle of old, the visible sign of God’s presence in the midst of His people, was a distinct ray of that glorious light of Deity, it had neither shape nor form. In the incarnation of Christ, the glory of God manifests itself in the form of a man. “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory.” The Lord Jesus claimed to be the perfect similitude of God when He said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” Christ was not making reference directly to His bodily appearance, but indicated that in His body He revealed the nature, the character, and the heart of God. The Lord Jesus Christ was the visible representation of the invisible God. We, frequently, in our behaviour misrepresent God and His truth; not so our perfect Lord. He declared the Father in all the perfections of His being. To quote Barlow again, “The Incarnate Word in His nature, attributes, and actions is the true epiphany of the unseen Deity, setting forth, like distinct rays of one and the same glorious light, His infinite wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and power.”

The restored image of God in redeemed man is seen as the reflection of God’s character, but the perfections of that character are seen in Christ alone.

R. McC.

* * *

Habitual communion with God must be maintained or our public service will be formal and futile. If there be no melting of the glacier high in the ravines of the mountain, there will be no descending rivulets to cheer the plain.

* * *

There are allurements which cannot be forsaken except through the eye being filled with a fairer object, and the heart being occupied with a more satisfying portion. To resist fleshly allurements is good; but it is far better to be so occupied with Christ that the charmers shall charm in vain.

The Forum (Nov 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 11, Nov 1959.

Correspondence:

Dear brother Price,

I have been following with the keenest interest the series of articles appearing in “Food for the Flock” from time to time, and I am delighted at the high standard that has been set in the various articles and connected subjects that have been presented. My September copy has arrived this morning and the first article that I turned to was the one: “Why Sunday School?” You are to be commended for the manner in which you have presented your views on this aspect of Sunday School activity … Although, if I may say so, your paragraph on “Special Events,” such as Christmas, Easter, Mother’s and Father’s Days can be, and has been, very much abused …

I look forward with the earnest hope that the October issue, “The Sunday School Teacher and his Qualifications,” will contain that which will cause every Sunday School Superintendent to be exercised as to the suitability of many of the teachers under his charge. It is not enough to merely place a register in the hands of every Tom, Dick, and Harry, and to say with reckless abandon, “Here, get busy and take a class.” The idea of giving new converts “something to do” in the way of activity is being overdone, particularly when that person is given a class of boys or girls.

One is convinced after years of close observation that many of our Sunday School teachers need to be “taught”

themselves before they can ever attempt to teach our children God's wonderful plan of salvation…

I heard a teacher not so very long ago, when asking a substitute to replace her, say, "Just give them any old thing so long as you can keep them quiet." The emphasis appears to be on getting as big a crowd as possible, and then boast of the numbers. In other words, quantity at the expense of quality. This is a sad commentary to have to make, but it is a true one and not in the least exaggerated …

I hope the series of articles on the subject will have the desired effect…

Please be assured of my warmest appreciation of these articles.

Yours in Him,

G. M. D.

Dear Brother D.,

Many thanks for your letter of appreciation and encouragement. We will greatly value your continued fellowship in prayer that the Lord will use His Word to awaken His people as to the drastic deficiencies of our present Sunday School endeavours.

I agree with your remarks that "special events" such as Christmas programs can be abused; they are of value only if carried out in a godly manner consistent with Scripture and spirituality.

Once again, many thanks for writing. It is good to know that others of longer experience are similarly exercised about conditions presently common in assembly Sunday Schools.

Sincerely in the Lord,

W. P.

* * *

“Special events” such as are referred to in these articles are not indorsed by the author in any way, nor are their practices approved. Since these times are marked by the world, brother Price uses them as timely occasions for special service and for concerted effort in the furtherance of the gospel. —Ed.

The Forum (Dec 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 12, Dec 1959.

QUESTION: “Can you please explain the meaning of Isaiah 45:7 which says, “God creates evil”?

ANSWER: This Scripture does not suggest that God creates such evil as sin, but rather that He creates punishment of guilt which may be in the form of an evil calamity. The evil that God creates is the penalty which in justice He measures out against sin.

R. McC.

A further word might be added to this explanation in order to confirm from another viewpoint what has been already submitted.

The law of contrast so easily applied to Isaiah 54 provides an illustration which elucidates this problem. Israel had known days of light during which God’s presence in their midst dispelled the ignorance of moral darkness. Because of their departure from Him, days of darkness descended upon them, namely, their captivity in Babylon. They had enjoyed peace from His right hand, but now in judgment they were suffering evil.

Eventually through Cyrus this was to be reversed. Verse seven is a forceful assertion of the sovereignty of God over the affairs and circumstances of nations in their prosperity and in their calamity. Surely here we have a word of wisdom to the people of God in this distressing era of human history.

J. G.

QUESTION: “Would you have any word as to why the gift of tongues was given to the early Church?”

ANSWER: The gift of tongues may be considered, first, as a sign to the Jewish nation of her rejection because of failure to give the world the knowledge of the true God (See Isa. 28:11. 1 Cor. 14:21-22). It, likewise, may be seen from this sign that the Church is to learn the universality of her mission, her responsibility to evangelize the world with the true gospel. Until Pentecost the knowledge of the true God was almost entirely confined to a nation of one language.

The gift of tongues served notice on the Jewish nation that she had miserably failed in her mission and that the Church was now to carry out the divine intention, the giving of the gospel to the nations of the world in their respective languages.

Japhet now dwells in the tents of Shem, for their casting away has meant the reconciling of the world (Rom. 11:15). The grafts from the wild olive have displaced the natural branches, but let them not boast for God is able to displace anyone as a witness who neglects to discharge his debt by preaching the gospel to the world.

R. McC.

The Forum (Jun 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 6, Jun 1960.

Dear Editor

On Page 205 of the November 1959 issue of Food for the Flock, in the article “Divine Worship” by Nelson Brooks, we read, “A similar response to the gospel of Christ is necessary for salvation today.” Romans 10:9 is then quoted. I, too, believe that a response to the gospel of Christ is necessary for salvation. However (and this is an honest inquiry), would not you say that one would have to be born again to confess that Jesus is his Lord, and to believe in his heart that God raised Him from the dead?

Thank you for any help that you may be able to supply on this subject.

Sincerely in Christ,

H. A. H.

Dear Brother,

That Romans 10:9 is speaking of the simple yet divine means whereby a soul may be saved is proven by the context. It is placed in the centre of three chapters dealing with Israel. Romans 9 explains God’s sovereign dealings with Israel; Romans 10, God’s offer of salvation to Israel in the present; Romans 11, God’s faithfulness to Israel in the future.

The first verse of chapter 10 assumes that certain Israelites are not saved, for Paul prays that they might be saved. Verse 12 asserts that there is no difference in the way of salvation for a Jew than for a Gentile, as in

chapter 3:23 both were shown to be sinners, so here both may be saved in the same way.

The intervening verses describe what is required on the part of any sinner for salvation. The words of Moses in verse 5 sum up in one forceful word, “doeth,” the Jewish effort to attain a righteous standing before God. Verses 6-8 contrast with this the way of salvation that God has provided, it is by faith in a finished work. We do not have to scale the heights (ascend to heaven) or sound depths, for that would put honour upon human ability. Christ has done all this. The word of salvation has been brought very near and pressed upon us.

Then Romans 10:9 proves that the experience of salvation results from only two things, consent and confession, our consent to God and our confession to men. The consent without the confession is not enough, one without the other indicates unreality. These statements are confirmed by verse 10, “For with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Compare with this Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Let us now examine Romans 10:9 clause by clause. The first one, “If thou shalt confess.” Salvation is for the individual. Although the passage generally deals with the nation of Israel, the invitation of salvation is to the individual. The “if” in this verse indicates the attitude of the sinner to God’s terms. Romans 9 deals with God’s sovereignty in election, but Romans 10 with the sinner’s responsibility to accept God’s offer.

A second expression to examine reads in the Revised Version, “Confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord.” To confess Christ as Lord implies, first, the

acknowledgement of Christ's Deity. On earth Jesus was addressed as Lord often merely as a title of courtesy equivalent to sir (sometimes so translated), but now when used of the ascended One it implies Deity. "God hath made that same Jesus …Lord" (Acts 2:36). None can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3). It implies, second, subjection to His sovereign will. To many who were fully instructed in the facts of the gospel, the principle point in their conversion seems to have been the bowing to Christ as Lord. For example, in Paul's conversion his first words were, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and these were followed by, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Let us consider another important part of this verse "Believe in the heart that God hath raised Him from the dead." Observe that here there is no mention of death, but only of resurrection. Death does not of itself imply resurrection, but resurrection does of necessity involve death. Our faith is directed to the one great event that proved beyond doubt Christ's Deity and the perfection of His sacrificial work upon the cross. Belief in Christ is the simple condition required of the sinner for salvation (John 3:16). In Romans 10:9 belief is qualified by the phrase, "in the heart." How does a person believe savingly? Not with the head only, for the Scriptures unequivocally infer the action of the heart. Such action marks the difference between placing faith in a fact and committing oneself, body, soul, and spirit, for life and death, to another.

The Word of God makes mention of two kinds of faith: that which has not root, the act of the professor who for a while believes (Luke 8:13), and that which results in salvation (Hob. 10:39). For example, James 2:17 speaks

of dead faith and John 2:23 tells of many who believed on Jesus' name when they saw the miracles which He did. Of these we read, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men."

Contrast with this Peter's confession of true faith, "We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). The Ethiopian eunuch's conversion was tested by the question, "If thou believest with all thine heart."

The Forum (Aug 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 8, Aug 1960.

Dear Brother,

I would like to amplify the thoughts we have exchanged regarding the use of the expression “vicar of Christ” when referring to the Holy Spirit, bearing in mind that we must guard against any exposition or expression that would imply anything less than His oneness and equality with Jesus Christ. From the Encyclopedia Britannica I quote the following excerpts regarding the historical and technical use of the word “vicar.” VICAR. A title, more especially ecclesiastical, describing various officials acting in some special way FOR A SUPERIOR. Cicero used the word “vicarius” to describe an under-slave kept by another slave as part of his private property.

In the middle ages it remained a title of secular officials appointed by the emperor to judge cases in distant lands or to exercise authority in certain districts. It was also applied to representatives of a court administering justice in small towns and dealing with unimportant cases, levying taxes, etc. Monasteries often EMPLOYED a vicar to answer to their Feudal Lords in matters pertaining to certain holdings.

The title “Vicar of Jesus Christ” borne by popes was introduced during the 8th century.

All bishops were looked upon in some sort as vicars of the pope, but the title came especially to describe papal legates to whom in certain places the pope DELEGATED A PORTION of his authority. Pope Benedict XIV tells that

the popes often named “vicars-apostolic” for the government of a particular diocese when the episcopal see was vacant, or, being filled, the titular bishop could not fulfill his functions.

The Roman Catholic Church in England was governed by “vicars-apostolic” from 1685 to 1850 when Pius IX re-established the hierarchy.

It early became a custom for the prebendaries and canons of a cathedral to employ “priest-vicars” or “vicars-choral” as their SUBSTITUTES when it was their turn to sing High Mass and conduct services. The incumbent of a parish where the tithes are empropriate (in the hands of a layman for disbursement) is entitled vicar.

In the Anglican Church vicars-general are EMPLOYED by the Archbishop of Canterbury and some other bishops TO ASSIST in such matters as ecclesiastical visitation.

In the Roman Catholic Church bishops sometimes appoint lesser vicars to exercise a more limited authority over a limited district. They are entrusted with the surveillance of the parish priests and the other priests of their district, and with matters of discipline. They are charged with the care of sick priests and in case of death, with the celebration of their funerals and the care of their vacant parishes.

In canon law priests doing work in the place of parish priests are called vicars. Thus, in France the head priest in a parish church is assisted by several “vicaires”.

N.B. The emphasized words are mine.

In light of the above I judge that the title “vicar” does not ascribe to the Holy Spirit His, essential and absolute Deity.

Sincerely J. B.

The Forum (Sept 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 9, Sept 1960.

Dear Brother McC.:

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a question in regard to baptism on which I would like some comments. In the mid-week prayer meeting and Bible study in the assembly, we are going through Romans. For the past two weeks we have been in chapter six, and have discussed the baptism mentioned in verses three and four. It was stated that what Paul had in mind was water baptism. However, I fail to see water baptism in this section, and for two reasons: First, if water baptism is meant, then Paul's argument applies only to water-baptised believers. Second, if one teaches water baptism from this passage, then he must teach baptismal regeneration.

Please allow me to quote Kenneth Wuest. In his book, Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament for the English Reader, page 70, he states: "The word 'baptizo' refers to the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition. While the word, we found, had other uses, yet the one that predominated over the others was the above. Observe how perfectly this meaning is in accord with the usage of the word in Romans 6:3-4, where the believing sinner is baptized into vital union with Jesus Christ. The believing sinner is introduced or placed in Christ, thus coming into union with Him. By that action

he is taken out of his old environment and condition in which he had lived, the first Adam, and is placed into a new environment and condition, the Last Adam. By this action his condition is changed from that of a lost sinner with a totally depraved nature to that of a saint with a divine nature. His relationship to the law of God is changed from that of a guilty sinner to that of a justified saint. All this is accomplished by the act of the Holy Spirit introducing or placing him into vital union with Jesus Christ.

The translation should read, 'Do you not know that so many of us as were placed in Jesus Christ, were introduced into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by this aforementioned introduction into His death in order that just as Christ was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also may be able to order our behaviour in the energy of a new life imparted.'

A student in one of the writer's Greek classes who himself is a Greek, and learned to speak that language as his mother-tongue in the schools of Greece, stated during a class discussion that the Greek reader would react to the Greek text in Romans and the word 'baptizo' as has the writer."

Have you noticed, brother McC, that the Amplified New Testament reads, in Galatians 2:26-27, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ — into a spiritual union and communion with Christ —have put on (clothed yourselves with) Christ"? Mr. Wuest comments, "Having spoken of the Galatians in the previous verse (26) as 'in Christ', referring to that mystical and vital union which

exists between the Lord Jesus and the believer, Paul now reminds them of how they became united with Christ. When they put their faith in Him as Saviour, the Holy Spirit baptized (introduced or placed) them into vital union with Christ. The reference cannot be to water baptism, for that never put a believing sinner in Christ. The Greek word ‘baptizo’ means to put or place into.”

Please look now at Colossians 2:11-12. Again I quote the Amplified New Testament, “In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, but in a spiritual circumcision performed by Chrst by stripping off the body of the flesh (the whole corrupt, carnal nature with its passions and lusts). Thus you were circumcized when you were buried with Him in your baptism, in which you were also raised with Him to a new life through your faith in the working of God as displayed when He raised Him up from the dead.” Mr. Wuest also says of this passage, “The believing sinner’s identification with Christ in His death, broke the power of indwelling sin. His identification with Him in His resurrection, resulted in the impartation of the divine nature. The baptism is effected by the Holy Spirit.”

It appears, therefore, that if the baptism of Colossians 2:12 is water baptism, then only water-baptized believers have received the spiritual circumcision of verse 11. If the baptism of Galatians 3:27 is water baptism, then it is inconsistent for watertized believers are in Christ, as stated in verse 26. Furthermore, if the baptism of Romans 6:2-3 is water baptism, then it is inconsistant for water-baptized believers only to continue in sin that grace may abound.

Yours in Christ by grace alone,

C.R.G.

* * *

Dear Brother C.,

Many thanks for your letter. I have read it carefully, and appreciate your intelligent approach to a difficult subject.

I agree with most of what you say, however, I feel you have not anticipated the probability that both Spirit and water baptism are included in the Scriptures you quote. The one is the visible and outward symbol of the invisible and inward work of the Divine Spirit,

Let me try and make a threefold comparison between the baptism of the Spirit and water baptism. The baptism of the Spirit has three great effects: First, it is into Christ (Gal. 3:27. Col. 2:12), that is, into vital union with Christ. Second, it is into His death (Rom. 6:3), that is, into all the efficacy of the atonement, the security of an accomplished redemption. Third, it is into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), that is, into organic union with all saints.

The baptism of the Spirit, consequently, initiates all believers into an identification with Christ, His work, and with one another. This is the one true baptism of Ephesians 4:5, although the external ordinance may be included in the one baptism as a symbol of that which is real and internal.

Since water baptism is a picture of the baptism of the Spirit, it has a threefold significance: First, it is the symbol of our initiation into Christ, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” The Christian in his baptism is seen rising out of death to walk in newness of

life. Second, it is the sign of our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. In our baptism we manifest that we have died with Christ to sin, and the world; the “old man” has been crucified with Christ. It is also the sign that with Christ, we have been raised out of death. The “new man” is identified with Christ on resurrection ground.

Third, it is a public renunciation of the old life that was lived in Adam. The act of renunciation in our baptism is in keeping with the fact that a spiritual circumcision has already taken place in the heart by the power of the Spirit of God.

Sincerely in Christ,

R. McC.

The Forum (Dec 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 12, Dec 1960.

Question:

What is the significance of the title “The Word” as it is applied to Christ in John 1:1?

Answer:

This title is peculiar to the writings of the Apostle John among which it occurs three times: John 1:1. I John 1:1. Revelation 19:13. In these references Christ is revealed as “The Faithful Witness” in the Gospel of John, “The First Begotten from the Dead” in his Epistle, and as “The Prince of the Kings of the Earth” in the Book of the Revelation. These appear related to Him as prophet, priest, and king. John calls the Lord Jesus “The Word” in his Gospel, “The Word of Life” in his Epistle, and “The Word of God” in the Book of the Revelation.

A word is the expression of a thought. The Eternal Word, Christ, was ever manifest before God, He was in the bosom of the Father. Through His incarnation He became visible to men as essentially manifesting God to them. He was in the world specifically to declare the Father. As the Incarnate Word, Christ revealed God in all the perfections of His nature and character as life, light, and love. When Philip said, “Show us the Father and it sufficeth us,” the Lord Jesus replied,

“He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.”

The saintly Canon Lidden said,” The term Logos, the Word, denotes at the very least something intimately and everlastingly present with God, something as

internal to the Being of God as thought is to the soul of man. In truth the Divine Logos (that is, the Divine Word) is God reflected in His own eternal thought. In the Logos God is His own object. This infinite thought, the reflection and counterpart of God, subsisting in God as a Being or hypostasis, and having a tendency to self-communication, such in the Logos. The Logos in the thought of God …subsisting with the intensity of a personal form. The expression suggests to our minds the further idea of communicativeness. The Logos is speech as weir as thought."

The Lord Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to tell us that God loved us. That life, light, and love can all be communicated to us in a new creation: love from the heart of the Father, life through the death of the Son, and light by the operation of the Holy Spirit (John 3:13-19).

"In Jesus Christ God is revealed unto us as a just God and a Saviour, as mighty and merciful, as faithful and forgiving, as infinitely holy and gracious and full of compassion. Such a revelation is attractive; it is fitted to melt the heart into penitence, to awaken its confidence in Him, and to draw it to Him in the fellowship of life and light" (W. Jones).

R. MCc.

* * *

Some, in the attempt to differentiate between the baptism of the Spirit and water baptism, aver that the baptism of the Spirit is a baptism into life, whereas the baptism in water is a baptism into death. This is most unsatisfactory reasoning, and does not bear the light of full investigation. The word "baptizo" not only means

immersion but also emersion. The real concept expressed by the Greek word is found in the English infinitive “to dip.” The final act of baptism, that of emersion in either of these forms, the baptism of the Spirit or baptism in water, must therefore be into life. — Ed.

The Forum (Jan 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 1, Jan 1961.

Dear Brother G.

I have been waiting for some one better qualified than I to challenge C.R.G.'s interpretation of Romans chapter six which appeared in the September issue.

Let us consider his reasons for questioning what has been, so long, taught in the assemblies of God's people, and firmly held by such outstanding Bible teachers as Vine, Hogg, Hoste, and Rodgers. Our brother gives two reasons for this: first, "If water baptism is meant, then Paul's argument applies only to water-baptized believers"; second, "If one teaches water baptism from this passage, then he must teach baptismal regeneration."

If our brother is suggesting that the argument for or against continuing in sin applies only to water-baptized believers because they are introduced at this point, then he must, to be consistent, argue that the truth expounded in the Epistle to the Romans applies only to the Romans since it is addressed to "All that be in Rome." I am sure that he does not believe that. "All Scripture … is profitable …" (2 Tim. 3:16). It is just such faulty reasoning that has led many sincere Christians down the pathway of error. You will recall the assertion, "Matthew is for the Jew," which was used in the early years of this century to reject the divine formula which Christ attached to this ordinance, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

His second objection is not only fallacious but inculpatory. The four men already mentioned believed that Romans chapter six taught water baptism, yet were adamant in their rejection of baptismal regeneration(See, The Sacraments, C. F. Hogg, pp. 21-26). Having, as you will remember, some personal acquaintance with this problem, I know that the origin of this teaching does not rise from taking Romans six to be water baptism, but from the spiritual benefits of baptism by the Spirit. Note the words of the priest on the completion of the ritual, “Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the Body of Christ’s Church …” How could anyone conceivably get this from Romans six? Baptism by the Spirit is “into one Body” (1 Cor. 12:13), not “into His death” as here.

The rest of our brother’s argument is taken up with an interpretation of the word “baptizo”. Mr. Hoste warns of the danger of building according to our own views of the Greek text. The writer makes no pretence of being a scholar of New Testament Greek, but numbers among his friends and associates those who are. One a Ph.D. in Greek who has spent two years in Greece studying the language has never come across the meaning given by Mr. Wuest. Says she, “It is a very free interpretation which leaves itself open to question when you consider the root meaning of the word, to dip.” Liddell and Scott (the Oxford of Greek) gives no meaning akin to the one employed by brother Wuest. Had such a meaning been given by scholars of the past, these men or their successors would have taken cognizance of it. In any event, where this doubt exists, it is extremely dangerous to build a doctrine upon this interpretation.

Sincerely in Christ,

J.S.R.

The Forum (Feb 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 2, Feb 1961.

Dear Brother:

I have admired the helpful manner in which Mr. Price has written in regard to Sunday School work.

My class has adopted a number of the suggestions he has given in his many articles.

All in all his writings on work among children have been a help and blessing to me, and that is probably why his article in the January issue has so disturbed my thinking. It made me feel as if he had taken the feet from under me.

Have we no scriptural authority for work among children? Are Sunday School efforts all wrong?

Please give me some help with these questions.

Yours by grace,

McM.

Dear Sister M.:

We were encouraged to receive your recent letter and to learn that some of the articles on children's work have been helpful. At the same time, we are sorry if your thinking has been unduly disturbed by our January article; it was not our intention to "take the feet from under you."

The article was, of course, designed to provoke thinking about our children's efforts. But it is hoped that the

follow-up article in this issue will help to allay some of your fears about our authority for doing children's work.

Sunday school efforts are certainly not "all wrong". We have ample authority for such work in the words of our Lord Himself: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), and that includes children. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). Perhaps it would also help if you were to re-read the article entitled "Why Sunday Schools?", Food for the Flock, September 1959, page 173.

We wish you the Lord's richest blessing in your endeavours to win young hearts and lives for the Master, and we would be delighted to be of assistance in any way possible, should you ever wish to call on us again.

Very sincerely,

W. P.

The Forum (Mar 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 3, Mar 1961.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Church Excommunication

Dear Brother:

Recently an exercised brother in one of our assemblies asked me to send you the problem which I am quoting. His desire is that it might be placed in The Forum, with a view to airing a difficulty which has caused distress among the assemblies of God's people, even to the point of friction. Here is his problem, as he has written it:

Problem

"At a conference meeting one of the speakers made the following statements, "Nowhere in the New Testament do we read of the excommunication of local churches. Excommunication is for the individual." That may not be a verbatum quotation, but it is the essence of the speaker's remark.

"Visiting a home lately, one brother, while discussing the receiving of Christians into assembly fellowship, stated of a particular assembly, "We are not in fellowship with that assembly."

"Perhaps some mature brother can provide the answer to the vast and disturbing discrepancy between these two statements: one made by an able minister of the

Word and the other by an elder whose felowship the writer has often enjoyed.

“It should be unnecessary to state that “Opinions” would be of little value. The answer must be based on sound scriptural exegesis.

JBN.

Suggested Solution

I would not be presumptuous enough to assume the role of the mature brother who could provide the answer by means of a sound scriptural exegesis.

However, in reading the problem, I was reminded of a very informative and instructive article on the subject of “Excommunication,” written by W. Fisher Hunter and appearing in “Truth and Tidings,” March 1949 issue, page 165. Here is a verbatum quotation of the paragraph on this particular phase, under the heading, “The Sphere of Its Exercise.”

“The words, “Put away from among yourselves” in 1 Corinthians 5:13, shows the bounds of the use of this authority by the local assembly. Its use is limited and applicable only to those of its number, that is, by those who have been received by each given assembly into full fellowship. One assembly cannot rightly cut off nor excommunicate another assembly, because the assemblies of God as constituted by Him are neither of nor in anything from which they could be cut off or put away. They are not congregations united to each other by an organizational tie and forming a religious body with a title, such as ‘The Brethren,’ ‘Plymouth Brethren,’ ‘Open Brethren,’ etc. On the contrary, all are detached and self-governing bodies (1 Cor. 12:27). Each is alone

responsible to the Lord for its practices and condition. Christ's letters to the Seven Churches in Asia (Revelation chapters 2 and 3) are the scriptural grounds for the above assertions. He blames and charges several of these churches with specific failures, but He holds none of them accountable for, not to, the others. Nor are they told to correct or judge each other."

The article quoted above, agrees with the statement which was made by the conference speaker. Is a "sound scriptural exegesis" required to confirm the evident fact thus revealed, that there is no Scripture that teaches the excommunication of assemblies?

It is apparent that the churches of Galatia were in fellowship with each other to some extent, because the Epistle was addressed to them as such. None of them was excommunicated even though doctrinal error was among them.

Also, in the latter part of the Colossians Epistle reference is made to fellowship and association with the church of the Laodiceans and also the church in the house of Nymphas; yet the Colossian assembly was not perfect, else why the corrective teaching given in the Epistle?

Finally, the Lord Himself directs His message as to the Seven Churches of Asia, recognizing them as such despite the lack of love, and the moral and doctrinal evils which some of them manifested and even condoned.

In view of the scriptural examples and teaching on the subject, one would wonder if perhaps the elder brother, and his assembly, were in error in denying fellowship to the saints of the other assembly.

I, too, would like to see this subject discussed by the readers of Food for the Flock, through the space allotted in “The Forum.”

Yours in Him.

ES.

The Forum (Apr 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 4, Apr 1961.

The following letter, dated October 18, 1929, was written by one of the ablest Bible teachers among the assemblies on this continent at that time. It was sent to a very capable evangelist. The gracious rebuke of the senior servant of Christ, and his weighty words of wisdom merit serious consideration. In them some may find help who have enquired as to the scriptural correctness or incorrectness of an instrument in the hall.

Musical Instruments

Dear Brother

Last night Mr. S — showed me your letter advising him of your desire to come amongst us for a few meetings. At the outset, let me say that I shall be glad to see you, and both my wife and myself join in the heartiest way in inviting you to the hospitality of our home while you are here.

But I am writing you now to let you know how disappointed I was to read the condition you proposed to the assembly as indispensable to your ministering among us. You put yourself in the position of demanding from them that they show you grace in setting aside their practice as to music, and I cannot but feel that it would be much more in keeping with your place as a servant of Christ, that you should offer to show grace to them and set aside your prejudice in the matter. It is not a vital matter or one that touches any foundation, and I am sure the Word is full of the demand on us for grace

and forbearance in things of that kind The instrument is only used in the S. S. and Gospel meeting and hardly ever in any other meeting. No one here would complain of your not using the piano or organ in meetings you are in charge of, but here it is a matter of the assembly using it for which you are in no way responsible.

But I am going to say more to you about it. Let me ask you, on what passage of the Word do you base your opposition to the use of the musical instrument in our services? You say in your letter that you wish only congregational singing. May I ask you to tell me exactly where you find that in the Word of God? As a matter of fact, where is the Scripture for many things that are done in our meetings as to this? It has been always a trial to me to see what is done; namely, hymn books passed around to all and sundry and an invitation given to every one to join in singing, and then possibly a sermon delivered afterwards, part of which is directed at the practice of singing lies to God. It has become an established habit, but let me ask you, is it a Scriptural one? As a matter of fact, the Word is strangely silent as to those things, and we are remarkably inconsistent about them. We demand a “Thus saith the Lord” for all that we do, but again let me ask for ministry to saints. You pursue the conventional form, by beginning with a hymn or hymns and prayer, but let me ask you again, where is this form laid down in the Word either by precept or example? I take the Book of Acts, the history of the early days of Gospel preaching and the founding of the Church of God, and beginning with Pentecost, can you imagine hymn singing or prayer connected with that wonderful appeal made to Israel? The thought is grotesque, and, yet, if you follow the story right through,

is there any suggestion of music, vocal or instrumental, solo or congregational, in connection with any of the ministry or of the Gospel? Did Peter, when he formally opened the door of the faith to the Gentiles in Acts 10, begin with a hymn or even a prayer on that memorable occasion? As a matter of fact, the only occasion we find in the Book of the Acts where there was singing was when the two men of God, Paul and Silas, were shut up in prison in the city of Phillipi.

When we turn to the epistles we find just as little evidence of instruction as to how to conduct Gospel meetings or meetings for believers as in the examples of Acts. Why then, should there be such a lack of forbearance with each other as to methods of preaching the Gospel or ministering to saints? What is your preference for congregational singing based on, when it is a question of scripture? I have known men who rang a bell up and down the streets of a town to gather in the people to hear the Gospel. Where is the Scripture for that? But who would take exception to it? The fact of the matter is, that while we have in a general way the command to preach the Gospel and to edify one another, the methods to be used in such meetings are not prescribed at all. In the Old Testament, where a nation was called out to be a testimony for God, every detail as to when and where and how was most carefully regulated when it came to the service of God. This dispensation is so wholly different in character that one can easily understand the lack of this exact rule or set of rules for service. As to the place of the Lord Himself, “Neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem” and as to the manner His words are, “In Spirit and in truth.”

There is more to be said on this question. It was right in Old Testament times to use all kinds of musical instruments. I suppose no one will contest that. Now the use of them in the service of God cannot be condemned as a wrong thing in itself because they were used by the authority of God in those past days. If there is any wrong in the use of them now, surely there would be some definite passage that would tell us it is. We find in Hebrews and other portions of the New Testament a distinct setting aside of many things belonging to the old economy, such as sacrifice and the priesthood, and ceremonies of various kinds, but no mention is made of the musical instruments. Surely this is significant. And what has always puzzled me in the case of those who opposed the use of an instrument to help us sing in the hall is the fact that they did not hesitate to use it in their homes in the praise of God. How can it be wrong in one place and right in another? I am quite fully aware of the sophistries used to make the distinction a justifiable one, I call them sophistries without compunction, for it is the praise of God in the one place and the praise of God in the other for which they are used as a help, and this dispensation refuses the thought of one place as more holy than another and I believe you do, too. I have sung with you in your own home while your wife played the piano to help us, and it was songs of praise to God we were singing. Why should this be right there and wrong in the hall is something beyond the power of my mind to fathom. I am sure that you do not pretend that when we are gathered for a Gospel meeting we are in the capacity of the Church of God, at least this has always been taught. We are simply met in a convenient place to preach the Gospel, that is all.

This letter is longer than I meant it should be when I started, but there is one point more I would call your attention to. We read in the Word of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. What is a psalm as distinguished from a hymn? Or from a spiritual song? Ask a Greek scholar and he will tell you that a psalm is a hymn or song sung with the accompaniment of an instrument. Or look up a Greek dictionary as to this or take any method you like to verify it. I have taken the utmost pains to inquire of those who are experts in the knowledge of the language, and without one dissenting voice, they all tell the same story. I do not press this except to point out that it is unseemly for any one to speak and write as if those using musical instruments are simply acting in defiance of the Word of God. I resent it myself as a very baseless accusation. I do not use this point much because it calls for more knowledge than many possess, that is, a little knowledge of Greek, but when men press their views as of authority I think they ought to be well enough taught to know that sometimes our translations can be amended to profit in the ways of clearness. As a general thing, I find it is enough to simply ask, was a Jew accustomed to the use of musical instruments in the service of God? The reply, of course, must be in the affirmative. Well, then, where are they forbidden to use them? The rites and ceremonies and sacrifices of Judaism are entirely ruled out in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and why no reference to this phase of their worship if it was to be abolished?

We read in 1 Corinthians 14:26, “How is it, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you bath a psalm.” What does this mean? Does it mean that a brother called on the assembly to turn to hymn 239 or 258 in the hymn

book they all had? Of course not, for hymn books were utterly unknown in those days. It simply means that, in those primitive days, one of the saints composed a psalm and sang it on behalf of the whole church as his contribution to the worship of the saints. It was an individual matter just as the rest of the verse tells us that others had a doctrine, or a tongue, and so on. Many seem to think that the saints came to meetings in those days with their Bibles and hymn books under their arms. I am sure you know better.

The letter closes with personal salutations.

The Forum (May 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 5, May 1961.

Dear Brother G.

In regard to music, may I call attention to a practice in which many evangelical circles engage, especially in radio studios when religious services are being broadcast. I refer to the practice of playing soft organ or piano music while the speaker is reading the Holy Scriptures or while he is engaging audibly in prayer. If there is a time for quietness and reverence, it is at such a moment. Those who, perhaps unconsciously, indulge in this practice would be the first to denounce irreverence, but is not this practice irreverent?

Supposing one were on special business, and were permitted an audience with the Queen, could anyone imagine the soft playing of an instrument during the conversation? Why then, this distracting innovation when men are speaking to a Holy God?

One would like to see this objectionable, irreverent, distracting, and useless practice discontinued. One would ask that God our Father be addressed, His Sacred Word read, and His message be proclaimed without the interruption of music.

While this background of music has not come into our assemblies to any extent, the thin edge of the wedge is visible. Occasionally, in some assemblies, immediately the number of a hymn is announced the piano or the organ is played very softly and continues during the reading of a verse or two. Consequently, the reading of the verses is not heard plainly, and this is especially true

in those cases that are dull of hearing. The confusion of two different things going on at the same time is, to say the least, distracting for neither the one nor the other is enjoyed.

Sometimes announcements are made, and solos are rendered, and congregational singing exercised while the offering is being taken. What unnecessary distraction, diverting the mind from that act of true worship! “To do good and to communicate forget not: for with which such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:6).

In some meetings the piano or organ is played with gusto before and after a solemn Gospel service with the result, the impact of the message is repelled. We might well ask ourselves, why all this hurry, noise, and distraction?

Let us beware of what these things might lead to, and firmly, but in grace and love, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

Let us, even in the matter of singing and playing of the instrument, do all things reverently and to the glory of God.

Sincerely in Christ,

F.D.

* * *

“Gospel Hymnody has been a plough digging up the hardened surfaces of pavemented minds. Its very obviousness has been its strength. Where delicacy or dignity can make no impress, Gospel hymnody stands up triumphing.”

The Forum (June 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 6, June 1961.

Dear Brother E.S.

Your attempt to help with the problem of church fellowship is valued, but your reply to B.N. appearing in the Forum of Food for the Flock, March issue, gives the impression that each assembly is a separate unit, that each is completely autonomous. Can this inference be substantiated by Scripture?

From Church history we know that there were other churches in Asia Minor. See, for example, Colossians 4:13. Would the fact that the Lord chose out these seven assemblies from among the rest prove that He did have a circle of fellowship nearer to Himself than that formed by the others which He omitted, purposely no doubt, from the picture in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, to which you referred?

Is there not a point here that would lend support to the discrimination made by some when they speak of “our assemblies” and “other meetings”? Furthermore, would not a decision made by any one in that limited circle of assemblies toward those other gatherings excluded from the seven not be binding upon all?

The problem stated by B.N. confronts many of God’s people; he is not the only one confused. A number of us have discussed it, and we look to you for further guidance.

Yours in Christ,

J.A.S.

Dear Brother G.

In reply to the letter from J.A.S., received in response to the March issue of Food for the Flock, the reference to the seven churches in Asia, in Revelation 2 and 3, would support the argument that each assembly is in itself a distinct unit.

They are described as seven lamp-stands, not seven branches attached to one common base. This is in contrast to the golden candlestick of the tabernacle, with its three branches coming out of each side. Each church in Asia stood on its own foundation and was wholly responsible to the Risen Head.

It would be difficult to classify them in any way, apart from their association with Christ, because of such evident differences between them. For example, Pergamos held doctrine which was hated by Ephesus; Thyatira permitted a false prophetess to teach, while Ephesus had tried the false prophets and found them liars; Smyrna was marked by poverty and affliction, while Laodicea boasted of being rich and in need of nothing.

One would hesitate to agree that these seven churches were nearer or dearer to the Lord than others. His denunciation was so stern, as He threatened to remove the lampstand of one, while He depicted Himself as outside another.

The only apparent circle joining these seven is a geographic one, formed by drawing a line between each locality. My map shows that such a line would not include in its regular circumference any church apart from the seven mentioned. This would hardly be

comparable to the “circles of fellowship” of which some Christians now speak.

Nor would we be justified in assuming that these seven churches were specially favored of the Lord, and so received a special message from Him. Paul wrote seven church epistles, but not because they were the only groups with which he had fellowship. The Inspired Word contains no epistle to Jerusalem, the church that received Saul as a young convert and to which he later returned. Nor is there an epistle to Antioch, even though the saints from that assembly commended him to the work of the Lord. The seven church Epistles of Paul were written because the Holy Spirit wished to send through Paul doctrinal or corrective ministry which these believers needed.

Similarly, the Lord had a definite and urgent message to meet the apparent need of each of the seven Asian churches. Paul had written, “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2 Tim. 1:15). Quite likely they would not have welcomed his ministry, whether oral or written. This may be the reason that the Lord spoke to them through the pen of the aged and beloved John.

Each of the seven churches was sent a personal and distinctive message, not an all-inclusive epistle to be jointly shared; compare 1 Peter 1:1. Nor are any of these seven assemblies held accountable for the deeds or doctrines of any other. Each church is a distinctive unit, responsible to Christ, the declared Head.

One would not, however, wish to give the impression that assemblies are to remain isolated from one another. There will be a drawing toward others of like precious faith because of the common love for Christ and a

kindred recognition of His lordship. There is evidence of mutual commendation and reception of members (Acts 11:22, Roan. 16:1, 2 Cor. 16:19).

We also have the example of two churches discussing problems that were affecting fellowship between them, as seen in Acts 15. This, however, does not alter the principle that each church is responsible to Christ,

Yours in Him,

E. S.

The Forum (July 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 7, July 1961.

Baptism" In Romans 6

Dear Brother G.

Any attempt to answer the vexed and much debated question as to whether the baptism mentioned in Romans six is that of water or of the Holy Spirit must be governed by the safe and excellent rule, the meaning of the text must be determined by its immediate context. When Romans six is read in that light, it produces the irresistible impression that water baptism is the subject the writer had in mind. At least, that is how the average reader of the plain English of the Authorized Version would understand it.

The setting of the chapter is something like this: the blood (chapter three), the water (chapter six), the Holy Spirit (chapter eight). John reminds us that these three agree in one (1 John 5:8). There is just one passing and incidental reference to the Holy Spirit in chapter five. To introduce the Holy Spirit into chapter six would appear to do violence to the teaching of the Apostle in this part of his letter. The letter to the Romans has been called the most profound book in the history of the world. Its teaching is more progressive and logical than usual. Paul builds up his teaching step by step with a forceful logic.

There are two aspects of the death of Christ in Romans five and six which merit close consideration: the judicial (chapter five), Christ died for the ungodly, for sinners. Because that is so, the believing sinner is justified, made

righteous. The second aspect, the experimental, appears in chapter six, the believer died with Christ when He died, thus the believer is free. The link with Christ is formed by His dying for us, and by our dying with Him. The one is just as true as is the other. Unfortunately, many Christians, perhaps the majority, fail to realize it.

The expression, “We died” in the Revised Version is preferable to the expression, “We are dead” as found in the King James Version. The one states a fact, the other the result of that fact. We are dead because we have died. It is just as simple as that. A dead person should, must be, buried. That is where water baptism comes into the picture. Water baptism by immersion does not of itself make us more dead than we are, but it is the symbol of something that has already taken place in the purpose and reckoning of God. This is something that is true doctrinally, and that ought to be true in a practical way of every child of God. It is a proof that we accept the judgment of God on our sin, our old nature, ourselves.

Baptism in water by immersion is the only possible way in which this precious truth can be set forth. “In the water,” death; “under the water,” burial; “out of the water,” resurrection. The original word, “baptizo” meant to immerse, but it also carried with it the idea of emersion. The word also means “to dip.” Anything dipped into water, or any other liquid, is not left there, it is taken out again. This will help us in trying to answer the question, “Is the 6th. of Romans the same in its teaching as 1 Corinthians 12:13?” The answer definitely must be “NO.” That answer rests upon the following grounds: there is no reference in 1 Corinthians 12:13 to, or even a hint of death, burial, and resurrection in the

immediate context. The baptism of the Spirit is connected with the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It is union with Christ, not as He was on the cross, in the grave, or even in resurrection; it is union with Him as ascended into Heaven and as set down on the right hand of God.

Returning to the idea of dipping, let this be said, a person may be dipped in water by another person and taken out again, but only Christ can baptize in the Holy Spirit, and when He does so, He does not take the baptized person out again.

The experience of the Israelites who were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” is a good illustration of the difference between the two baptisms which we are discussing. The cloud would suggest the baptism of the Spirit; and the sea, the baptism in water. The Israelites did not go into the cloud, pass through it, and pass out of it. In fact, Scripture carefully guards against such a suggestion by saying, “They passed under the cloud.” On the other hand they entered into the sea, passed through it figuratively, and passed out again.

It is just as difficult to make those two baptisms of the Israelites one and the same thing as it is to make Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 one and the same thing.

Agreeing with this, it may be said, we do not find what is called Ephesian-truth, which is a development of I Corinthians 12:13, in Romans chapter 6. A comparison of Paul’s teaching on the subject of baptism as it is found in his letters will save us from confused thinking.

In Romans six it is death, burial and resurrection with Christ, with the emphasis placed upon death. Death is

the basis of the teaching there, the other matters follow as a natural result. In Colossians the emphasis is on the resurrection (chapters 2:12; 3:1). In Ephesians the believer is viewed as having been raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies. The truth of the one Body is strongly emphasized in Ephesians, and as that is connected with the baptism in the Spirit as in 1 Corinthians 12:13, it is called “the unity of the Spirit.” In that connection there is one baptism. It is baptism viewed objectively and not subjectively. The incidental reference to baptism in Galatians 3:27 is along the same lines. Those who were baptized had “put on Christ” in whom national distinctions were removed: social barriers were broken, sexual differences forgotten, and all were one in Christ. It should not be very difficult to see the connection between this and 1 Corinthians 12:13. It also should be easy to see the difference between this and Romans chapter six.

Sincerely in the Lord,

H. K. D.

The Forum (Aug 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 8, Aug 1961.

Dear Brother G.:

I would like to make some comments on the matter before the “Forum” regarding the excommunication of churches.

It has often been pointed out that the One Body is composed of members and not churches. If we can conceive the Church in its original state, before any division at all, we could speak of inter-assembly fellowship, thus corporately expressing the idea of unity. There would not be the question then of which company of believers can we recognize.

But such is not the state of Christendom about us now; hence the individual responsibility regarding one’s association. The early brethren, in appreciation of truth newly apprehended, could not remain in the systems of their day. Did they then organize something of a corporate character to further confuse Christendom, or did they meet as fellow believers, walking in the light of truth concerning the Church without assuming a corporate entity?

The early brethren withdrew from the systems because of individual exercise. The same responsibility remains for the individual today. It is not then a matter of cutting off companies, which savors of authority that is not ours, (Thyatira et al have not yet been judged by the Lord), but the individual responsibility to “seek those calling on the Lord out of a pure heart”, without assuming corporate status. Brethren used to decry the name of

“Plymouth Brethren” as being sectarian; now we speak of ourselves as “The Assemblies.” Is this justifiable? Is it not likewise sectarian? Is not the acknowledgement of various companies of believers then in the present state of Christendom but one of convenience in directing saints as they move about, to those of like mind? It is not then an official circle of churches.

Mr. Hunter’s remark, “The assemblies of God, as constituted by Him,” seems to me ambiguous; for if they were that, the question of cutting them off would not arise. Then too, in the present confusion of Christendom, we would be judging companies as being thus constituted or not, and my choice of such might not agree with yours.

To me then, it is a matter of withdrawing because of one’s responsibility in regard to his association, and not cutting off, which requires authority.

Trust there is a generous response to this question. Will be looking forward to them, D.V.

Affectionately,

K. S.

The Forum (Sept 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 9, Sept 1961.

Bear Brother G.,

In regard to the article in the Forum of the March issue of Food for the Flock, I have been thinking that the attitude of certain assemblies in excommunicating other assemblies from their circle of fellowship is so unlike the attitude of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah in the Remnant History of Judah. Those men linked themselves with the remnant in confession and self-judgment to God. It occured to me that you might want to use parts of the enclosed study on the church of Laodicea as compared with the Remnant Testimony of Israel in its final development as recorded in Malachi.

This is not all original with me; I have received help from several writers on the subject.

Sincerely in Christ,

W.R.S.

Let us review briefly some of the things that are recorded in the series of letters to the seven churches of Asia as found in Revelation chapters two and three.

In the first place, the history of the Church in its original condition is portrayed in the first four letters: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos and Thyatira.

In this picture we see the gradual departure from God that ended in the subjection to a system described under the symbol of a notorious woman of the Old Testament; namely, Jezebel.

In the letter to Thyatira, a remnant is marked off, the history of which appears in the last three letters: Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Will this remnant in the closing days of the history of the Church, profiting by all the lessons of the past, prove more faithful to the testimony committed to her than the Church in former generations? What should we look for?

It will be remembered that more than once have we turned back to the Old Testament for illustrations of New Testament truths.

There was a remnant brought back from Babylon to Jerusalem. The history of that remnant is given us in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. What an opportunity that remnant had through the kindness of the king of Persia to profit by all the lessons of the past! No doubt they did profit somewhat by them, and by the discipline in their exile. But to what extent did they learn the intended lessons? Only in one particular: they never returned to idolatry after their exile. They, outwardly at least, maintained their allegiance to Jehovah, the God of Israel. Among other things God delivered Israel His people into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar as a punishment for their persistent idolatry.

Let us recall the three prophetic books which belong to this particular period: Haggia, Zechariah and Malachi. These tell the condition of the people as time went on, and should be studied by any who would learn the ways of the Lord, especially in regard to His testimony as it is entrusted to man.

The first two of these books are full of encouragement for this remnant, but the last one, written quite a

number of years later, is an expression of God's displeasure with their condition.

In Revelation we have in the letter to Laodicea a picture of the last stage of the history of the remnant of those who were delivered from Rome. It might be well to compare the Book of Malachi with this brief letter to Laodicea.

One outstanding feature of the prophecy of Malachi is the repetition of the expression "ye say." Indeed the entire book seems to be a reply to arguments and complaints made by the people of God when the Lord called their attention to their delinquencies. Notice how all this is repeated in the letter to the Laodiceans: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." How strikingly like the Book of Malachi! The same want of heart for the Lord. The Laodiceans were self-satisfied, and the Lord was vainly knocking for admission among them. Apparently they did not miss Him and were quite content without Him.

It is idle to think because we maintain the form the truth in Philadelphia gave to the activities among the saints, that we are entitled to claim the Lord's approval of our state.

Not for a moment would we speak slightingly of the Lord's ordinances such as baptism and the breaking of the bread, but if these become merely forms without any

exercise of heart that the Lord should have His place in our affections, then they are of little value to Him.

If the knowledge of the truth that has been recovered in the last century and a half leads only to self-satisfaction with a supercilious attitude towards those who do not know as much as we think we know, then Laodicea in principle has come upon us.

When the people of Israel were in Babylon, Daniel bowed before the Lord in prayer for restoration. In his prayer (Dan. 9) there was a complete confession of the sin that had led to their captivity. This prayer was answered when God moved on the heart of the king of Persia to let Israel go back to Palestine to build the House of God.

Years later when Ezra reached Jerusalem and found that things were going badly, he immediately cast himself down before the Lord in confession and self-judgment. Not only so, but his example was followed by many.

At a still later date, we are told about Nehemiah who became an outstanding figure after Ezra's time. We are told that when he heard of the sad state of the remnant in Jerusalem, he fell down before God in the same self-judgment and confession, saying, "We have sinned against Thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandest Thy servant Moses" (Neh. 1:6-7).

This was the spirit that God approved. He, therefore, sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem to help the feeble few who were there. As long as this spirit prevailed among the people, God could find delight in them. Alas, this spirit

soon departed from them and in its place pride, independence, and even insolence toward God arose! This development is readily seen throughout Malachi. One has only to read the book to see the terrible lack of confession and self-judgment.

Take for instance one passage: “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” (Mal. 3:6-7).

What a contrast to the time of Nehemiah when they wept as they listened to the Word of God.

Shall we carry the analogy between Israel and the Church to its end? Why not?

When the saints of God at the beginning of the last century began meeting in the Name of the Lord alone, there was with them the deepest consciousness of the failures of the Church in its testimony. One has only to read the writings of those days to see this.

There was no cutting themselves off from its past history as if it were no concern of theirs. There was no cutting themselves off from other such assemblies gathered in the Lord’s Name. They acknowledged their sin and departure before God. Confession accompanied their prayer to God for recovery. It was this condition to which the Lord responded with such an abundance of grace as to overwhelm them with the treasures of His Word.

Alas! Alas! When the spirit of confession and self-judgment was replaced with that of pride over the possession of so much truth, surely Laodicea had begun.

Intellectual knowledge of truth took the place of communion with the Lord and an experiential learning of the Word from Him. The truth of God really apprehended would ever lead to more humility, more real confession over the sad state of the Church, scattered, divided, and torn.

The threat by the Lord to spue this church out of His mouth is unconditional; it is the end of His patience. Throughout the entire series of the seven letters the Church is in public testimony, and in this she has been a failure. Her close is one more witness to the untrustworthiness of man.

The Forum (Nov 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 11, Nov 1961.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Churches

With a desire to comment on questions raised by K. S. in the August “Forum,” while also dealing with other matters of practical interest, our Brother Schwartz has submitted the following article.

Much has been written on this subject, anything written now must be largely repetition. However, a few remarks on the subject are in order and, we sincerely trust, will be helpful.

The subject begins naturally with the first occurrences of the word “church” in the New Testament. These are in Matthew 16:18 (“on this rock will I build My Church”) and in Matthew 18:17 (“Tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church …”). In these two passages the word is the same. But in any language it frequently happens that the same word many stand in different concepts. That is the case here. The mental image projected by the word in chapter 18 is not the same as that in chapter 16. In chapter 16, the Lord speaks of something that cannot be thought of as confined to any given place. It is the equivalent of what is referred to in Ephesians and Colossians as the Body of Christ. It takes in all true believers, everywhere. In chapter 18 we have something different. What is called “the church” there

can be reached, be communicated with, be “told” something, express a decision and be heard or ignored. All this is strongly indicative of locality. It is what we refer to frequently as a “local church.”

Other distinctions may be noticed. In Matthew 16 the Lord Himself is the Builder: He says “I will build …” But in the establishment of local churches men have a part. In the one case there can be no failure: all that HE does is perfect. What HE builds is in no way vulnerable: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” That is not true of local churches. They are vulnerable. While it is true that, ideally, they are composed of believers only, actually they may include mere professors and even wicked persons. In them there may be misbehaviour which calls for rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20). There may be evil-doers who must be put away (1 Cor. 5:13). A dictator may arise in one of them, assuming unwarranted power, refusing even an apostle and wickedly excluding some from the church! (3 John). It is clear that while, in the sense of Matthew 16 there can be, but one Church, there can be, and are, many local churches. See the following passages, noticing that in each there is clear reference to a plurality of churches: Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Cor. 7:17; 1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 11:8, 28; Phil. 4:15; Rev. 1:4, 11, 13, 20.

Local churches are variously designated. They are called: “churches of God” (1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4); “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16) — this speaks of their relationship to Him as Lord; “churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33; cf. Acts 2:44; 5:13; 19:9) — in reference to their composition; “churches of Asia … of Galatia, etc.” (Rom. 16:5, 23; 1 Cor. 1:2; 16:1, 19; 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:22; 1 Thess. 2:14; 1 Pet. 5:13) — referring to

their locations. (Today we might erroneously say “the church in Asia” or “the Galatian church”).

A local church (or assembly) consists of believers united and forming a corporate entity. As to this we quote the following from W. E. Vine and W. R. Lewis: “An assembly of believers accustomed to gather together according to the Scriptures still continues to be a church even when some of its members are asleep, or having their meals at home or are away from the locality. They are still part of that assembly wherever they may be during the intervals between their gatherings. The churches of the New Testament are not viewed as churches only during their meetings. The messages given to them affect their lives and conduct at all times.” (Believer’s Magazine, April 1949). Rowland C. Edwards, in “The Church: A Symposium” writes: “The believers at Corinth… did not cease to be a church when they dispersed.”

Corporate status is clearly indicated or implied in a number of passages which, if carefully considered, will be seen to refer to united, “authorized” or “corporate” action. Here are a few of the passages, chosen at random: Matthew 18:17, already referred to. The church hears, expresses itself, is heard or ignored. Could this be true of a something without corporate status?

Romans 16:4: churches can express themselves, as churches, in thanksgiving.

2 Corinthians 8:19, 23: churches choose and send messengers. Do the messengers represent undefinable and irresponsible groups?

1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 2 John 9: churches are addressed by letter. To receive communications they must have existed as definite entities.

2 John 10: a self-appointed and unscrupulous tyrant casts some “out of the church.” Surely what he casts them out of was a tangible reality, having parts, and not just a casually assembled group of people.

Acts 14:27: “When they had gathered the church together.” It must exist to be gathered. Compare 1 Corinthians 5:4: to those the Apostle had addressed as the church at Corinth, he now says “…. when ye are gathered together …” They were a church, they gathered as such.

1 Corinthians 14:23 speaks of “the whole church” coming together into one place. Since this would be impossible for the “church universal,” it cannot be meant. It can only refer to a local group, and the expression “the whole church” assumes, clearly, a definite entity with a definite “membership.”

Philippians 4:15-16: a church can and does take specific action (unitedly, “corporately”) in matters financial.

Romans 16:16: churches express themselves in salutation to saints elsewhere.

1 Timothy 5:9, 16: a church can accept responsibility for a list of widows and can be “charged” with their care. From the epistles generally, and especially 1 and 2 Corinthians, it is clear that churches, as such, were expected to accept a variety of responsibilities. Responsibility cannot be assigned to a group that has not in some sense “corporate status.” We trust that this matter of “status” is sufficiently clear.

Another fact that it is important to notice is this: each local church (or assembly) is a unit complete in itself. It is not a part of a larger unit. The New Testament knows

nothing of an organizational connection between churches, expressed or implied. No kind of federation, association or other inter-church framework is contemplated. There is no record in Scripture of any "understanding" between churches that might lead to the formation of groups or circles. We are not forgetting (may we never forget it!) that there is a divinely-formed unity of believers as members of the one Body (Eph. 4:3-6). But it does not by any means follow that the Body of Christ is simply an aggregation of local churches, or that the churches collectively and the Body of Christ are one and the same thing. We need to be on guard against the formation of "circles of fellowship" by means of unwritten, veiled or implied understandings, or by the consent, expressed or implied, of likeminded Christians. These, where they exist, are not a whit less objectionable, from a scriptural point of view, than the expressly organized denominations. The existence of seemingly worthy motives, the use of pious phraseology, and the attempt to find justification for such circles in Scripture (where it is not to be found!) do not alter their character. Nor does the dignifying of them by the use of the term "fellowship."

Wherever groupings of churches are found, some form of centralization will naturally follow — the very existence of the circle demands it. There will come into existence what one writer refers to as a "central organization, from which streams of thought, suggestion and personal influence flow out at once to all parts of the affiliated body." The equivalent, at least, of such a "central organization" may exist and, we fear, in some quarters does exist, though perhaps not recognized. It

exists in practice wherever “leading brethren” direct the policies of a group of assemblies.

Where churches operate as individually responsible units, they normally are spared many vexations. If mistaken policies are adopted somewhere, or evil doctrines are introduced, they are not automatically brought under their blight. If strife occurs, resulting perhaps in a sad division, the trouble will be more or less localized — unless, as has sometimes occurred, individuals make it their business to spread the plague by forcing some who are not directly affected to “take a stand” or “judge the question.”

It will be asked, is there no provision for guidance or control? There is, but not of the sort sometimes imposed upon assemblies. It is noticeable that, in Matthew 18, the final decision is that given by the church. If there were anywhere on earth a higher authority that could be appealed to, this would have been a natural place to mention it, but there is none. When Barnabas went to Antioch (Acts 11:22, 23), he did not suggest to Christians there that they should submit themselves to some ecclesiastical “authority,” or that they should become part of some “circle of fellowship.” He simply “exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” When Paul was taking leave, finally as he supposed, of the elders from Ephesus, he did not leave them in the care of an administrative body, but simply commended them “to God and to the word of His grace” (Acts 20:32). Here again there was an excellent opportunity to define any arrangement, if it existed, for the union of asemblies and for their united administration, but there is no mention of any such arrangement. In fact, the whole

responsibility for the guidance of the church at Ephesus is placed upon the elders of that church, in dependence directly upon the Lord. It is evident that each assembly stood responsible immediately to the Lord, not guided by the action of any other assembly, nor authorized to adjust the affairs of any other. As my individual conduct is my responsibility, so the conduct of an assembly is the responsibility of that assembly alone. A believer going from one place to another will normally be received, not because he comes from an assembly that has been "recognized," but because he himself is considered to be a suitable person to be received. A letter of commendation, if he brings one (as usually he should) will simplify matters by clearly establishing his character, but is not to be looked upon by the assemblies involved as indication of a link between them. If the individual seeking fellowship has, for scriptural reasons, been excluded from the assembly he was formerly associated with, he will be dealt with accordingly, simply because the conduct which made it necessary, in obedience to the Word of God, for the one assembly to exclude him, makes it equally necessary for the other to do so.

We must not let ourselves forget, of course, that while Scripture knows of no union of assemblies, there is a vital oneness of believers. As united to Christ all true Christians are "members one of another" (Eph. 4:25; Rona. 12:5).

As such it is expected that they will have an affectionate regard for each others' interests and welfare (1 Cor. 12:25-26). There should ever be friendly understanding, sympathy and loving care. Anything that would tend to stumble others should be carefully avoided (1 Cor. 8:9).

Co-operation, where possible, in the furtherance and support of Gospel activity, in the sharing of ministry, in mutual assistance wherever there is need for it, can be highly profitable and are to be devoutly encouraged. We may well pray for an increase of such co-operation.

The Forum (Jan 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 1, Jan 1962.

The Christian and Politics

Dear Mr. G.:

In regard to the Forum section of the October 1961 issue of Food for the Flock, Mr. A. G. C. hardly takes a realistic view of politics and the exercise of the vote.

Mr. A. G. C. makes a serious error in generalizing that politics is strictly out for the Christian. Surely when a true statesman makes a decision in the public interest, amidst the opposing pressure of many lobbies and factions, this cannot be for (self) glory. If anything, there is a strong need for Christians in this area of civil service who would more likely tend to be real statesmen. Surely a Christian can suffer spiritual (?) defeat in any occupation. It is expected, of course, that this Christian in politics would not compromise his testimony, as it should be in any job.

As for the exercise of the vote, did not the Apostles themselves cast lots for Matthias in Acts 1:26? It seems that the vote together with prayer is the best way for election. Mr. A. G. C. seems to believe that by our voting we are going against the express command of our rulers, in the third paragraph of his letter. I believe Mr. A. G. C. has interpreted the verses he selected to fit what he is trying to show, rather than expositionally working from the verses themselves.

I, a student at New York University, write you, the Editor, not for rebuke but as a warning that this kind of

extra-scriptural thinking can only hurt the reputation of the assemblies and also the character of the assembly Christians who are the primary readers of your magazine.

Perhaps a Letter to the Editor section in Food for the Flock would encourage and provoke thought mechanisms in the readers, rather than having them accept everything handed to them.

Sincerely in Christ,

G. K.

* * *

It is not suitable to publish all communications on this subject. Letters have been received from older and more mature Christians as well as from younger and less experienced ones. Some of these are excellent, but others prove the statement of Elihu, “Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment” (Job 32:9). Still others call to remembrance an intensive discussion between a young chemist and an older and much more experienced engineering executive. During the debate, the illogical reasoning of the younger man became obvious. At the close, graciously and humorously the older put his hand on the shoulder of the younger and with a broad smile asked, “Do you know the difference between a young and an old man?” “Well, what?” enquired the younger. “O, really not very much,” said the experienced executive, “Only, an old man knows that he does not know; whereas, a young man does not know that he does not know.”

A strict biblical exegesis of Acts chapter one would not result in a parallelism between the choice of Matthias

and the election of a political candidate, as some apparently imagine. There is a marked contrast in purpose, candidates, electors, and methods.

The purpose for which Matthias was chosen was simply to complete the original number, as Peter said, “Of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.” The purpose did not involve politics or statesmanship. The chosen man was to be a witness of the events in the life of Christ, not a legislator.

The candidates were not from contending parties nor were they contributors to conflicting systems of government. In fact, the two brethren were passive throughout the entire proceedings.

The electors were the Apostles themselves. What a contrast to the mixture that goes to the poles in an election, a mixture of Christians, non-Christians, agnostics, and atheists!

The method employed was simple: there were no campaigns, no ballot boxes, no slips, no scrutineers, and certainly no lobbyists. It must be remembered that our Lord Jesus had ascended on high and that the Holy Spirit had not yet descended. This event took place in a very critical period of history when the Apostles were left to themselves. Without other means of divine guidance they resorted to the Old Testament way of making a decision; they, like the high priest on the great day of the atonment, cast lots (Lev. 16). How could this possibly be confused with the casting of a ballot at election time?

With the Canon of Scripture completed and the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer, ‘Christian decisions must

now be based on biblical revelation and spiritual illumination.

This entire transaction recorded in Acts chapter one is altogether too questionable to accept as an example in such matters. Realism demands that we admit; it was carried out without divine command, without direct divine guidance, and without divine sanction. Matthias is never seen in active association with the Apostles. There may be an indirect reference to him in 1 Corinthians 15:5, “He (Christ in resurrection) was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.” If we insist upon the literalism of the number twelve, then we must ask, who is eliminated from the list in Revelation 21:12? “The city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.” Paul was “an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God” (1 Tim. 1:1); counting Matthias, he would be the thirteenth. Does the vision seen by John omit Matthias or Paul? Could it be that the choice made by the Apostles just after Pentecost was a mistake, a premature action? If so, surely a mistake is a poor pattern to follow.

Even in so-called democratic countries there are two methods of voting, one is the voluntary ballot, where the exercise of one’s franchise is left to his own discretion. Under such conditions, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5). The other method is the obligatory ballot, and here the Christian has no alternative but to “submit … to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (1 Pet. 2:13).

Nevertheless, all should remember that the voluntary ballot is as much an “ordinance of man,” therefore

divinely sanctioned where it is constitutional, as is the obligatory ballot where it is decreed.

The majority of the correspondents have missed the major point of brother A. G. S.'s letter. He questioned the propriety of a Christian becoming an active politician. Most have missed this and have either denounced or defended the Christian in the exercise of his franchise to vote.

In participating in any discussion in The Forum, it would be more helpful to either quote or refer to Scripture in order that others discern a biblical perspective from a mere personal opinion.

Editor.

The Forum (Feb 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 2, Feb 1962.

“The Care of All the Churches”

Dear Mr. G.

Pleased to see F. W. S’s. article on the character of the local assembly, …

The remarks are very true, but I think characteristic of first century Church history. Because they do express the truth, they are that by which we govern ecclesiastically whether or not we assume corporate character to our gatherings.

But I feel that they lack in one regard, and that is they do not recognize the broken state of Christendom, and give no place in local church character to Christians who do not gather as we. Generally, the view taken of a local church is one that bears certain features, so we look for these features and judge accordingly.

When we hear of desires expressed concerning “unity,” are they not limited to those of brethren? Would that not be somewhat less than the Lord’s mind in regard to His own? Paul saw all twelve tribes serving God day and night, and were not those same tribes scattered as the Church is today?

Scripture speaks of the church of this and that city. (Romans 16 speaks of various companies, but only one the church). So all believers in a given locality are the local church, whether or not they meet together. If that be true, no one part can presume to be the assembly of that locality. My interest has not been in trying to define

geographical limitations, merely acknowledging all believers, so giving some standing in the local church to them.

The question then is, are we seeking to maintain the faithfulness of Philadelphia in the midst of Laodiceanism (which the Lord has not yet set aside), and presume to nothing but that of only remnant character? Then, can that which has but remnant character have corporate statue?

With best regards,

K. S.

Dear Brother K. S.

We do appreciate your most recent letter. The tone of sincerity and godly exercise is very commendable. Many thanks.

The first part of your closing paragraph arrests my attention; in fact, it deeply impresses me: “Are we seeking to maintain the faithfulness of Philadelphia in the midst of Laodiceanism (which the Lord has not yet set aside), and presume to nothing but only that of remnant character?”

While one may differ on certain points of interpretation involved in the doctrine of the Church, he would share the concern you have expressed.

Is not the opinion you state relative to Romans 16 too inductive to be thoroughly conclusive? If all believers in any given locality are at all times in the church local and form that church, from what did the saints at Corinth excommunicate the incestuous man (1 Cor. 5:13)? This guilty man, in the light of 2 Corinthians, was a Christian brother, therefore, definitely in the Church in its

universal sense from which he could not be expelled, but outside the church in its local aspect.

The Apostle John wrote of Diotrephes, “Neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.”

We agree that he could not cast them out of the Church in its comprehensive character. Out of what then did he cast them? Out of the church in its local aspect. Consequently, even for believers there is an outside and an inside to the local church.

There is a threefold concept of church in the New Testament: the Jewish, the pagan, and the Christian. Stephen made reference to “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). Surely the entire Jewish concept is not expressed only in Israel’s being called out of Egypt, but in the additional thought of her being brought to the Lord (Ex. 19:4).

Similarly, in Acts 19:39-41 we have the pagan concept; the town clerk dismissed the assembly (the church). He did not dismiss a crowd of persons who had merely been called from their homes, but a crowd of persons who had been called together (19:25), and it was this being together under the circumstances which made their assemblage unlawful.

The full concept expressed by the word church is that of calling out and gathering together. Is it not obvious that persons who have not been gathered together cannot express the New Testament conception of church. Technically speaking, unless God’s people are thus gathered together (Matt. 18:20), they do not form a geographic church.

Now, God's ideal is that all His people should thus be gathered together, and He has revealed in His Word, particularly in the New Testament, the principles which will not only call His people out of the world, but call them together. It is at this point we have one common exercise and concern as to what we may do to gather together all God's people in testimony, even although it be but a remnant testimony.

The lamented scattered condition of God's beloved people today arises from grave failure; failure in those who do gather according to these divine principles, and failure in those who do not thus gather. That apparently is the only true premise upon which to rest our thinking.

In regard to those who do not gather accordingly, there may be various reasons; first, some may not understand what God has revealed in His Word, and their ignorance of His truth is the hindrance. Second, in certain cases there may be a knowledge of the Word of God and an unwillingness to obey. Third, there may be some who once did gather with God's people in blessed simplicity, but who were offended by other saints in local churches, and so withdrew. In such a case we assume that weakness is the hindrance.

What should our attitude be to all God's people irrespective of their affiliation in view of the increasing apostacy of Christendom and the remnant character of present day testimony?

Our attitude should be one of humility; and, frankly, it is not. An aged brother bemoaned in the prayer meeting "the ecclesiastical pride evinced by some in the assemblies." The claims of superior light and knowledge made by certain are distasteful. Judged by the standard

of the literature being produced by brethren in the assemblies today, these claims are untrue.

Nevertheless, our attitude to the Word of God must be one of complete submission. In your reference to the remarks by F. W. S. you say, “The remarks are very true, but I think characteristic of first century Church history. Because they do express truth, they are that by which we govern ecclesiastically.”

The principles stated in these remarks you accept as truth are taught by the Spirit of God through the Apostles, and as suggested, they did produce first century churches. We, therefore, must still submit to that teaching. We must submit to the same high standard, and refuse any substandard truth. God’s Word cannot be accommodated to meet our deficiencies. The Lord does not reveal one set of principles for the apostolic churches and another for the churches in remnant testimony.

Prayerful dependence upon the Lord becomes us rather than the spirit of self-complacency which characterizes not a few. Such dependence would make the place “outside the camp” much more attractive to devout souls.

The schismatic spirit once prevalent in Corinth, and even more prevalent today, must be judged in the presence of the Lord. “The unity of the Spirit” is made by the Holy Spirit Himself and therefore is perfect. The word by the Apostle to us, Gentiles, needs to be taken more seriously: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, …Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).

Your reference to Paul's statement in Acts 26:7 is interesting: "Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." As you remind us, the twelve tribes in Paul's day were sadly scattered, and any service for God and any testimony to Him were carried out by a very small remnant. Notwithstanding, Paul ascribes to that small remnant national status. Do you not think that Paul's reference to this remnant gives the conception that it formed a corporate entity? Paul saw a united nation in a few, the majority of whom belonged only to Judah and Benjamin.

Our attitude toward all Christians ought to be that of love. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. 5:13-14). The warmth of divine love will win the hearts of others, and it will heal the hurts, and remove the offences which have caused sincere ones to withdraw from local gatherings of the saints.

Furthermore, we should act in earnest solicitude toward all our fellow-believers rather than isolate ourselves from them. Aquila and Priscilla have left us an example (Acts 18:24-26). If we enjoy some of the truth of God in a deeper and fuller manner, we ought to be ready to share it with others whom we may consider less fortunate.

Surely, it would not be wrong to fit the words of the Apostle Peter into this very context, using them to direct our attitude to all God's people: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Pet. 3:8).

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Mar 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 3, Mar 1962.

Conducting a Conference

Inasmuch as there has been considerable enquiry relative to Annual Conferences, their merits, their arrangement and in some cases their disbandment, this article is inserted in The Forum in order to stimulate serious thinking and godly exercise. The article first appeared in The Believer's Treasurey, November, 1895.

There are several different ways in which Christian "Conferences" may be conducted. We do not write to suggest any method that has never been tried before. Our present object is rather to review the methods already in use, and to make a few practical reflections thereon.

There is, first, the open principle. That is the method of inviting saints over a wide area to come together in a particular hall to wait on the Lord for ministry as He may guide. Such a conference is at once "thrown open" and, if any brethren in the body of the hall have a desire to minister the Word, they are told that they are expected to speak from the platform. It is thus clear that any brother who feels his call to speak, is at liberty to stand forth and deliver his message. We do not doubt that Conferences, conducted on this principle, have often been found helpful; yea, have in many cases proved times of refreshing. Yet it is only fair to say that many brethren question how far it is right to take the "open" principle that rules at the Breaking of Bread in a local Assembly and apply it to the very much larger and

more varied circle of a general Believer's Conference. Such liberty in a Conference may easily be abused.

As a matter of fact, it has been abused. No one will deny that brethren without the fitness for ministering the Word on a Conference platform, have been only too ready to avail themselves of what they call "their liberty." The result has been that godly souls who have travelled a long way to hear a message from God, have been grievously disappointed. Some may say that failure of that kind does not necessarily prove this method of conducting a Conference to be wrong. But may the failure not be traceable to this, that we apply the "open" principle to meetings to which Scripture does not intend that principle to be applied? If a Conference is thrown open, it becomes a delicate matter to silence a brother when once he has made a beginning, no matter how manifestly unequal he may be to the occasion. These difficulties have been perceived; and the result has been that a slightly different mode of conducting a Conference has become common. To avoid the risk of a brother rising and "wasting" the meeting, and also to let the saints know at whose mouth they are to hear the Word, invitations are sent out by a local Assembly to certain ministering brethren. On receiving their promise to be present, the local brethren issue a circular saying that these three or four brethren, with others, are expected to minister the Word. This kind of Conference is not "thrown open," at least not until the brethren named on the circular have all delivered their message. This has the merit of letting you know what ministering servants you are going to hear, and that they will have the privilege of speaking first. By the time they have delivered their souls, the hour of closing is usually near

at hand, and there is not likely to be further ministry. This method when wisely gone about, is generally successful. It at least gains its point in securing that the time is occupied, by well-known ministering brethren. When we say “wisely gone about,” we imply that the securing of the speakers may not be wisely gone about. We have known cases in which invitations were sent to several ministering brethren, each of whom came together without any idea of what other brethren were to be on the platform. The result was that brethren of “diverging schools of thought” found themselves on the same platform; and what one brother built up another pulled down, a danger to which the “open” Conference is no less exposed. If a ministering brother has no idea who is to be associated with him on a public platform, this may gender to bondage. Local brethren who are “wise” will observe these things; for it is certainly an important matter that those on the platform should, with one mouth and one voice, glorify God.

In the remaining method which we have now to consider, there is no pretence whatever of acting on the “open” principle. We refer to the method of three or four ministering brethren taking the initiative themselves, and calling a Conference of Believers. These three or four ministering brethren gravitate towards each other by the law of a common affinity; and, feeling the burden of a certain message needed for the times, they invite God’s people to come and hear that message. The advantages of this method of arranging a Conference (or “Meeting of Believers,” as it would more correctly be called) are apparent. The ministering brethren are of one mind, else they would not have gravitated towards each other of their own accord. This is a great matter.

We need not doubt that the witnesses shall agree with each other. Assuming the three or four ministering brethren to be men of God, we may reasonably expect a message from God. The fact that they have been burdened as to the need of the saints, and have found each other out, is a better guarantee that they are sent, than those who are merely selected by some brethren in a local Assembly. It seems to us to be specially in keeping with the dignity of the Lord's servants that they should act spontaneously, in obedience to the call of God, and not remain inactive until some local brethren make their selection and say, "We would like brothers So-and-so, and So-and-so, to address us."

We may say that it is not uncommon for one ministering brother to say to a company of believers at a distance, "I have a message I should like to deliver on such a night." They are glad, and arrange accordingly. Now, it is the same principle, only on an enlarged scale, when two, or three, or more ministering brethren call a believers meeting in a wider area to hear some special message.

We see this principle in operation in certain circles, and with manifest tokens for good. We humbly think that there might be among ourselves a wider recognition of the same principle.

When the Lord's sent ones shall arise to a higher apprehension of their true calling, and go forth at the bidding of God with messages from the Throne, we do not think they shall find any lack of "recognition" of the principle to which we have been referring.

—Submitted by T.G.W.

The Forum (Apr 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 4, Apr 1962.

Matthias Not Paul

Dear Mr. G.

I disagree that the casting of lots for one to take the office of Judas was carried out without divine command for Peter quotes from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8.

Notice the words of Peter (Acts 1:21-22), “Of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be witness with us of His resurrection.”

The two appointed were two who had companied with the Lord and with them, and were witnesses of His resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:5 confirms what is recorded here in Acts 1. In verse 24 they asked the Lord to show them which one of the two He would choose, and Matthias was the Lord’s choice. This is recorded by the Holy Spirit that the Scripture should be fulfilled. Matthias, and not Paul was numbered with the eleven (Acts 1:26).

Yours faithfully,

A. K.

* * *

Dear Brother A.K.

We do appreciate your letter, and welcome another approach to a difficult passage of Scripture.

In our search for the truth (All must study the Scriptures with the intention of finding the truth.), the reward of which, because of our finite capacities, can be only relative, we must remember that God alone knows truth in its absolute and complete form. In His Holy Word it has pleased Him to reveal certain aspects of truth in fullness and clarity; it has also pleased Him to withhold certain other aspects, which our curious minds would like to know, but which in His wisdom He conceals. Furthermore, there are certain other aspects which He reveals partially, indefinitely, in order to stimulate our thinking, and to provoke a deeper study of the Holy Scriptures. God reveals to us all that in His wisdom He wants us to understand. When He gives us a well-defined revelation, we must accept it with all credence; when He withholds a revelation, we must bow in submission and humility before Him; and when He gives fragmentary revelation, in spite of personal opinions about it, we must be tolerant with one another. Of course, as Dr. Collier has said, “We must not let go manifest truths because we cannot answer all questions about them.” Those who have the widest vision and the deepest knowledge of a matter, generally speaking, sense their responsibility to be lenient with the convictions of another.

An examination of the context will show that the words, “This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled,” modify the quotations in regard to the untimely end of Judas; they were “concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.”

There are points in regard to the election of Matthias which remain unanswered to the satisfaction of many sincere and devout students of the Scriptures. The

necessity presented by Peter in his statement, “Must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection,” is naturally questioned in the light of the martyrdom of the Apostle James a short time later. If the vacancy caused by the defection and death of Judas had to be filled, why not the vacancy caused by the death of James? Since the Lord predicted the apostacy of Judas, why did He not predict the need of a successor? Did He, the Lord, not commission the eleven true apostles as a group on the mountain of Galilee after His resurrection (Matt. 28:16-20; John 20-19-23)?

Furthermore, was it absolutely necessary to replace the witness of one concerning whom Christ said, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70).

Dr. Blaiklock, in his commentary on the Book of the Acts, states concisely our own opinion:

“Peter ever craved for action in times of tension (John 20:3; 21-3), and usually persuaded others to follow his bold lead. Here (15) he runs true to form. His citation of Old Testament authority is natural argument for one who habitually thought in the forms, language, and imagery of the Scriptures, and the speech is highly consistent with Peter’s later manner as recorded in the narrative, and with his own writings…

“We hear no more of the good Matthias (23-26) save for the legend of Ethiopian martyrdom, and it is commonly assumed that Peter ran ahead of God’s purpose in seeking this appointment. Paul was destined for the vacant place. The casting of lots was a provision of the Law (Lev. 16:8), and as such a practice of immaturity. Chrysostom was the first to note that these events took

place before Pentecost. The Spirit of Truth made such actions obsolete."

Since this has been a problem to the saints during many generations (Chrysostom lived in the middle of the third century of the Church), it must be considered as one of the fragmentary items recorded in Holy Scripture. Be that as it may, we are happy to publish an alternative view.

Sincerely in Christ,

J.G.

The Forum (May 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 5, May 1962.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Church and the Tribulation

Dear Brother G.

I know that you are a very busy man, but feel that I should write the following thoughts. As the Lord gives you time perhaps you could give them some consideration. If they were exclusively my own thoughts, I would not bother you…

I am troubled to some extent by the teaching that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation. Do we have much Scripture to prove otherwise? Surely Revelation 4:1 seems to be a weak support for the pre-tribulation rapture. Sometimes I think that the rapture will occur in the middle of the tribulation, and sometimes at the end of this awful seven year period. Frankly, I am puzzled. If the Church is to go through the tribulation, or even the half of it, surely she is not ready for such persecution. Some say that perhaps persecution will bring revival; maybe it will, I do not know. Perhaps past Church history will confirm this. Even so, we do not seem to be ready doctrinally, and by this I mean, we do not hear much teaching today on such subjects as: "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin," "I am crucified with Christ," and other Scriptures teaching our high position in Christ Jesus.

Relative to the possibility of the Church going through the tribulation, I was thinking of Revelation 12:11, “And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb.” Would we not have to know this experimentally now, to put it into good use were we to undergo persecution? …

This is something that has caused me much thought for quite a while, and felt the weight of expressing them to someone who might be able to do something about it…

Thank you for inviting letters from your readers.

Sincerely by His grace,

H. A. H.

Dear Brother H.

I am sure that you are not the only one confused by the many conflicting opinions in regard to prophetical subjects. With some teaching pre-millennialism, others post-millennialism, and still others a-millennialism, it is really no wonder that God’s people are perplexed. As you mention in your letter, there are also some teaching a pre-tribulation rapture; others, a mid-tribulation rapture; and still others, a post-tribulation rapture. To this sorry complexity we can now add another disconcerting speculation that is being revived in some areas, the partial rapture theory.

The Apostle Peter says, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy (the prophetic word made sure); whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19). In the light of such a statement, it becomes obvious that the Lord did not intend the interpretation of the prophetic word to cause disordered thinking and teaching, the confusion is not of God.

The second coming of Christ is presented in the New Testament as a living hope because it is based upon the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3); as a good hope because it is given by grace along with everlasting consolation (2 Thess. 2:16); and as a blessed hope because of the resulting joy and glory (Tit. 2:13). Surely the realization of this living, good, and blessed hope ought to be anticipated with delight. Teaching regarding it, if it leaves God's people bewildered, cannot be sound. The babel of opinions must result from adverse influences which would rob the Christian of the personal joy of anticipation, would divert his mind from the attitude of watchfulness, and would direct his attention to certain events rather than to the advent of our Lord.

To discuss this problem in The Forum in its many aspects and details would be impossible; nevertheless, a few remarks might help you. These remarks will centre upon the need of a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, the need of logical thinking, the value of scriptural statements, and the attitude of the Church in the first century of her existence.

Literal interpretation: The practice of allegorizing (also called spiritualizing) the Scriptures might well be blamed for much of the confusion in the subject of prophecy as well as in other fields of Bible study. By such means the Bible can be made to mean almost anything. Allegorizing frequently is the result of a fertile imagination rather than the product of the Holy Spirit. The Amillennialist and the Post-millennialist both alike adopt this approach to Bible study.

By literal interpretation is meant the process of interpreting the Bible. First, by considering its grammar.

The meaning of each word according to its usage and connection must be thoroughly understood. In second place, by examining every detail in accordance with the immediate and the general context. The context of any statement of Scripture is one of the surest sources of necessary information. Finally, by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Since the structure of the Word of God is that of a divine unity, there is throughout its entire revelation an inerrant consistency; no one passage contradicts another. Dr. Charles L. Feinberg in his excellent work, Premillennialism or Amillennialism? cites the testimony of Dr. Horatius Bonar. Speaking of the results of fifty years of the study of prophecy, he concluded with the statement that, first of all, he had gained assurance as to the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. Secondly, he felt more certain than ever that the literal interpretation of the Word is best. Said he: “Literal, if possible, is, I believe the only maxim that will carry you right through the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation.”

It is now clear that space forbids further discussion on this subject in this issue. Inasmuch as four necessary points were mentioned, we shall reserve these until the next issue. I trust that you will be patient and follow the remarks which we specified as brief. In proportion to the importance of the subject, they are indeed very brief.

May the Lord richly bless you in your studies of His Holy Word.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (June 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 6, June 1962.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Church and the Tribulation

Part 2

Dear Brother H.

We were forced, because of the lack of space, to discontinue in our last issue, the discussion on the Church and the Great Tribulation. This may be added to the comments with which the last issue closed in regard to the literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; when such a careful method is applied to the prophetic Word, it leads to but one conclusion, that which is called Premillennialism.

Before considering the other points which have been raised, this might be the proper place to make sure that we both understand the terms being used. The word “Millennium,” like the word “trinity” does not occur in the Bible, so to those who are used to thinking and speaking of the Holy Trinity, this word itself should not cause any trouble.

The word “millennium” is the Latin equivalent for “one thousand years.” A reference to the reign of Christ for one thousand years may be found in Revelation 20:4-5. A Millennialist is one who believes that this Scripture teaches a literal thousand years of righteousness and

glory on this earth during a future reign of the Lord as supreme Sovereign. A Pre-millennialist is one who believes that Christ will come previous to such a thousand years of peace and equity, and that in His coming He will rapture the Church from earth. Our contention is that a literal interpretation of Scripture confirms this belief. We must now proceed with our examination.

Logical thinking: The question, “Will the Church go through the Great Tribulation?” expresses a serious misconception. Few deny the obvious, that we are approaching the end of the age. Consequently, there is but a very small fraction of the Church left on earth; the greater portion is now in glory. For the Church to go through the Great Tribulation would require a physical resurrection without a transformation in order that every member suffer equally, and the Scriptures make no reference to such a movement. It would be inconsistent with the love of the heavenly Bridegroom to leave a very small portion of His Church, His Bride, to endure great tribulation “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).

It has occasionally been pointed out by others that the Great Tribulation is called in Scripture: first, “The time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7); and, second, “The time of the heathen” (the Gentiles). It is never referred to as the time of the Church or of the Church’s trouble. The Great Tribulation is the time of the pouring out by God of His wrath upon a world that rejected and crucified His Son. While we know that God does chastise His beloved people (Heb. 12:6-9), it is inconceivable that as a Father, He would do this along with those who are His enemies.

During that period of unparalleled suffering, God will deal with Israel for the rejection of Christ as Messiah and with the world, particularly Christendom, for the rejection of Christ as Saviour and Lord.

These, and many other reasons, convince one that the Lord will rapture home His Church previous to the period of the Great Tribulation.

Scriptural statements: That the Church will not go through The Great Tribulation is implied in the doctrine of salvation. “Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:9). Since justification is shown to be a completed act, salvation from wrath (the word is employed in a generic sense) is seen to be an addition. That the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation is inferred in the Christian hope. The Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” This last clause reads more literally, even Jesus our Deliverer from the coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

That the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation is also included in the word of prophecy: “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9). In this connection we might quote, “Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). Finally, that the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation may be expressed, (As many claim because of the use of the definite article in the text which makes it read, “the hour of the

temptation,") is a promise of exemption: "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation (the trial), which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

These Scriptures alone should lead some to reconsider their position lest, unfortunately, they be found saying, "My Lord delayeth His coming." May our attitude ever be that of John on the Isle of Patmos, who in the spirit of gratitude and worship exclaimed, "Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

The attitude of apostolic Christians: The rapture of the Church was a mystery (a hidden secret) made known especially to the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:51). As a revealed secret, a prophecy, Paul taught it at Thessalonica in such a manner that the young believers there were living in the expectancy of a literal fulfilment in their own day. They verily believed that Christ could come in person to them in their own life-time. The one man, Paul, to whom God had given the revelation of this mystery, the one man therefore who knew the subject thoroughly, wrote commending them for their attitude in thus waiting for the personal return of Christ. He did not reprove their attitude, nor did he suggest the need of correcting it. This attitude of the early Christians must be accepted as correct and proper. They were not anticipating the Great Tribulation; they were hoping for the personal imminent return of their Lord.

We hope that our very limited discussion on this matter may prove helpful. We are sorry that because of the pressure of other matters, an answer to your question was not given sooner.

May the Lord bless you in your studies. May the “Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5, J.N.D.).

Very sincerely yours in Christ,

J.G.

The Forum (July 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 7, July 1962.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Anointing Of Christ

Dear Brother G.

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust this letter finds you and your family prospering well both in body and soul. The main purpose of my writing is to ask you about the anointing of the Lord Jesus by the Father as stated in Luke 4:18-19; Acts 4:27 and 10:38.

1. Is this anointing the same as the believer's anointing with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20 and 27)?

2. Was this anointing a necessary preparation for our Lord's earthly ministry?

3. When did this anointing take place, at His baptism?

4. If this anointing took place at our Lord's baptism, does this mean that the Lord Jesus did not possess the Holy Spirit (the anointing) until the event of His baptism?

I would appreciate very much if you would take time to enlighten me on this subject.

Sincerely in Christ,

C.G.

Dear Brother C. G.

In the Old Testament it was the will of God that men from among His people holding public position be anointed with oil for consecration into their office. Kings were anointed; as were Saul, David, Solomon, etc. Prophets were anointed; as for example, Elisha. Priests were anointed with a special oil made according to divine specifications (Ex. 30:30).

Without doubt, the anointing of persons in the Old Testament typifies the santification of the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit, as this is taught in the New Testament. Believers today are not anointed into any office, because, from their conversion they have the anointing within them (1 John 2:20-27). From the experience of the new birth, consequently, they are made a kingdom of priests (Rev. 5:10).

In the case of the Lord Jesus, He was anointed as were the prophets, kings, and priests of the Old Testament into His public office. The title, “The Christ,” simply means, “The Anointed One.”

The anointing of Christ was predicted in Psalm 45:7 and a number of other Old Testament passages. This Psalm is Messianic and Millennial in character. It pictures Christ as King on the day of His marriage anointed with the oil of gladness above all the friends of the Bridegroom. According to the prophetic Word the marriage of Christ to His Bride, the Church, and the future manifestation of His Kingship in glory are closely associated.

That John the Baptist saw the fulfilment of this predicted anointing is generally conceded, but to suggest that not until His baptism did Christ possess the Holy Spirit is a wrong conception of the personality of our Lord. This must be remembered, the anointing of the Lord Jesus was an external act witnessed by John which produced no internal change. The anointing of the believer is an internal act which does produce a change both in his nature and in his relationship to God; this change is seen by others through his conversion.

Christ is God, yet perfect Man. The hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ cannot be over-emphasized; He is the God Man in one glorious personality. Consequently, it is incorrect to say that as God He did this and as Man He did that; He, in all His acts was God, yet Man. Furthermore, He is one of the distinctions in the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To even infer that the Christ, the Eternal Son did not at any time possess the Spirit, when we know Him to be one with the Spirit, is to wrest the doctrine of Christ.

Let it ever be remembered that the anointing of Christ was an external act fulfilling the predictions of the Old Testament, as well as its types, an act that did not, nor could, change His nature or His relationship to the other members of the Godhead.

In that the Lord Jesus while on earth became voluntarily subject to the Holy Spirit, He became such in order to be a pattern to all them that believe.

Sincerely in Christ,

J.G.

The Forum (Aug 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 8, Aug 1962.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Family Prayers

Dear Brother G.

I have been interested in your comments in “The Forum” in “Food for the Flock” regarding the ministry of Christian women. I have been having a discussion with two young Christian men about this subject, and would like to have your comments on a point in question.

Should a Christian woman pray audibly in the presence of her husband in the home, when they kneel together before the Lord?

My own viewpoint, based upon 1 Corinthians 11, is that she can and should. In fact, is it not a blessed privilege for husband and wife to kneel together in prayer, and each take part in bringing the trials, burdens, and joys of the home to the Lord?

The gathering of ominous war clouds and the rapidity of current events make us believe that the “Coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Perhaps, very soon we shall see Him! What a glorious day that will be! May we each be faithful to Him until then.

Yours in His grace,

C. D.

Dear Brother C. D.

I regret the delay in making reply to your letter which followed me into the “Deep South” and back again, and then was mislaid.

In making comments on the question under discussion, one feels as Paul when he wrote of certain matters and prefaced them with such statements: “I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.” “I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.”

While it is not possible to focus attention to any direct injunction from Scripture, 1 Pet. 3:7 might cast some light upon the matter.

This passage is very important when one recalls the position of subjugation generally given to the woman in the Ancient World. Dr. Ryrie informs us: “Greek women… were placed almost on the same level with the slave and were under the authority and control of their husbands both by custom and by law.” “Under the Roman Empire women enjoyed a somewhat better standing … however, the wife was still regarded merely as a piece of property completely under the control of the husband.”

This interesting verse treats the Christian woman as a joint-heir with her husband, associated with him in true emotional and spiritual coordination.

There are several impressive words employed here by the Holy Spirit. The word “dwell” suggests a dwelling together and clearly embraces every aspect of married life, and the dwelling together is to be according to knowledge; that is, with a perfect mutual understanding.

The word “giving” similarly suggests an equitable giving of honour. What honour the husband would receive for him, self, he should be willing to apportion to his wife. They both alike are heirs of the grace of eternal life. This dwelling together, this matter of mutual understanding, this being heirs together of the same life, this extension of similar honour all sustain the idea that husband and wife ought also to be together in prayer. The words, “That their prayers be not hindered;” that is, cut off, intimate that they should pray together.

The woman is silent in the church because of her secondary place in creation and because of her priority in transgression (1 Tim. 1:12-14). As she bows in prayer beside her husband, she acknowledges his leadership and her scriptural obedience to him, and with him acknowledges the Lord and their dependence upon Him.

Dr. Robert Leighton has several excellent paragraphs on this point in his Commentary on First Peter; he writes: “These heirs, if they be alone, they pray alone; if heirs together, and living together, they pray together. Can the husband and wife have that love, wisdom, and meekness, which may make their life happy, and that blessing which may make their affairs succesful, while they neglect God, the only Giver of these and all good things?” “And it is not enough that they pray when with the family, but even husband and wife together by themselves, and also, with their children” ought to pray.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Sept 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 9, Sept 1962.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Sandra:

In response to your question as to whether or not you should go bowling, here are the principles which should guide us in matters of this nature. The worldling is a lover of pleasure (2 Tim. 3:4; 1 John 2:15). We are told not to love the world that passeth away (1 John 2:16-17). The greatest keeping power is love for Christ. Married persons are faithful to each other because they love one another, not because the law of the land asserts that they must not commit adultery.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian so that he is no longer his own; he is a bond-slave of Jesus Christ, purchased by His precious blood (1 Cor. 6:20). Notice therefore, Romans 12:1-2 and also Hebrews 12:1. Some things in life are not in themselves sinful, but they are weights which no spiritual runner wants, lest he lose the race, and be disapproved (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

The matter of discipleship to Christ calls for self-denial (Matt. 16:24-26). This is not irksome if we are conscious of doing it for the Lord.

There are several questions which we could ask in this connection: Is it expedient (profitable) that I do this (1

Cor. 6:12; 12:23)? Will it edify (build up spiritually) myself and others (Rom. 14:19)?

Would the Lord Jesus do it? He has left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Would I feel ashamed if the Lord came and found me doing it? Is there the least bit of doubt in my mind about the matter? If so, I should not do it lest I be condemned (Rom. 14:22-23). Will the act be for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31)? Does it break the tender link of communion with God? It is a fact that the conscience becomes hard through the deceitfulness of sin (1 John 1:3; Heb. 3:13). Will it offend or stumble my brother or sister who may be weaker than myself (1 Cor. 8:11 and 12)? What influence will it have generally (Rom. 14:7)? How does it look in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ? How much of my time does it occupy? Am I taking time for the things that really matter: reading God's word, prayer, visiting, witnessing, assembly responsibility, good works, etc. (2 Cor. 8:9; 9:6; (1 Cor. 16:1)? How much expense is involved? Does the Lord get His portion?

Moreover, it is very important that we cultivate the companionship of those who are Christians. The Amplified Version renders 1 Corinthians 15:33 in this manner: "Do not be deceived and misled! Evil companions (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character."

Bodily exercise does have value, but godliness is profitable for all things, both now and hereafter (1 Tim. 4:7-8). This verse does not mean that one should not have exercise, but, rather, that this should be tempered by the consideration that godliness is much more profitable in everything. It is very unhealthful for one

not to have physical and mental diversion and exercise, but one should learn by experience those things which are best for his spiritual life. There is a vast difference between pleasurable relaxation and worldly amusement.

One should ever remember that what might be harmless to him, might be fatal to his brother.

The Forum (Nov 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 11, Nov 1962.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Many are One Loaf

QUESTION

Dear Brethren,

Would you please explain the reason why there is a difference in regard to the loaf and the cup between 1 Corinthians, chapter 10 and 11?

Yours sincerely,

W.R.T.

ANSWER

Dear W.R.T.

The key word in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 is partaker. The key word in chapter 11 is remember. The emphasis in chapter 10 is on the continuous communion of saints. The emphasis in chapter 11 is on the weekly expression of that communion at the Lord’s supper.

In chapter 10 there are three tables, expressive of three fellowships: that of Judaism, Paganism, and Christianity. To be present at any one of these identified the person with the fellowship it represented.

The significance of the cup coming first in chapter 10 is because only by the blood of Christ is the believer

introduced into the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Thus, the Christian's participation in the value of the blood of Christ brings him into the participation of the life of the Body of Christ.

The Lord's table in chapter 10, therefore, declares three things: our separation from the world's systems of religion, our unification with all the people of God, and our participation in all the benefits of the atonement.

In chapter 10 the emblems are the symbols of the communion or common interest of the saints in the atonement. In chapter 11 the emblems are the symbols of the sufferings and death of our Lord which made this communion possible.

In chapter 10 the bread is the symbol of our Lord's mystical Body, the Church; whereas, in chapter 11 it is the symbol of His physical Body.

In chapter 10 we rejoice in our position as "we bless" the cup, or speak eloquently of the blood in our daily living. In chapter 11 we remember the person of our glorious Lord and proclaim His death as we partake of the emblems week by week.

Sincerely in Christ,

R. McC.

In order to further impress upon the mind what Brother McC. has said relative to the symbolism of the loaf in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, a contrast might be drawn between the Jewish feast of Pentecost and the symbol that represents the Church born on the Day of Pentecost.

At the celebration of the Jewish feast of Pentecost two loaves were always used (Lev. 23:15-21). No matter how

these may be viewed typically, literally they were two loaves. The Body of Christ, the Church of the Living God, born on that very day, is symbolized by only one loaf. What an emphasis upon the organic oneness of the Body of Christ!

—Ed.

The Forum (Dec 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 12, Dec 1962.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Christ, Creator or Creature

Dear Brethren,

Is it proper to say when speaking of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus that “The Creator became a creature”? We have heard this a number of times recently.

Yours in Christ,

S. Dear Brother S.,

Such a statement about our Lord is decidedly incorrect. In His incarnation our Lord Jesus became what He never had been before, perfect humanity; yet He did not cease to be what He always had been, perfect Deity. God is expressed in three distinct personalities, coequal and co-eternal with each other. The word God is in the plural. While some Hebrew scholars contend that this plurality is linked with the varied powers of God and not with His personalities, yet such Scriptures as Genesis 1:26; 3:22 and Isaiah 6:8 link these two together. The Father emphasizes the essence of the Godhead, the Spirit His operations, and the Son His manifestation. As the image of God, the Son became the visible representation of the invisible God.

Since creation this manifestation has taken on various forms, the most notable being those called the

“Christophanies” of the Old Testament. These were temporary visible appearances of God. In the incarnation “God was manifest in the flesh,” He took upon Him a permanent visible form. The Eternal Son clothed Himself in the garment of perfect humanity and thereby brought God near to man. As the Light He revealed God, and as the Word He declared Him. The character of God is perfectly revealed in Christ. He could say, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.” Not only did He bring God near to man, but in assuming our humanity apart from its sin, He became Kinsman (Heb. 2:14), Redeemer (Heb. 2:15), and Avenger (Heb. 2:14b) to the human race.

We must guard ourselves against the error that our Lord in taking to Himself humanity became a dual personality. This error perhaps has prompted the matter now before us. It is true that He possessed two natures, the one human and the other divine, but the human nature formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary was impersonal until the Son of God entered into it. “A body hast Thou prepared Me,” He said, and then added, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” The personality of Jesus was, therefore, the personality of the Divine Son. At which point of time the Divine Person entered into the body in the process of its formation is one of the great mysteries of Godliness. In what manner the human and divine natures of our Lord Jesus became blended also belongs to that mystery. Like the beautiful curtains of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, where the fine-twined linen was interwoven with the colours: blue, purple, and scarlet, our Lord’s two natures are so blended that we cannot say of His words and works that such and such

was accomplished by the human, and such and such by the divine.

However, as the Servant of Jehovah which He voluntarily became at the time of the incarnation, He did leave many things in the hand of the Father (Mark 13:32. Acts 1:7), and submitted Himself to the Father's will; yet He never did abdicate the throne of Deity. Mr. William Hoste has pointed out that the word rendered "emptied" in Philippians 2:7 would be nearer to the original had it been rendered by the word "effaced." The Lord did not empty Himself of anything in order to become incarnate; on the contrary, since the incarnation "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

No, the Creator did not become a creature; but the Creator, the Eternal Son of God, added to Himself perfect humanity, so that as perfect Man and perfect God He went to the cross and made atonement for sin. There the true Daysman, as the Son of God placed His hand on the throne of Deity, and as Son of Man placed His hand on our ruined race. The antitype of Jacob's ladder reached both Heaven and earth, and bridged the mighty gulf between our souls and God.

Yours in Christ,

R. McC.

Many thanks, Brother McC. for your excellent comments on this apparently clever but improper clause. To what you have said, one or two points might be added in confirmation.

The title "Only Begotten" as applied to Christ is used in regard to His Deity. The second part of this title is derived from an adjective, not from a verb form, which

means origin, race, or stock; therefore, it must imply that Christ was not derived from, or subordinate to, the Father, but that He was unique, that Jesus is all that God is, and that He alone is this. Nevertheless, let it be remembered that His humanity is God only begotten. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit; consequently, His humanity is unique, different to that of any other human.

Two of the great Christological passages of the New Testament teach that even in His perfect humanity Christ is considered the Creator: “His dear Son: … the image of the invisible God (His appearance in humanity): …For by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven and that are in earth” (Col. 1:1317).

In His humanity the Lord Jesus is the outshining of God’s glory, the identical image of His substance, and His final message to man. Of Him as such, we read, “Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds” (Heb. 1:13).

Revelation chapter five indicates the true position of the Lord Jesus. As the Lamb of God, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David (What emphasis upon His humanity!), He prevails to take the book and to execute the purposes of God relative to the earth, and as He does so “Every creature (Obviously, He is not one of them) which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (V. 13).

Here the Lamb of God, Christ in His humanity, Christ the Redeemer, is acclaimed by every creature in all the Universe, The logical implication is simple; Christ, even

in His humanity, is not referred to in Scripture as a creature.

—Editor.

The Forum (Jan 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 1, Jan 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Brother G.:

Would the brethren associated with Food for the Flock care to express their views about the tendency in some places of addressing God in the third person; as for example, “Thank you Lord,” or “We ask You Father”?

P. P. L.

Dear P. P. L.:

It would be difficult to get the views of all the several brethren associated with this magazine. Each, of course, is as free to use the Forum as is the Editor, and it is hoped that some of them might do so. It is also hoped that other brethren will give some guidance in this and any other matter discussed in this department. The views presented this month are those of the Editor. Other contributions to the discussion should be forwarded promptly.

A spirit of reverence always must be evident when we approach God, and that in both our comportment and language. It is well to recall the words of the wisest man, Solomon, “Keep thy feet when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart

be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Ecc. 5:1-2). This admonition suggests control of both our ears and our mouths.

We rejoice in the intimate relationship that the redeemed bear to God, and that by the Spirit of Adoption they cry, Abba Father. Notwithstanding, to enter the presence of the Lord requires a reverent attitude and a reverent language. Our Lord Jesus said, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him" (John 5:23).

It is quite disconcerting that, in the manner in which the second and the third persons are used in direct address to God, modern translators, according to this divine statement, dishonour both the Son and the Father. This is true in both the recent American and English versions.

In addressing God as God they still retain the second person, and address Him as Thou, Thee, and Thine; but in addressing the Lord Jesus they use the third person, and employ the pronouns you and yours. They thus wrongfully distinguish between the Father and the Son, implying that the latter is inferior to the former. The Word of God always assumes the absolute equality of each person in the Godhead.

Although there are many attractive and helpful changes in these recent works, this purposeful irreverence comes as a great surprise to genuine Christians. It appears that a technicality in translation work is being used to deprive, in the mind of the reader, the Lord Jesus of His essential Deity. This fact in itself ought to make any

devout Christian very cautious lest he employ any construction in grammar that would be disrespectful, and any form of address that might link him with the impious intentions of modernistic scholarship.

The excuse given by some for the use of the third person in addressing God is, the use of the second person is too archaic, therefore, a more modern use of language is necessary to keep pace with our times. The fact that the most modern of scholarship in works so recent employ it in translating direct address to God, is a refutation of such an excuse. The proper use of the different persons in grammar is only the employment with precision of the fine points of modern English.

In writing to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul asserts, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13). This closing clause has been variously translated. One translation which is in direct accord with the entire verse reads, “Fitting spiritual truths with spiritual language.” The inference is obvious, divine verities merit special handling. Language that is rough and crude is unsuitable for the expressing of holy things. It must also be that any language that is too familiar, a language that man would use in addressing his fellows, is unbecoming before the Lord. We must learn to use, not the words that modern men in their wisdom would suggest, but rather a language reverent and dignified that the Holy Spirit would find adequate for His purpose.

While it is unkind to make a man an offender for a word, one has to admit that when he has listened to God being

addressed in the third person, it has sounded too common-place, and even disrespectful, to be appreciated. Furthermore, he does not believe that this resentment is the outcome of tradition. Definitely it is inconsistent with the majesty, infinite holiness, and righteous character of God, to use the same language in addressing Deity that would be used in addressing ones own equal.

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17).

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Feb 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 2, Feb 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Advocacy of Christ

Dear Ed.:

Please explain the word “Advocate” as applied to Christ. We were told in the Bible class that it means “one who comes alongside to help.” Is not Christ always within us? How then should we think of Him as being away from us and coming close to help when we sin?

Yours truly,

A Reader.

Dear Brother:

Our Lord Jesus Christ exercises three great ministries from the right hand of God: they are mediation, intercession and advocacy. The first is linked to our alienation as sinners and rebels. He is the only One in all the universe who can introduce a poor sinner to God (1 Tim. 2:5). This ministry is expounded in Romans, and is exercised on the basis of His propitiation (Rom. 3:25-26).

The second is linked to our infirmities as saints. This ministry is explained in the Hebrews, and is likewise exercised on the basis of His propitiation (Heb. 2:17). It is the same word as in Romans. He succours the

tempted, and leads on through all the vicissitudes of life to final victory (Heb. 7:25).

The third is linked to our failures as children. This ministry is taught in 1 John. Like the other two ministries, this too is exercised on the basis of His propitiation (1 John 2:3). I might add here that the New Testament word propitiation is the exact equivalent of the Old Testament word atonement. It means satisfaction. The satisfaction that has been given to divine justice in the work of the Cross to meet all our need, from conversion to glorification.

It is true that the word “advocate” means one who comes alongside to help, However, this requires a fuller explanation than what was given in the Bible class. The same word is applied to the Holy Spirit, and is translated Comforter in John 14-16. Note that the Lord said, “I will send you another Advocate,” meaning that He, himself, was an Advocate while here on earth. In what way was He an Advocate while here on earth? He stood by us in all our need as sinners. He stood surety for us before the demands of the stern justice of God. The full weight of God’s wrath against sin fell on the head of our Advocate until every demand of holiness was met and satisfied. God put the seal of approval upon Christ’s work of atonement by raising Him from the dead, and by exalting Him to be a Prince and a Saviour at His own right hand.

From the right hand of God our Lord sends the other Comforter or Advocate, namely, the Holy Spirit. Acting on the intercession of the first Advocate in Heaven, the second Advocate on earth “helpeth our infirmities” (Rom. 8:26). He strengthens and supports us

in all our weaknesses and guides us through all confusion and temptation to peace and victory. Mr. August Van Ryn has pointed out that there are three prepositions used in the Holy Spirit's relationship to the people of God (John 14:16-17): "Abide with them," "Dwell with them" and "Be in them." The first means "among," the second "alongside," and the third "in." This writer says, "Among us for power and worship in the assembly; He is by the side of each believer for help and guidance; He indwells us for fruit and fellowship." In the same way Christ can be within us as the hope of glory, and at the same time represent us before the face of the Father in Heaven.

Not only was Christ our Avocate while on earth to deal with the question of sin, not only has He sent the Holy Spirit to deal with the question of our weakness, but he is an Advocate now with the Father to deal with the question of our failures. Observe that He is an "Advocate with the Father." This means that while the failures of the children break communion with the Father, they do not break relationship.

The Advocacy of Christ in Heaven takes on a legal form. The picture is that of a lawyer taking up the case of his client and assuming full responsibility before the law. But an earthly lawyer may not be able to satisfy the law on behalf of his client. Our Advocate is more than able to meet the demands of God's law on the basis of the abiding efficacy of His atonement. Always, where the word advocate is used there is an adjective to describe the holiness of our counsel "the Spirit of truth" or "Jesus Christ the righteous." Even in the work of restoration everything is done to maintain the rights and purity of the law of God.

We are given an illustration of how the advocacy of our Lord works in Luke 22:31-32. The Lord saw the temptation coming and prayed for Peter. The work of restoration began, not when Peter repented, but when he was being led into sin. Though Peter's courage failed, his faith was sustained. When the Lord prayed for Peter, the Spirit of God began to work on Peter's conscience. Godly sorrow wrought repentance, and Peter was restored, restored in conscience in heart, and to his position of service (John 21).

Sincerely,

R. McC.

Dear Brother:

The word for advocate (parakletos) is used in the New Testament both as a title of the Holy Spirit and for the work of the Lord Jesus as Priest at God's right hand. In John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7 the Lord promises another "Comforter" (parakletos). This Comforter is the Holy Spirit, and is the same word as Advocate in 1 John 2:1. "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate (parakletos) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The word, parakletos is a combination of two words: para—beside and kaleo—to call. It, therefore, means, one called to our side to help. Technically though, the word was used of a legal assistant, counsel for the defence, an intercessor. We have, therefore, two Advocates; the Holy Spirit, dwelling in our hearts, to comfort, encourage, teach and guide, and the Lord Jesus on the throne to plead our case when we sin. Of course, it is also true that the Lord Jesus dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). He is also "at hand" that is, by our side (Phil. 4:5). He is all this because He is divine and has the

divine attribute of omnipresence. But above all He is personally present on the throne in Heaven performing priestly functions on behalf of His people. His work as Advocate comes into operation as soon as we sin. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, (Heb. 2:17), but He is an Advocate with the Father (John 2:1), indicating a family relationship.

We have a lovely word in Africa which is used to express this idea. An advocate or comforter is sometimes called a kasendo mukwashi. The first word kasendo means a blood-brother, one with whom a solemn covenant sealed in blood has been made. The second word mukwashi means, one who helps by laying hold. The Lord is both to us, a kasendo mukwashi.

By Grace,

Ernest T. Wilson

The Forum (Mar 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 3, Mar 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Comments on How to Address God

Dear Brother in Christ,

Just a few lines to say that my heart greatly rejoiced and really overflowed as I read The Forum, December issue of Food for the Flock.

My heartfelt thanks to Brother McClurkin, who, I think, answered the question that had been raised, and, to you also, dear brother, for your additional comments (Christ, Creator or Creature).

When our beloved Lord Jesus Christ is given His rightful place, words fail. I cannot begin to tell you of the thrill and deep joy that was mine as led by such ministry into God’s thoughts concerning His dear Son.

Also the lovely poem by E.M.G. touched me deeply.

This copy of Food for the Flock was read and meditated upon while spending some weeks in a hospital after a major coronary attack.

Much love in Christ,

W. D. Sr.

Dear Brother,

Many thanks for the warning in regard to the method of discrimination between the Father and the Son adopted by some of the modern translations. Those who thus dishonour the Son likewise dishonour the Father.

T. N. K.

Dear Mr. G,

I was very interested in your answer to the question on "How to address God" in the last issue of "Food for the Flock." While I personally agree with the final conclusion that the use of the personal pronoun "Thou" and its objective form, "Thee," are seemly in addressing God, it is for precisely the opposite reasons you brought forward.

"Thou" is the nominative second personal pronoun, singular, and was formerly used in familiar, not reverential, address. It is now replaced by "You," as current English no longer employs the familiar form, certain British dialects and "Quakers" excepted. The formal "You" is employed, even in a singular sense.

Three hundred and fifty years ago the familiar form "Thou" was chosen instead of the formal, reverential "You," when both forms of address had very definite meaning. The same distinction may be observed in Protestant French Scriptures to this day, where the ordinary, familiar form "Tu"' is used in addressing God, rather than the formal or reverential "Vous."

To suggest, then, that "the language that man would use in addressing his fellows, is unbecoming before the Lord," is in this instance exactly opposite to the meaning of the word "Thou," and to the intentions of the English

translators who in a bygone age used the word in a familiar sense.

To insist that “Thou” and “Thee” are more fitting spiritually than “you” would be to create a Shibboleth, and make Jacobean English the language of the Holy Spirit. We must be careful not to invest words with meanings or overtones, especially of a spiritual or reverential nature, which they do not in fact merit.

The child of God may truly delight in the informal, familiar form “Thou,” and its cognates “Thee,” “Thy,” “Thine,” and “Thyself,” for they bespeak the delightful intimacy that is ours, and imply no lack of reverence whatever.

However, if anyone is unfamiliar with these now-archaic forms, except, perhaps, as a “religious” form of address, and is not able to use them according to their true meaning, he would do better by far to employ such words as are meaningful to him, even though they may at times fall a trifle harshly on the ears of those steeped in a language of former centuries.

Reverence is present (or absent) in the demeanour and sentiments of the speaker, not in his choice of Jacobean rather than current English words.

May I be permitted to express my keen appreciation of the ministry of “Food for the Flock,” and I trust you will accept the above corrections in the gracious ‘spirit in which they are made.

Yours very sincerely,

Dr. E. J. R.

Dear Mr. G.:

I'm writing you with a few comments on your letter in the January Food for the Flock with reference to addressing God in the second person plural. I, like you, find it distasteful to hear God addressed in this person, but after having given it a great deal of thought in the past, I have not been able to come to the conclusion that it is anything more than the result of tradition, much as I would like to justify my feelings by something more authoritative.

The second person singular is the person used for God in other languages such as French and Spanish where it is still used in common speech, so that it is not reserved for Deity even today in these languages… but we wouldn't want to say that they are less reverential than we. In connection with this point, I think it is interesting to note that the person used for Deity is the person which is used for family, close friend and servant relationships… it would be insulting to use it to a dignitary. I have never looked into the question of its usage in English in a bygone day, but I would not be surprised if it was the same, because the phrase "Your Majesty" has come down from old times, and signifies that the second person plural was used in addressing royalty in English at all times. It is not "Thy Majesty." Is it not strange that the person that is used for addressing God in Spanish and French is one that would be an insult if used to any official person or even an unknown stranger? I have thought a lot on why this is the form used for God, and I have wondered if it goes back to apostolic times when the early Christians were instructed in their new relationship with God…He was no longer the Jehovah whose name they even feared to write in full… but Abba Father, and they had the

relationship of little children to a father… hence the “tu” relationship.

In spite of the foregoing I still find the plural person irritating when used … but, if I’m honest, I think I must admit it is because of the tradition of my background.

Yours in the Lord,

R. W.

The Forum (Apr 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 4, Apr 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Comments on How to Address God

All Christians will surely agree that our approaches to God should be with reverence and in good taste. It may be that these can exist in the abstract, but when they are expressed it can only be in some suitable attitude or form of speech. Kneeling, bowing the head and closing the eyes are ways we have of expressing reverence when engaged in prayer. And the type of language which for centuries God's people have used in speaking to Him or of Him is still generally felt to be suitable and appropriate. It has an atmosphere about it that is suggestive of reverence and is conducive to it. This accounts for its still being adhered to even in very "modern" translations and paraphrases of the Scriptures.

It is true, of course, that the terms, "Thou, Thee, and Thine" are no longer usual in every-day conversation. Years ago they were commonly used forms of the pronoun in the second person singular. Today, in ordinary usage, the plural forms "You, your, etc." are generally used as singulars. The earlier usage has, for ordinary purposes, been abandoned.

But these are not the only expressions that have come down to us from the past which, in spite of an ancient

flavour, are still in use. Such titles, for instance, as “Your Majesty,” “Your Honour,” “Your Excellency,” are still in good standing. (It is Scriptural to use such terms in their proper places; see Luke 1:3; Acts 26:25). To dismiss them as mere relics of the past, and use in their stead terms used in greeting the man in the street, would mark a man as ill-bred and ungentlemanly. If, as an excuse, he were to plead that the “old” terms were not part of his accustomed vocabulary, he would be told, in no uncertain terms, that it was time he learned to observe the proprieties. And if such proprieties are expected to govern our speech when dealing with human dignitaries (even in a democratic country!), shall we be less deferential when addressing our God, who is “greatly to be praised” and whose “greatness is unsearchable?” Let us be slow to adopt a way of speaking that is out of keeping with hallowed associations, and that seems to smack of too great familiarity.

Some will not too readily agree with these conclusions. It is quite understandable, for instance, that a man who has been but recently led to Christ, and whose former associations were altogether of a worldly character, might not be acquainted with language which, to most Christians, is familiar. (Some, however, seem to learn very quickly!) Others again are impressed with a supposed need to make the Christian’s vocabulary conform in every particular to that of every-day conversation. They expect that this will ensure a readier understanding and acceptance of the Christian message. But has not this “problem” been overstated?

We should not brand our brethren as wilfully irreverent because they do not express themselves in the manner

that has long been accepted and that appeals to us as still fitting. But it may well be urged that, before committing themselves to a new vogue, they give the whole matter careful and prayerful study.

—F. W. Schwartz

Dear Brother G:

I received today the March issue of your magazine, and the correspondence in The Forum has solidified some of my thinking and prompted me to express some of my thoughts on the same subject, that is, How to Address God.

To me, in the present day, the formality of the forms ‘Thee’ and ‘Thou’ has replaced the familiarity of these words as used some centuries ago (as Dr. E. J. R. points out). When these were used in the Bible translation of the seventeenth century, they corresponded to our present-day term ‘you’ and were in common use.

Even more important is the fact that the Scripture was originally written (at least, the New Testament) in the common, everyday, idiomatic, commercial language of the people, not in the so-called classical Greek. ‘Thee’ and ‘Thou’ can scarcely be farther from this.

Thirdly, I feel that this use of outmoded language in our Scriptures, our hymns and our prayers tends toward departmentalizing our lives so that the things of God are left to Sunday and to a language ‘turned on’ for the purpose, rather than being a reality in all that we do. This has been a problem in my own life, and in others’, as well. It has become important to me to be free and natural in my conversation with God, which the archaic forms of expression and common cliches used,

prevented. I most heartily agree with your statement of the need of reverence in talking with God, but I feel that the use of one word over another does not necessarily impart that reverence to the communication. This reality is the whole subject of Mr. Phillips' book, God, Our Contemporary from which is taken the quotation on the first line of the inside cover of the March magazine.

In conclusion, and perhaps by way of explanation of the above views, I should state that I am a young man and am seriously concerned over this question. In any ministry, I find that the use of 'you' in reference to God so startles and offends the listeners (especially older ones) that the effect is lost from what has been spoken, and therefore I refrain from using it. In conversation with some elderly people on this subject, I am aware that it would be a major upheaval in their thinking to institute such a change after fifty years of communication with the Lord in this manner, and as a young man, I would respect my older brethren and sisters needs in this respect. However, there is a very noticeable change of attitude in some of the younger people, who seek this natural but reverent communion with God, and it is on their behalf as well as my own that I have sought to present our side of this discussion, and to present it for your comment and criticism, that in our lives as well as our conversation and our prayer, we might give to Him that "honour and glory for ever and ever" which is His due.

I would also add my appreciation to that so often expressed in The Forum for this magazine and its challenge to thinking Christians who would honour their Lord. Please continue to "provoke us unto love and good works."

Prayerfully yours in Christ,

R. N. T.

The Forum (May 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 5, May 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Are All Promises for the Christian?

QUESTION:

A recent speaker told us that the promises of God throughout the Bible were for us today — that we should accept them in Christ's Name.

Another recent speaker said that if we rightly divide the Word of Truth, the Church would not be claiming what actually belonged to Israel.

Some of the young folk would like to have this contradiction explained.

Yours truly,

A.C.C.

ANSWER:

Both statements will bear a little qualifying. The one is just a little too sweeping, while the other might be understood as too restrictive.

There are promises given to specific persons or to a specific nation, dealing with matters of immediate concern to them. For instance, Abraham was promised a posterity and a land (Gen. 12:2, 7), and David was given promises relating to the establishment of his throne (2

Sam. 7:12, 13, 28). It is evident that these promises, or others like them, have not the same meaning for us as they had for those to whom they were given. But, on the other hand, every promise relating to matters of interest to children of God as such may properly be claimed by any child of God today.

To treat the Old Testament, or any large part of it, as if it had no voice for us now is a serious mistake. In Hebrews 13:15 there is a promise quoted which had been given originally to Joshua (Josh. 1:5; Deut. 31:8). It is quoted without qualification as an encouragement to all God's people. And do we not recognize similar words of comfort in many other Old Testament passages which may legitimately be treated in the same way? Who would willingly part with such passages (to name only a few) as Isaiah 40:31; 41:10, 13; 43:1, 2; Psalm 46:1, 2? These, though "Written aforetime," have often brought "the comfort of the Scriptures" to us (Rom. 15:4). And that comfort was clearly intended to be derived from the Old Testament, for when the Apostle wrote of it there were no other Scriptures extant.

If certain passages, in their primary meaning, belong to Israel, let us not divorce them from their context. But neither let us hesitate to receive any encouragement or comfort from them. Someone has truthfully said that "We may suck all the honey out of Israel's flower and leave the flower intact for Israel."

—F. W. Schwartz.

Paul's comments on this question are found in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "How many soever be the promises of God, in Him (Christ) is the yea: wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through

us” (R.V.). God Himself is the inexhaustible source, and Christ both the channel of supply and the medium through which our thanksgiving and praise return. Christ is worthy of the title, “The Amen, the faithful and true witness” (Rev. 3:14).

—Ed.

The Forum (June 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 6, June 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Brother:

Could you give me some information on the Nicolaitanes? What are their deeds and doctrines as mentioned in the letters to the seven churches? Since it is so hateful in the sight of the Lord, I feel we should guard against it. Have we any of these people today? Is it the doctrine connected with clerisy?

A brother in Christ.

Answer: Since history is unable to trace any sect of the Nicolaitanes, the term must be interpreted by the meaning of the name itself. To quote Mr. F. W. Grant, “The word is made up from two Greek words that mean “Conquering the people.” The last part of the word (Laos) is used in the Greek for “people,” the word from which the commonly used term “laity” is derived. The Nicolaitanes were just those subjecting, putting down, the laity, the mass of Christian people in order unduly to lord over them.

In the church at Ephesus their deeds were hated. In the church at Pergamos deeds crystallized into doctrine or fixed principle. Deeds refer to the dominating attitude on the part of a certain class of men. This attitude became fixed when they installed themselves as a

religious hierarchy and subjected the people to a false authority, which in turn was contrary to the authority of the Risen Head of the Church. This was the beginning of what eventually became priestcraft or clerisy in the professing Church.

Alongside the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes in the church at Pergamos was “the doctrine of Balaam.” Both words have a close connection. To quote Mr. Grant again, “Balaam is the Hebrew word as the other is the Greek and means “destroyer of the people.” The doctrine of Balaam destroys by an unholy mixture of the genuine and false, and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes conquers by an unholy authority.

It has been suggested too that the verb to devour in 2 Corinthians 11:20 is very closely linked with the word “Nicolaitanes.” 2 Corinthians 11:20 describes the rise of the clerisy in the church of Corinth: “For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.” It is possible that the church in 3 John is the church in Corinth. If so, then the deeds mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:20 become a doctrine in the person of ungodly Diotrephes.

It may be well to point out here that there are three marks of religious apostasy in the Epistle of Jude, which Epistle forms a fitting preface to the Book of the Revelation: “the way of Cain,” the rejection of the Work of Christ; “the error of Balaam,” the corruption of the Word of God; “the gainsaying of Core,” the repudiation of the High-Priestly authority of Christ. Our only safety is in keeping near the Cross, in maintaining a holy reverence for the Word of God, and in manifesting a

humble subjection to Him whose authority alone is supreme in His own House, the Lord Jesus.

Few assemblies may be free from the spirit of Diotrephes. Both the assemblies and the servants of Christ should pray earnestly to be kept from the spirit that has divided Christendom into clergy and laity.

R. McC.

The Forum (July 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 7, July 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

“The Toast”

Dear Brethren,

Could you please tell me what is the origin and meaning of “The Toast” so often proposed at weddings now; I mean Christian weddings.

Sincerely,

C. S.

Dear C.S.

To “toast” means to drink to the health of a person, and is a custom of long antiquity, practised by the ancient Greeks and Romans — although the word “toast” has been applied to this custom only since the 17th century when it initially referred to drinking to women. It appears that the name was derived from the habit of placing a piece of toast in the cup; in drinking the toast, the cup had to be drained to get the toast, which, being saturated sank to the bottom. While alcohol is a usual constituent of most toasts, non-alcoholic drinks may also be used.

For the Christian, two problems arise — first, the taking of alcohol and second, the observance of a custom. In the writer’s considered judgment, Christians should, as

far as possible, abstain from alcoholic beverages — the rare instances of its medicinal use being exceptions. It is unnecessary here to point out its potential dangers to a Christian: even when taken in small quantities infrequently, habit formation can result. Perhaps a more important consideration is the influence one may have on others, who can readily be stumbled by the example of a fellow-believer. The important teaching of Romans 14 (see especially verses 13, 15, 21) and 1 Corinthians 8 (especially verses 11-13) is particularly applicable to this problem, and we should be careful not to put any stumbling block in the way of others. The writer has known of believers, addicts to alcohol in their unconverted days, being severely tempted on occasions when alcohol was being consumed, and especially when they saw mature Christians indulging in it. What a tragedy if we should be the means of encouraging such to return to their former ways — or of giving some young believer an appetite for liquor! Surely it behoves us to refuse it personally when served at weddings (or other occasions), and not to provide it at Christian weddings for which we may have responsibility.

While we should not be “conformed to this world,” there are many customs in everyday life which we observe and which in themselves are harmless and useful: this applies to many of the practices at weddings, and, in the writer’s judgment, to the drinking of toasts — with the proviso above relating to alcohol. Drinking of toasts at a wedding is simply a communal expression of good wishes for the health and blessing of bride and bridegroom and others toasted —in which we would all wish to join, and which would not seem to violate Scripture or the writer’s conscience.

Yours in Him,

Dr. J.N.

The Forum (Aug 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 8, Aug 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

A Review of Dr. DeHaan's Booklet on the Temptation of Jesus

We have every respect for Dr. De-Haan as a Christian gentleman and a sincere appreciation for the great radio Gospel work he is engaged in. However, in the interests of truth we must challenge his teaching relative to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The booklet states that it was possible for the humanity of Jesus to sin; that His temptation in the wilderness would not have been a real one if that possibility had not existed. The premise on which he builds his argument is the assumption that our Lord possessed two personalities as well as two natures and that only the human was involved in the crisis. We reject this assumption as an unsound and dangerous exegesis of the biblical revelation of the Person of Christ.

Our Lord did not become two persons at incarnation. It is true that He had two natures, the human and the divine. But it is also true that the human nature of Jesus was an impersonal nature until the Personality of the Eternal Son entered into the body which God prepared in the womb of the Virgin. He could say when about to enter that body, "Lo I come… A body hast Thou prepared Me." Were it possible for the human nature of Jesus to

yield to temptation, then it would be the will and action of the Eternal Son that would flow through that nature. The fact of the existence of such a possibility would be a flaw in the otherwise perfect character of God's beloved Son.

Let us think for a moment of the dire consequences of our Lord's yielding to sin. The very throne of the Universe would topple. Its moral code would disintegrate by the fall of the moral Governer of all creation. The Creator and Sustainer of all things would discover Himself devoid of the power to control the very creation He brought into being. Moreover, the relationship of the divine Trinity would be affected, resulting in a chaos we dare not contemplate.

It is true, if we may express ourselves in the words of another, "That our Lord's temptation was fought in the field of our humanity and won by weapons available to every child of God. It was necessary (as the Example of His people and with a view to His Priesthood) that our Lord's perfect humanity be disciplined by sorrow, matured by conflict, and strengthened by endurance." It is also true that, while being tempted in all points like as we, He was apart from sin. Not only apart from original sin, but apart from the possibility of sinning.

There is everything in us that responds to temptation. These tendencies in the Christian are counteracted by the impartation of the new nature and the controling power of the Spirit of God. In the Man Christ Jesus there was nothing to respond to temptation. He could say, "The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." The Bible says of the new nature in every believer that "It cannot sin." Since that new nature is fashioned

after the image of Christ, we ask, how then was it possible for Christ to sin?

Dr. DeHaan seeks to compare the humanity of Adam with that of Christ. He draws the conclusion that if Adam in his perfection could respond to temptation so could our Saviour. He also suggests that Adam was responsible for the act of Eve, his wife. 1 Timothy 2:11-15, clearly shows that Eve, by virtue of her disobedience, bore her own responsibility before the Lord, and brought an additional curse upon her sex. The devil waited for an opportunity when Eve was alone. In the absense of Adam Eve was a prey, and acting in the absence of her head, she fell. When Adam saw her involved in the ruin, he identified himself with her in it, not because of his love for sin, but because of his love for the woman. The devil knew not to make a frontal attack on Adam; Adam would have been superior to such attacks. Satan simply waited his time to bring Adam down through the weakness of another.

In a much greater way our Lord was superiour to the attacks of the devil. Every attack, instead of probing the weaknesses of His humanity, proved its perfections. He was the true meat-offering in whose humanity there was none of the leaven of sin. The fine flour mingled with oil was the symbol of His perfect manhood, every feature of which was in balance. The symmetry of that perfect life reflected the character of the Father and rendered the devil impotent in the field of conflict.

Adam, though innocent, lacked much that our Lord possessed in His human nature. He lacked the knowledge of good and evil. He was not conscious of the potential danger in one act of disobedience. He was

therefore incapable of hating evil. Our Lord by virtue of His pre-existence had a perfect knowledge of good and evil. He watched the fall of Lucifer and his angles. He saw the havoc their sin had wrought in the universe. He hated sin with a true and holy hatred.

It may be said, too, that Adam, though innocent, was not perfected for eternal happiness. He was placed on probation with the capability of exercising the power of choice for either good or evil. Our Lord had no such probation or prohibition of “thou shalt not.” He was the Eternal Son who became incarnate for the purpose of Redemption. His Divine Personality flowed through both His natures. His was the will and choice of that perfect humanity. It could not be possible that the will of the devil, a mere creature, be stronger than the will of the Son of God. As it is impossible for God to lie, so is it for God to sin in any respect. It is not impossible for an unfallen creature, in his probationary state, to think evil. Lucifer did so and fell. recognition. What our Lord refused Adam did so and fell. Incarnate Love “thinketh no evil.” Of Him it is written, “He knew no sin,” — no sin was ever conceived; “He did no sin,” — no sin was ever committed; “in Him was no sin,” — no sin was ever inherent.

Another contrast between Adam and the Man Christ Jesus is, “That in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” This means that the full totality of the character and attributes of Deity were resident in Jesus. “God was manifest in flesh.” It was the divine will of the Eternal Son that resisted every attack of the devil in the full knowledge of what evil is in all its variety and with a holy hatred of sin, impossible in the humanity of Adam.

The writer of the booklet says that it could not be a real temptation unless there existed the possibility to sin. We ask, why not? The sensitiveness of His holy natures made temptation all the more real. “He Himself hath suffered, being tempted.” Take a sensitive, innocent little girl who has been brought up in a loving Christian home and put her in the midst of drunken, swearing and filthy men. Her sensitive soul would shrink with horror in such a foul atmosphere. Our Lord felt more keenly the filthiness of this wicked world than any other human being. Every foul suggestion, every snare or trap laid for Him, added additional suffering to the Man of Sorrows. Every sight of cruelty and injustice roused His holy and righteous indignation. The utter repulsion of His holy natures to sin, His love and zeal for the Father’s will and that loving compulsion to accomplish the work of Atonement which would satisfy the justice of a holy God and lay the foundation for the blessing of man, rendered the defeat of the devil inevitable and Christ’s fall impossible.

Why Then The Temptation ?

Dr. DeHaan says the temptation was to prove that a sinless man like Adam could have had the victory over Satan, and that we Christians too may overcome him. This, of-course, is true. But there is more to the temptations of our Lord than that. Our Lord had come from Nazareth to baptism. At His baptism He officially entered upon His ministry which climaxed in His atoning death for the salvation of mankind. But He must first bind the strong man, the devil; this He did in the conflict in the wilderness, after which He returned in the power of the Spirit to spoil his goods. Immediately He

conquered three specific enemies, fever, leprosy and demon possesion (Mark 1). or the restlessness, the loathsomeness, and the power of sin. Then we view throughout Mark's Gospel, the majestic march of Jehovah's Servant, conquering and to conquer, on His way to the Cross, where the head of the serpent received its deadly wound (Gen. 3:15).

By entering into the conflict, our Lord as the representative man wished to expose the sublety of Satan's attacks on all saints. The temptation revealed the fallacy of misdirecting the powers of our humanity, to do evil that good may come, to seek short cuts in the mission of life or to exchange common sense for supernatural display. The three perils, of materialism, sensationalism, and escapism ever confront God's people. The devil's temptation to satisfy, to display and to glorify self is always with us. Our Lord in perfect humanity left us an example to meet such attacks effectively.

The temptation reveals that the devil's work is to corrupt the legitimate desires of human nature. These desires seek their realization through the body, soul and spirit. These have been described as: physical satisfaction, material possession, and public from Satan, He received as a gift from the Father. The lesson we all may learn from this is, God will always compensate every act of self-denial for His glory. "He that believeth shall not be ashamed."

Right motives preserve the purity of all legitimate desires and give quality to all the motions of our being. Our Lord, in resisting Satan's attacks, demonstrated that motives are retained in their purity by our

dependence on God, our confidence in God and our devotedness to God.

Moreover, the temptation of Jesus teaches us that what we receive by selfish means will always result in spiritual loss. It will damage our devotional life by breaking our fellowship with God. It will hurt our Church life by stumbling on the stone of sensationalism and losing the protection of God. It will impair our vocational life by missing the direction that leads to the true goal of all Christian service.

From the temptation of our Lord we are also taught the real emphasis of life, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;” and the guiding principle of life which is faith and not presumption, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” Our Lord was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. He did not deliberately run into temptation. The temptation also emphasizes the true object of Life. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Jesus is the Author and Finisher of faith. He began the life of faith and finished it to the glory of God. Now as the Captain of our Salvation He is leading many sons to glory by the same path that He Himself trod. That path, according to Hebrews 2, is marked by suffering, worship and dependence. In company with Him our foes are impotent, and without His company we are impotent. When the Church militant becomes the Church at rest, it will be “this same Jesus” who will come to receive her unto Himself. Then, with His glorified saints He will meet the devil in deadly conflict to clear the way for His own glorious Kingdom. We ask, will it be possible for

Him to sin in that Day? He will be “this same Jesus,” If not, why not? Surely all lovers of the Saviour will cry out, “perish the thought!”

May the Lord preserve us all from irreverently lifting the lid of the true Ark of the Covenant of play with a mystery too profound for the finite minds of men to understand. “Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.” We behold, with holy reverence and worship, the God Man. We view Him with joy and satisfaction, the one Divine Personality of the Eternal Son expressed by both His natures to the glory of God, the defeat of the devil, and the blessing of mankind and all consistent with the holiness and justice of God.

In closing, it is superfluous to say that the weapons with which the devil defeats the saints are they that we ourselves put into his hand. These are the weapons of a soiled conscience, discouragement, unbelief, etc. With these he wounds us in the conflict, but none of these were effective against Christ. With the sword, “It is written,” Christ slew the devil. That power is available to each one of the saints, it is recorded, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.”

“Like man He walked, like God He talked,

His words were oracles, His works were miracles.

Of man the finest specimen, of God the true expression;

Full-orbed humanity, clothed with Deity,

No taint of iniquity, No trace of infirmity,

Ecce Homo — Behold the Man,

Ecce Deus—Behold thy God.”

The Forum (Oct 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 10, Oct 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Mr. Editor:

By way of humbly submitting the following to you, may I take this opportunity of saying how we do enjoy the contents of your monthly publication. Further to the comments made in the “Forum” as contained in the last few issues and referring firstly to April’s issue, I would like to state how fully one agrees with Mr. F. W. Schwartz’s excellent contribution. Secondly, in regard to the statements made by R. W., in a previous issue, while it is quite right to regard the 2nd person singular in the Spanish as being the familiar tense, namely “tu,” may I point out that when used in reference to God, it is almost invariably preceded or followed by one of our Lord’s titles; admittedly, we can also do that in our English language, but we must remember that while we use “you” in a familiar sense, the Spanish “tu” carries with it a deeper degree of courtesy and respect, familiar, yes, but at the same time, most respectful, equivalent to our “Thou.” The term “you” has been changed from olden times as regards man to man of equal standing in life, but was never intended for use when addressing dignitaries, much less the Person of God. Up-to-date Bilingual Dictionaries all give for “tu” — Thou, Thee, Thine and Thy, “you” is not even shown. We simply cannot reconcile one language with another, there are

shades and degrees of meaning both proper and correct for every phase and rank of our conversation and each must stand alone in its own light and beauty. True, as mentioned by R. W., in Spanish we use “tu” for God, which would be out of place when speaking to a person whom we had just met for the first time, which in such a case would then be “usted,” but one must bear in mind that in Spanish we have several different words for “you,” depending on the occasion to hand, whilst in English it is used at all times when addressing one another, but if such shows a lack of respect when addressing a high dignitary on earth, what reason can we give to justify ourselves before God? The familiar Spanish short singular form of “vos” is another term we can add, for man to man. They also have an upside down question mark in Spanish, which in English does not exist, so we can see that languages do not necessarily follow a certain “pattern.”

Finally, by way of illustration, at my place of employment as Translator, my helper, younger in age and length of service, never uses the very familiar phrase “te llamaron,” but rather “le llamaron,” as in “you were called,” only a slight variation and both standard, but usage depends on “standing.” If such is our marked distinction to one another here on earth, how much more should we, creatures of His Creation, bestow the place of honour due only to Him, who is a Holy, yea, Thrice Holy God. Modern tendencies are to lower the standards in everything, but shall we as Christians join hands with the world? Surely we can know and realize His Presence in us and with us daily, without using none other but the highest seal of reverence to Him who

saved us by His Grace alone, thereby honouring that worthy One.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

D. S. M.

This letter from an Argentinian is worthy of serious consideration. It forms a good complement to earlier discussions. — Ed.

The Forum (Nov 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 11, Nov 1963.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Brother in Christ:

A group was discussing certain points in a passage of the Bible. The word reconciliation was in the passage, and no one was very sure what it meant, particularly according to its usage in the Scriptures. Most thought that it means a little giving on both sides in order to restore a happy relationship, but God is never wrong, is He? Could you please explain what reconciliation in the Bible really means?

An inquiring believer,

I. C.

Dear Brother I. C.

The word reconciliation means to produce harmony where there is discord and disunity, where there was nothing but variance. Let us look at it in three ways:

Its need: This is described in Colossians 1:21, “And you that were sometime (once) alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled …” The cause of our alienation from God is said to be “wicked works.” These are the product of an evil nature inherited by birth. We all are part of a fallen and depraved race. Alienation, estrangement, soon manifests itself in hostility and enmity toward God.

Its foundation: The basis of reconciliation is the atonement of Christ. This is the message of Ephesians 2:16, “And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”

Its extent: It has been said, “Christ by virtue of His atonement reconciles man to God, man to man, man to himself, and man to duty” (F. W. Robertson).

(a) Christ, by virtue of His work on the cross, reconciles man to God. Calvary revealed two things, the character of God as a God of love and the power of that love to destroy the enmity and hostility of the human heart, thus making peace.

(b) He reconciles man to man. He makes in Himself of Jew and Gentile one new man. First there is peace with God; then there is peace man with man, in a new society of redeemed humanity.

(c) He reconciles man to Himself. Unregenerate man acts at variance with his own conscience. Sin destroys the harmony of body, soul, and spirit, and fills the human heart with discord and a sense of utter frustration. Only the work of God through the Holy Spirit can restore and bring into proper spiritual balance the mind and will of man so that he can live at peace with himself. 2 Corinthians 5:14 puts it this way, “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”

(d) He reconciles man to duty. This is accomplished, not by a change of circumstances but by fitting him to live for God’s glory in the place where his lot is cast (Phil.

4:10-13). The noblest life on earth is the life that remains ever faithful to the will of God in the face of adversity.

No, reconciliation is not the giving of a little on both sides; it is the complete surrender of the soul to a loving God in order to enjoy fellowship with Him and His beloved people, to live in harmony with one’s own conscience by finding true peace in God and in obedience to His blessed will.

Your brother in Christ,

R. McC.

The Forum (Jan 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 1, Jan 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Brother in Christ:

The other night I attended a Gospel Service and the preacher spoke from the parable of the ten virgins. He said the foolish virgins were unsaved because they had no oil which speaks of the Holy Spirit. But in Matthew 25:8 it says their lamps had gone out. Doesn't this infer that they had had oil and used it up? Can we have the Holy Spirit and then lose Him? Please explain this to me.

Your in Him,

M. J.

Dear M. J.

Broadly speaking, the parable is given to teach the following truths: The feast speaks of that felicity that awaits all who trust the Lord Jesus. The wise and foolish virgins contrast those who truly possess salvation to purity and those who merely profess but have no real possession of eternal life which is imparted to the believing soul as a gift from God. The oil is the grace of the Spirit producing that faith that worketh by love. The vessel is the heart of the Christian in which the oil resides. The lamp is the outward profession of that which is enjoyed within.

The preacher was quite right in using this parable to illustrate the difference between the saved and unsaved. The parable, however, does not teach, nor does it infer, that one can have the Spirit and then lose Him. It is true that the foolish virgins had oil. It was in their lamps, which speaks of profession, but not in their vessels, which is the heart and speaks of possession.

The unsaved are not entirely without the Holy Spirit. He deals with them in grace, convicting them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. Because of fickleness of character or lack of honesty towards God, this will sometimes lead to a profession in which there is no reality — the stoney ground hearer of another parable. Without oil in the vessel, or the Holy Spirit in the heart, this profession only lasts a little while. The coming of the Lord will test the reality of all profession.

Yours in Christ

R. McC.

The Forum (Mar 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 3, Mar 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Sir,

I have been much grieved of late in walking into the morning meeting to see so many sisters with short hair, trimmed so as to cover nothing of the neck. I feel that this is showing a rebellious spirit, especially on the part of some who have been saved many years.

I am not out for very long hair, but I believe in a length that will result in a good conscience, and that, of course, may vary with different individuals. The phrase, “How short is short,” does not make sense when a person has already cut her hair very short. I love some of these Christians very much, and this makes it hurt all the more.

Personally I am willing to set aside much of what is only tradition, for we have had too much of this at times. Nevertheless, we must not set aside what God’s Word plainly states.

One sometimes wonders what the angels think when they look down and see some of us sisters in rebellion.

Am anxious to see your comments on this question, not only for my own good but for that of others.

Saved many years

M.R.

An exercised correspondent has written us asking why godly saints are being grieved by certain sisters who cut their hair short, and who fail to wear a proper head covering at assembly meetings. This correspondent asks if the hair of the sisters should not be long enough to give one a good conscience in the presence of the Lord and His angels.

The truth of the double covering for our sisters in 1 Corinthians 2 is acknowledged as sound doctrine by all assemblies. It is therefore not a lack of knowledge on the part of some who ignore what is plainly taught; but, alas, a mark of disobedience. Some will insist on coming with a net on the head which is not even an excuse for a covering. What a sight for angels to behold! What a mark of lawlessness in the sisters' dress. It is not hard to discern some of the reasons for this disregard of godly order.

One is the failure on the part of elder brethren to bear the responsibility that devolves upon them as overseers. It is their duty to see that all carry out what is plainly taught in the Word of God. In a kindly manner they should insist on godly deportment in all the gatherings of the saints.

Another reason for this disorder is the setting aside of the truth of eldership altogether, and the substituting in its place a general business meeting where every babe and novice in the assembly has as much to say about church administration as the matured, experienced, and godly shepherds.

To substitute a business meeting for a godly oversight is to contradict the clear teaching of the Word of God, and to destroy the scriptural government a the assembly.

Perhaps there is another reason; we live in an age of change. The craze for change has come in among us. Many of the old landmarks have been removed and new ones set up. But I confess that many of the new ones are inferior to the old for some of these changes have infringed even upon divine principles, albeit they profess to be simply a change of method.

It is not only an age of change but an age of shallow thinking. Fixed convictions have been shaken and a spirit of irreverence has crept in. We no longer stand in awe at the Word of God, and the fear of God has so little grip upon our souls. There is more money, more planning, and more activity than ever, but, alas, godly saints yearn for a return to first love, first works, and first principles. We need to be led out of the quagmire of shallowness into a deeper knowledge of God and His ways.

R. McC.

The Forum (Apr 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 4, Apr 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Brother:

Referring to the question last month in the Forum about women's hair and head covering, there are two matters touched on in the question and these should be considered separately. The writer who has asked for light, specifically refers to the question of the length of women's hair, but the questioner goes on to wonder what the angels think when they look down on the sisters today. From 1 Corinthians 11:10, the angels are looking at, or for, the covering which women should have on their heads, not at their hair or the lack of it. As to the latter part of the question, generally all in assemblies today recognize and practise the teaching of the Scriptures and the doctrinal principle involved that women should wear a head covering when attending meetings of the church. This is not the hair but a veil or hat.

I quote the following from J. R. Littleproud's The Christian Assembly under Appendix E. by Lester Wilson: "Some claim the veil referred to is the hair. Let us look at a verse in this passage (1 Cor. 11), verse 4, "Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonoureth his head." If the covering referred to is the hair, then any man praying or preaching with hair on his

head dishonoureth his head, which is Christ. Therefore, only a baldheaded man could pray or preach. — The Apostle says in verse 6, “For if the woman be not covered let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.” Let us quote this verse using the hair as the covering. “For if the woman has no hair, let her be shorn.” Does that make sense? Now read it with the covering being the veil or hat. “For if the woman goes without a hat, let her be shorn.” That is, if a woman is not going to wear a hat, but have her hat off like a man, then let her have her hair cut off like a man; but if it be a shame, then let her keep her hat on.” For those having access to the above book, there will be real profit in reading Appendix E in its entirety.

As to the matter of the length of women’s hair, 1 Corinthians 11:15 simply states that “if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her” and in contrast verse 14, says “that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him.” A woman’s hair, then, should be long. But some immediately ask: How long? One obvious answer from the context of the passage in 1 Corinthians is that it should be sufficiently long to be sharply in contrast to a man’s short hair. Note that nothing in the passage forbids trimming or cutting the hair. But, a woman’s hair should never be made to look like a man’s, and the converse is also true, a man should never let his hair grow to look like a woman’s.

Sisters should not be conspicuous in their dress and appearance, and this would apply to the way the hair is worn. “Women (should) adorn themselves in modest apparel — not with broided hair or gold or pearls or costly array —” (1 Tim. 2:9). Extremes in hairdress

which includes very short hair as well as obviously old fashioned hairstyles, either of which would attract undue attention, should be avoided by the Christian sister desiring to please the Lord.

Sincerely S.G.

The Forum (May 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 5, May 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Lord's Supper

Question: "Recently heard of a minister in one of the denominations who said as he prepared to administer the holy communion (?), "In the times of Christ it was the custom to use bread and wine, today we use donuts and coffee at our times of good fellowship; that is what we are going to do now."

A missionary from among the assemblies stated in my hearing that as far as he was concerned, if wine was not available, he would use water.

May I have your opinions on these extravagant assertions."

—Anxious

Answer: How sad it is that so many errors in thought and practice have crept into the observance of the Lord's Supper — the occasion that should be among the most holy and blessed for the Lord's people this side of Heaven! To this simple feast, some have added ritual — more or less elaborate — that has deprived it of its simplicity and beclouded its real significance. Others have taken away from it essential features, robbing the symbols of their true meaning and value. To the latter category belongs the suggestion made in this question.

It should be noted, too, that the term — used so frequently in many circles — “to administer the holy communion” — is hardly scriptural.

Simple though they are, and common articles — staple food — in Palestine, the elements of the feast instituted by our Lord are significant symbols. It is important to recognize that the Lord’s supper is not primarily a “time of good fellowship”; it is an occasion to remember the Lord and to show forth His death till He come (1 Cor. 11. 24-26). Donuts and coffee may express our fellowship together but hardly our remembrance of our Lord and proclamation of His death. The bread, betokening the Bread of Life on whom we feed, and reminding us of the corn of wheat that fell into the ground and died, speaks loudly to us of His body given in death for us at Calvary. The outpoured wine, fruit of the vine, crushed and bruised, symbolizes His blood shed. The more we ponder the articles our Lord took, the more we must appreciate that He did not choose them only because they were common and simple but because they were full of meaning.

It should be observed, however, that, in all the records of the institution of the feast (Matthew, Mark, Luke), and in the instructions on the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians, the contents of “the cup” are not specified — though indicated by our Lord’s subsequent words “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine.” May it not be that the writers purposely used the term “cup” rather than the “wine” it contained, so that, in places where wine is unobtainable. the Lord’s Supper can still be celebrated? Wherever possible it is desirable to use the fruit of the vine as used by the Lord Himself. But, in extraordinary circumstances where this is impossible, it

would seem better to remember the Lord, using a cup of water than not to remember Him at all.

J. N.

The Forum (June 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 6, June 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Mr. G.

“A group of Bible class folks would appreciate an explanation of Mark 4:11-12. There were times when He said “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” Why, in this parable: “…lest at any time,” etc.

—Kansas City, Mo.

ANSWER: The Gospel records make it clear that, during our Lord’s ministry, the attitudes of men to Him and to His blessings varied as they do today. Some rejoiced at His coming, acknowledged their need of Him and sought His help. To them He spoke, as He does today, words of gracious forgiveness, and gave physical and spiritual blessings. Others, however, hardened their hearts and closed their eyes, refusing the light of His Person and teaching. Concerning those, the Lord spoke the words referred to in Mark 4, verses 11 and 12. The “lest at any time” clause indicates the consequence of their own attitude and their wilful rejection of Christ, by which they brought upon themselves judgment instead of forgiveness, blindness instead of enlightenment. This passage and the parallel portions in Matthew (13:1415) and Luke (8:10) refer to the message given to the prophet Isaiah of old (Ch. 6:10), quoted also in John 12:40 and by Paul in Acts 28:26-27. A study of these

passages will make it clear that it is hearts that have already been hardened that God hardens, and eyes that will not see that He blinds. The solemn lesson for today is that, as in the days of Isaiah, the Lord, and Paul, so now, those who obstinately close their ears and eyes to the truth, and harden their hearts to the Lord's mercy bring upon themselves His judgment. If, however, they truly seek the Lord, He will "abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7).

—J.N.

* * *

Q. What is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 6:4 "If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the Church." Who are they who are least esteemed in the Church?

A. Perhaps the Revised Version makes the reading a little clearer; "Do ye set them to judge who are of no account in the Church?" meaning the Gentile magistrates in the law courts. Paul says as it were to the Church at Corinth, you who are destined to judge the world to come and to judge angels (perhaps fallen angels at the Judgment Throne of God) have lowered your dignity in not being able to settle the smallest matters among you. You have gone to the secular courts of the land to have your problems settled by unsaved men who are of no account in the Church.

Q. What does it mean in Isaiah 45: where it says, "God creates evil?"

A. It does not mean that God creates such evil as sin, but rather the punishment which may be an evil calamity

that sin deserves. The evil He cerates is the punishment that His justice must measure out against sin.

R.McC.

The Forum (Aug-Sept 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Aug-Sept 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Brother:

One is much surprised at the answer given in the Forum of the May Number, especially with the latter part and its conclusion.

It is well known that the expression “the cup” is a figure of speech called metonymy, signifying its contents. We are not left in doubt as to what this is — as the writer says, “It is indicated by our Lord’s subsequent words,” “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine.” As the word “wine” is never used in Scripture in regard to the contents of the cup, we may not be too dogmatic as to whether or not fermented wine is meant. It is known also that in the keeping of the Passover Feast in ancient times a liquid produced by the boiling of raisins was used. The bread (or loaf) used was an unleavened wafer. However, bread (artos) is the usual term for the so-called staff of life, and is used by the Lord at the institution of “the feast” (Matt. 26:26). Consequently, it is scripturally called “The Breaking of Bread” (Acts 2:24; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23).

Now, there most certainly are circumstances envisaged in the Word in which a disciple or disciples (walking in fellowship with the Lord) would not be able to “break Bread.”

1. A single or solitary disciple must perforce abstain.

2. A single sister or any number of sisters would obediently refrain.

3. So scripturally, if for any reason or circumstances “the fruit of the vine” is not procurable, it would not seem to be in the will of the Lord to begin with a substitute. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

The watering down or away (the diluting) of the element of any ordinance opens the way to the departure from the scriptural observance of the other i.e. baptism. If “the fruit of the vine” could be interpreted as water then an equally good exegesis would be that the amount of water in baptism is immaterial, it may be sprinkling, pouring, or immersing in the liquid. Such an exposition of the Scriptures is associated with much heresy and error.

May the Lord sustain you in your service for Him!

Fervently through grace,

—M.B. Mac

The Forum (Oct 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 10, Oct 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Editor:

Could the following statement taken from Bible Problems and Answers, page 135, be used to compliment an answer given by R. McC. in The Forum of the March issue in regard to substituting a general church business meeting in place of a godly oversight?

I thought the answer given by R. McC. very good and would like to see a further consideration of his thoughts.

The Question: Is it scriptural to call the whole assembly together to discuss business matters in the assembly?

The Answer: from Bible Problems and Answers, Hoste and Rodgers: “I do not know of any Scripture which would favour such a custom and judged merely by ordinary standards of common sense and business principles, I should think it very unlikely to result in good to the business or to the assembly as a whole. What profit could come from listening perhaps to differences among elder brethren? An assembly of God is not a debating society nor a democracy, in which rule is from beneath, it is a theocracy in which rule is entrusted by the Holy Spirit to those He has fitted for the work. “Take heed….to all the flock (not your flock) over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers”

Acts 20-28. Read Hebrews 13:7, 17. also 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13.

The answers which follow are from two experienced brethren, one who has spent many years on the mission field, the other who has gained considerable experience among the assemblies on this continent.

Answer (A.N.)

The local assembly in Philippi comprised Saints — all in the assembly; Bishops — overseers or elders, with spiritual responsibilities; (Phil 1:1). Deacons — serving in business matters and also, when necessary, in ministry.

The ‘Bishops’ (overseers) and ‘Deacons’ are grouped together. This is suggestive.

The ‘Oversight meeting’ is usually one that requires elders and deacons to be closely associated in conferring together on matters relating to the assembly. Such a meeting should be held regularly and there the business matters of the assembly discussed.

Special matters of a spiritual nature, involving questions of doctrine or procedure based on doctrine, or moral conduct of individual members, may wisely be entrusted to the elders (or bishops or guides), who watch for souls. Such meetings would be convened as occasions arise.

In addition to these, since all the saints give regularly to the Lord’s work and the recurring expenses of the assembly, they should be kept informed regularly of the financial position of the assembly, the expenditure and distribution of the offerings, and general proposals for larger future expenditure and additional assembly activities. For such reports and proposals, a fellowship

meeting of all the saints in the assembly twice a year has often been found necessary and always profitable.

Answer (J.N.)

From such passages as Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3, it is evidently the Lord's will that local churches should have both "bishops" (overseers, elders, pastors. See 1 Peter 5:1-4) and "deacons," and that both should have spiritual qualifications for their work. While Scripture does not give us direct guidance as to meetings for discussion of business matters, such meetings are obviously necessary and should be convened from time to time as convenient. Elders, having a particular care for the spiritual well being of the assembly, will wish to meet to ponder the spiritual needs and problems of the believers and the work. These meetings may be regular or called for on occasions; by their nature, they should be private gatherings of the oversight. Matters for prayer and consideration will include: the spiritual progress (or lack of it) of the babes in Christ as well as more mature believers; evidence of spiritual lethargy or backsliding in any — and the appropriate steps that should be taken; visitation needs and problems, discipline, and restoration; requirements of spiritual food and ministry, etc.

Li addition, more general meetings — of both elders and deacons—to consider particularly the financial and material aspects of the work of the assembly will profitably be held at regular intervals. These should in no way replace the meetings of elders.

Bitter divisions are more than a weakness, they are a sin. The Lord prayed for us: "That they all might be one … that the world may know" and, surely, one of the

saddest reasons for the failure of our evangelistic efforts is our tragic lack of unity. Paul in 1st Corinthians deplored the “Paul” and the “Apollos” and the “Cephas” parties in the church in Corinth, but his strongest reprimand was for those who actually dared to boast: I (only) am “of Christ.” Let us be exercised about fostering the unity, the Lord prayed for, lest we be “ashamed before Him at His coming.”

The Forum (Nov 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 11, Nov 1964.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

The Fruit of the Vine

Dear Mr. G.

I am grateful to brother M.B. Mac. for his comments in the August -September issue of “Food for the Flock” on my answer to the question in the May number relating to the Lord’s Supper. The expression of different viewpoints is profitable as it stimulates to further searching of the Scriptures to see “whether those things are so.”

The question at issue is whether or not, in circumstances where wine is completely unobtainable, water or some other substitute might be used in our remembrance of our Lord. The alternative, of course, is not to remember Him at all. Our brother rightly emphasizes the Scripture, “To obey is better than sacrifice,” and the writer wholeheartedly agrees that, in any matter, obedience to the Word of God is of paramount importance. In this case, however, not to remember the Lord is disobedience to His expressed command, reiterated in His Word, whereas the use of a substitute for wine is not contrary to any Scripture, since, as previously pointed out, in no record of the Lord’s Supper is the content of the “cup” specified. Today, the fruit of the vine is readily obtainable in most

parts of the world, but in the early days of the Church, with more limited transportation facilities, it might be almost impossible to procure in certain countries. Were believers there never to obey their Lord in remembering Him? Or did the Lord in His wisdom and grace forsee such circumstances and speak simply of the “cup” so that they could use such contents as were locally available? In our day the problem may not often arise and the writer would be the last to suggest the use of a substitute if the fruit of the vine were at all procurable.

Our brother fears that such practice might lead to departure from the Scriptural mode of baptism. “If,” he states, the fruit of the vine could be interpreted as water, then an equally good exegesis would be that the amount of water in baptism is immaterial.” I trust it is clear that the writer does not “interpret” “the fruit of the vine” as “water,” but rather suggests the latter as a possible substitute in very exceptional circumstances. Nor does he see how this would in any way influence the practice of baptism. It could be argued with equal validity that the practice of non-observance of the Lord’s Supper could lead to nonobservance of baptism.

With warm greetings, Yours in our Blessed Lord,

—J.T.N.

The Forum (Feb 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 2, Feb 1965.

The Book of Life

Dear Brother;

I am writing for the Ladies' Home Missionary Class (myself included). We are taking up Revelation and have a comment on chapter 3:5 which has disturbed us. The comment reads: "The Book of Life appears to be a record of all who profess to be believers, whether born again or not. God accepts them on their profession, and then demands the evidence of a transformed life as a proof of reality. Those who are Christians in name only will have their names removed from the Book of Life. No true Christian will suffer this fate; instead his name will be confessed by Christ before God the Father and the holy angels."

Some discussion arose from this statement, and such questions were asked, as for example: "Would God write a name, then blot it out, why go to that extent?" Also, "Fancy a book in Heaven smeared through as this one would have to be."

Many years ago brother McClure spoke here on Revelation, and as I remember it, he spoke of the blotting out as something similar to what churches do when a member leaves, in contrast to which God writes the believer's name permanently.

We certainly would appreciate any help you can give us on this disturbing question.

Christian love to you and yours from all of us.

In Him,

—F. G.

The Book Of Life

The Book of God in the Old Testament apparently refers to a record of both the righteous and the sinner (Ex. 32:32), and to the possibility of certain names being blotted out; this stands in contrast to the references to the Book of Life in the New Testament.

The term actually occurs five times in the New Testament, once in the Epistle to the Philippians and four times in the Book of the Revelation. (It should be noticed that the rendering Book of Life in Revelation 22:19, should read Tree of Life).

An examination of four of these references reveals that in three out of the four, the record contains only the names of the redeemed.

Revelation 13:8, distinguishes between the believer and the unbeliever, and asserts that the names of believers were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life before the foundation of the world; they were chosen in Christ in that indefinite past (Eph. 1:4); whereas the names of the unbelievers are not written in the book.

Revelation 20:5, implies that only the names of the saved are recorded in the Book of Life, and the same idea is carried over into Revelation 20:12.

Philippians 4:3 definitely gives the same impression, only believers are recorded in this divine register of the living.

With these references being so clear, we must accept the reference in Revelation 3:5 to imply the same, and seek an explanation in accord with this conclusion.

To state in an arbitrary way, as does one expository of The Revelation, “In chapter 3:5, the Book of Life is the record of Christian profession; in chapter 13:8, the Book of Life is the record of reality. In the former the true and the false are found; in the later the true only,” is, to say the least, inconsistent and sets one reference at variance with another.

The statement, “I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life,” is one meant to give absolute assurance. In the Greek this sentence has a double negative. The Lord Jesus used a similar double negative in one of His public addresses, saying, “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). The full force of His words being, “Him that cometh unto Me I will never no never cast out.” In this passage in Revelation, the Lord is giving the same assurance. “I will never no never blot his name out of the Book of Life.”

This promise was made to the church of Sardis which suggests the time of the Reformation, that period of church history when the Church of Rome stormed and threatened with excommunication all she classed as heretics. These words of assurance implied that although saints be expelled from the professing church, and their names be blotted out of the church roll, God would not erase them from His records, the Book of Life.

The Forum (Mar 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 3, Mar 1965.

Overseers

Dear Brethren:

Is it proper in an assembly of normal size for one brother to assume practically all responsibility? We mean by that, for one man to act as trustee of the property, correspondent, treasurer, Bible Class leader, etc. and to participate in almost every other activity of the assembly?

Sincerely,

Disturbed.

Dear Brother G.

In making an answer to the question in The Forum, this is what I have learnt from the Word and our experience. Not if there are other brethren morally and spiritually suitable in the same assembly, and capable of sharing the responsibilities involved.

Gifts differ, and it is well and desirable that ministry should be shared and responsibility assigned in accordance with spiritual gifts and character.

Often the gracious retirement of elderly brethren who have held office, done service, and exercised their gift over a long period, is beneficial to the assembly. The delegation of responsibility to younger men to take their place should be kept in mind constantly.

I trust this reply may prove helpful.

With cordial Christian love,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A. N.

At the beginning the churches had the apostles to give wise counsel, spiritual guidance, and shepherd care, but God did not reveal any means for the perpetuating of their office. He removed the men, ended their office, but left to the Church their inspired writings. In their stead He raised up elders and deacons. As Mr. William Kelly suggests, “Although the Apostle was not at Philippi, they had the bishops and the deacons, not a bishop and several deacons, and still less bishops and presbyters (or, priests) and deacons, but several of the higher spiritual guides, as well as the lower.”

In Paul’s address to that local church his greeting is, “To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and the deacons.” His greeting is not to the leaders of the church, the overseers, and then to the assembly, but to the entire assembly. Obviously Paul considered the spiritual guides as part of the whole, but not superior to or higher than the church herself.

Spiritual guides should be in the plural number in each assembly. It was definitely thus in Philippi, the church to which reference has been made. It was thus among the churches of Galatia (Acts 14:23), and at Ephesus (Acts 20:28). This was likewise true among the Hebrews (Heb. 13:17).

The only instance recorded in the New Testament where one man assumed a major, if not the entire responsibility in church administration is found in 3 John. The account

is not a very complimentary one. No one would be envious of the reputation of Diotrephes.

It is well to bear in mind the principles established in the Scriptures for they present to us the ideal. In a very small assembly where, at times, one brother must administer most of the assembly affairs, every opportunity of sharing responsibility with another will be appreciated. As young men develop and manifest the necessary qualifications, their assistance should be welcomed.

The world humorously states, “The committee of one gets the matter done,” but in the things of the Lord the ultimate is accomplished by the proper functioning of the respective gifts.

Editor

The Forum (Apr 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 4, Apr 1965.

Dear Brother:

Could you please explain the difference between an apostate and an heretic, and tell me can a true born-again Christian become either one or the other.

Yours by grace,

—H.S.J.

An “heretic” is a schismatic or factious person, according to the meaning of the original Greek word from which it is transliterated. It occurs only in Titus 3:10, where an opinionated person, who persists in pressing certain views to the detriment of the whole counsel of God and of the unity of the Spirit, is to be shunned after repeated remonstrance fails to dissuade him. This instruction occurs in the context of contentions and strivings about the law being termed unprofitable and vain. A closely related Greek word is translated “sect” in Acts 5:17, 15:5, 24:5, 26:5 and 28:29; also “heresy” in Acts 24:14; and “heresies” in Gal. 5:20, where it has the force of “schools of opinion”. The close connection between heresies (sects) and divisions (schisms) is clearly intimated in 1 Corinthians 11:18, 19. A born-again Christian can unfortunately lend himself to the propagation and practice of heretical (sectarian) views, which the Apostle Paul rebukes in the Assembly at Corinth. The “damnable” heresies of 2 Peter 2:1 are the particularly virulent propagations of apostates.

An “apostate” is a person guilty of “apostasy”, the Greek word for which is translated “falling away” in 2 Thess. 2:3. It here implies wilfull abandonment of the truth and complete defection from the faith. It connotes the considered, formal repudiation of a profession that lacked the root of reality. Judas Iscariot is a classic apostate. The anti-christ, as the man of sin, heads the religious apostasy predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2. He apostasizes from Judaism (denieth that Jesus is the Messiah) and from Christianity (denieth the Father and the Son), according to 1 John 2:22. He first appears “like a Lamb” (a wolf in sheep’s clothing) but soon speaks “as a dragon”, betraying his true colours, as depicted in Revelation 13:11. Jude emphasizes most solemnly the “Acts of the Apostates” —angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, Cain, Balaam, Korah, and a host of others, characterized as “without fruit, twice dead.” Apostates are irrecoverable — “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” John says “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us” (1 John 2:19). A born-again Christian cannot become an apostate, for God’s seed remaineth in him (1 John 3:9) and to such the Apostle says “Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation (Heb. 6:9).

—R.F.H.

The Forum (May 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 5, May 1965.

Assembly Principles

This excellent letter is in reply to the question appearing in the March 1965 number regarding overseers. Not only does the firm scriptural premise commend this answer, but so does its spiritual tone.

Assembly principles are previewed in the Old Testament, predicted in the Gospels, practised in the Acts, and promulgated in the Epistles. The consistent witness of this wide variety of instruction precludes the idea that ministerial gift, governmental authority and financial control can properly be concentrated in and monopolized by a single brother in a local assembly.

The tabernacle in the wilderness perhaps provides the most complete Old Testament typology of Christ and His Church. And here we find upright boards to represent the common standing and corporate unity of church saints, and Aaronites, Kohathites, Gershonites and Merarites to illustrate the divinel-appointed distention of services and division of labour by which assembly activities are to be performed.

In Matthew 18, the very passage in which the Lord speaks of a gathering of somewhat less than “normal size” (two or three gathered together to His Name), He counsels an injured brother to carry his final appeal not to a specially prominent official of the assembly, but to the assembly itself.

Acts 6 shows a plurality of apostles and deacons functioning in the Jerusalem assembly; Acts 13 reveals a plurality of prophets and teachers ministering in the assembly at Antioch; and Acts 20 mentions a plurality of elders governing the Ephesian church.

Paul addresses a plurality of saints, bishops and deacons in the salutation of his Philippian epistle; insists upon diversity in unity (many members in one body) respecting the exercise of spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4; and enjoins Titus to ordain a plurality of elders in every city.

Diotrephes draws the scathing censure of the Apostle of Love (3 John) for demanding preeminence, rejecting apostolic authority, attacking with malicious words, manipulating formal fellowship, and casting gracious brethren out of the assembly. What a practical denial of the true composition, unity and scriptural regulation of a local church! Should a brother in an assembly of normal size find the great majority of decisions, services, ministry and control devolving upon himself, well might he appeal to his brethren to seek the Lord with him in concerted prayer, that the traits of a normal assembly might be developed in his assembly of “normal size”.

—R. F. H.

The Forum (Aug-Sept 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1965.

Baptism And Reception

Dear Brethren:

I have been in the assembly for years and believed one should be baptized before he could partake of the emblems. A young brother has come into our assembly teaching that this is not so. If one confesses the name of Christ as Saviour, he can partake. Also the Lord's table should be open to any one that confesses the name of Christ no matter what denomination he may come from.

I am confused on this matter, would you please explain?

Yours in Christ,

I. R.

Dear I. R.:

We regret that confusion has arisen from differences of thought in regard to believer's baptism and reception into the assembly. One dislikes anything that mars the peace of mind and fellowship of the saints. Consequently, it behoves all of us to be careful lest we disrupt the spiritual quietness of God's people. This should be the attitude of all, particularly younger brethren (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

Frequently we should examine our church practices in the light of the principles taught in the New Testament. The Word of God is our final authority, not tradition or custom. It is difficult to break from a course of long use,

but the honour of the Lord and obedience to His Word are of paramount importance (1 Sam. 2:30).

The Conference of Brethren recently held at Guelph, Canada, prayerfully and in the fear of God considered both of these subjects. Shall copy here some of the recorded questions and answers hoping that they may guide your thinking and exercise.

Baptism is connected with evangelism (Matt. 28:16-20); whereas, the Lord's supper is linked to the fellowship of saints (1 Cor. 11:23-34). If these are maintained in their proper perspectives confusion will be avoided.

1. Is a believer received only to the Lord's supper? Unless only a visitor, he is received into all the activities, responsibilities, and privileges of the assembly.

2. Should there be a difference between a visitor and one who wishes to remain in the assembly? Yes, a visitor should be received if he complies with scriptural qualifications regardless of his affiliations. It is as serious a matter to refuse fellowship to one who meets scriptural requirements as it is to receive one who contravenes these.

3. Must a person be baptized before he is received into the assembly? Baptism is not a bar to reception under certain circumstances; however, refusal to be baptized is contrary to Scripture. The early Church baptized on conversion, therefore before reception.

4. What should be done with the visitor, say from a denomination, who continues to attend indefinitely; in other words, how long is a visitor a visitor? It is the responsibility of the elders to interview him regarding

the fuller and more permanent fellowship of the assembly.

5. Who receives into fellowship, the elders or the church? The whole church. Uusually two or three elders interview the Christian to be received, and then make public their recommendations. Should there be no valid objection, under this guidance, the assembly welcomes the person.

There is nothing new or novel in these answers; they represent the thinking not only of the present but of the earliest days of the assembly movement.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. G.

The Forum (Dec 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 10, Dec 1965.

Baptism and Reception

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning matters are requested.

Dear Brother G.

Would you please insert the following in Food for the Flock? I enjoy reading it each month and find the ministry very helpful and instructive.

In our Family Bible Hour services we are getting a good number of the unsaved in, but why do so many of our preachers give a ministry message for Christians? Since this is the most favourable time for a gospel service, and since this was the original object of the Family Bible Hour, why withhold this from them? We are constantly praying for the salvation of souls, yet when we bring an unconverted friend, it is discouraging that the necessity and the way of salvation are not made plain. If it is asserted that we need ministry, and we do, may I suggest that it be given at the evening service when nearly all present are Christians.

Trusting that all concerned may be exercised about this matter before the Lord.

The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Prayer partner

In this regard it is well to remember the commendation given by Paul to the church of the Thessalonians: “So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

Dr. Campbell Morgan has an excellent comment on this passage: “From you hath sounded forth the Word of the Lord.” “Sounded forth”: that is, quite literally, echoed forth. Chrysostom said, “Sounded as a clear trumpet note.” “Sounded forth.” It is not that these people went everywhere preaching; but it is that these people, in their unity of life as a church, became an instrument through which the Word of the Lord was sounding forth. I would like to use another word than “sounded forth,” another word than echoed forth. I would like to use this word: “From you the Word of the Lord reverberated”; through the valleys and over the mountains, and away through Macedonia and Achaia, the Word of the Lord reverberated. The assembly at Thessalonica was like a transmitting station disseminating the news of salvation. In this they provide an illustration of what Paul wrote to the Philippians: “Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the Word of Life” (Phil. 2:15-16).

May the churches of the saints everywhere be really exercised to follow this apostolic example of evangelistic zeal and activity.

The Forum (Apr 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 4, Apr 1966.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Brother G.

The first chapter of the Book of First John is a study in contrasts —light versus darkness — and so hardly a place for one to find the doctrine of the restoration of the Christian who has broken fellowship with his Lord. This restoration rests on another principle entirely, namely that all our sins, past, present and future, were all forgiven and we were cleansed once and for all when we were born again by the Spirit of God through faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning work on the Cross. This puts the spotlight where it belongs — on the CROSS!

The non-Christian needs the forgiveness and cleansing of 1 John 1:9, if he will but honestly disagree with the terrible lie of 1 John 1:8 and apply the truth of sinfulness to himself. But there is the deep need for the Christian to honestly acknowledge his sin to himself — not explaining it away nor making excuses, but the idea being that he should make himself fully responsible for his own wrong conduct and unChristlike attitudes. Then, with God’s help, the sin must GO — must be forsaken — must be put out of his or her life or (and we know the answer) our loving Heavenly Father must of necessity apply the rod of correction.

Don’t you think that the weak and condemned flesh of each one of us who are “new creations in Christ Jesus” has leaned long enough on the crutches of the evangelistic approach of 1 John 1:9?

This no doubt, would be considered controversial writing. It is not intended to be that at all for I have reasons to believe that it is true to the Word. If it could be published, it would certainly give some of the Christians who enjoy thinking on the Word, something to “chew” on. I think I would humbly go as far as to challenge the thinking Christians to prove that it is not in harmony with God’s Word. Perhaps you could see it in your interesting Forum section. As always, appreciating you and your little magazine, may our Lord bless you in all that you do for Him in these peculiar days.

Yours, By His Grace

H. A. H.

The Forum (Aug-Sept 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1966.

The Bride of Christ

The following excerpts are taken from a communication submitted to the Editor asking help relative to a subject quite controversial among some believers.

"…I have never heard a systematic study showing that the Church is the Bride of Christ; it is rather considered to be a fact."

"…In Scripture the Bride is not mentioned from John 3:29 to Revelation 21:2 and 9, and in this latter verse, it is the Bride of the Lamb that is mentioned. The term Bride of Christ never appears in Scripture."

"…According to Jeremiah 31:32, Israel as a nation became the wife of the Lord when she entered into relationship at Sinai."

"…Paul speaks as a friend of the Bridegroom (John 3:29; note in contrast 1 Cor. 6:15-16). Paul speaks in the painful anxiety of a mother, the loving care of a father, and as the friend of the Bridegroom."

"…Scripture always uses the figure of a man to describe the present Body - Church."

"…Bride and Bridegroom, while in a sense are one, they are distinct. It is clear that we are members of Christ's Body and therefore part of the Bridegroom (Husband) himself."

"…The title virgin may be used for either sex, and indicates chastity and purity." —R. S.

R. S. and all other believers must realize that to engage in proper and well-organized research, it is necessary that all important terms be defined, especially those terms under dispute.

Obviously, in the excerpts submitted by R.S. there are three terms which we must understand clearly: “wife,” “bride,” and “body.”

For the first two the Oxford Dictionary gives these definitions: A wife is a married woman especially in relation to her husband, and in this relationship she stands in contrast to a mistress or a concubine. A bride is a woman on her wedding day, and for some weeks or days before and after.

The word wife occurs frequently in both the Old and New Testaments, and in several different contexts. The word bride is rarely used in either Testament (9 times in the Old and 5 times in the New), and generally in a restricted sense.

Nowhere in the Old Testament, in which we have the origin, development, ascendancy, and decline of Israel, is that nation called the bride of the Lord. In contrast, she is repeatedly viewed as a wife, and even as a mother (Isa. 50:1).

This pictorial language is used mostly by the Major Prophets and occasionally by the Minor Prophets. Jeremiah actually ‘pictures Jehovah’s marriage to Israel and their wedding trip together: “Thus saith the Lord: I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown” (Jer. 2:2). Of a later stage in Israel’s history Isaiah has this to say, “Thy maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name;

and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 54:5). There can be little misunderstanding here; there was mutual love and esteem between Jehovah and Israel in those early times of their relationship. Would to God that such had continued!

The Lord through Jeremiah describes the sin and departure of the nation, and does so in the terms of marital relationship. "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel" (Jer. 3:20).

Hosea was instructed to do, as a sign to Israel, that which would be repulsive to any man of character, to marry an impure woman, an harlot. All this was done to show in figure the unfaithfulness of the nation. "Go take thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms. for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord" (Hos. 1:2).

Ezekiel further describes Israel's departure from the Lord. The whole of his sixteenth chapter should be read in this connection: "The word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of Man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations… As a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband… Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted Me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head" (Ezek. 16:1, 31-32, 43).

Through Jeremiah the Lord clearly states that the sin of His ancient people was that of spiritual adultery, idolatry. "And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks" (Jer. 3:9).

So grievous was this sin of departure from Jehovah, this sin of idolatry, that we read, “I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce” (Jer. 3:8). We are informed that the technical fulness of these words suggests that they were actually the customary formula with which every writing of divorcement began.

In this the Lord distinguished between Israel, the northern Kingdom, and Judah. Although Judah witnessed the severity of God’s judgment upon her sister Israel, she continued in her sin until the Lord charges her with divorcing herself from Him and selling herself into slavery (Isa. 50:1).

In spite of all this, the day will come when Israel as a nation will be recovered and grace will triumph through righteousness. The Lord predicts, “I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness” (the place of their wedding trip — Jer. 2:2). “And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call Me Ishi (my husband), and shall call Me no more Baali (my Lord). For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name” (Hos. 2:16-17).

Israel’s relationship to the Lord is clearly that of a wife to her husband, a relationship entered into by the Lord out of love. Shortly after her bridal days, Israel fell into spiritual adultery (Jer. 2:2-3). For this sin the northern kingdom, Israel, was divorced (Jer. 3:8). The kingdom of Judah failed to learn by this lesson, and is charged with divorcing herself by her conduct (Jer. 3:10 and Isa. 50:1). Israel’s present relationship to the Lord is that of a divorcee, separated from Him but still using His name.

The Forum (Oct 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 8, Oct 1966.

The Bride of Christ

In our investigation into the matter of who or what is the bride of Christ, it seems obvious from our previous examination that Israel is not to be considered His bride, that the future marriage to Christ recorded in Revelation 19:7-9 is not Israel's marriage to Him. Furthermore, it seems plain that Israel, during this present period of time, is viewed as Jehovah's estranged wife, a repudiated wife who eventually will be restored to her Husband.

It, therefore, seems necessary to now examine any claims that have been made in this regard for the Church. Could she possibly be the bride of Christ? This interrogation demands an investigation into the commencement of the Church, her relationship to Christ, and her possible future, as well as some of the statements made by our correspondent.

The Commencement of the Church

Is it true that the Church is a fellowship that embraces all the faithful who ever lived: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, as well as Peter, James, John, and Paul?

One readily understands from a careful, prayerful reading of the Word of God that His dealings with men before the coming of Christ are different to His dealings with man after the coming of Christ. There is not only a B.C. and A.D. in time, but with the manifestation of the

Lord Jesus there is definitely a transition in God's purposes.

Certain facts before that transition and certain facts after indicate that the Church came into existence after the appearance of our Saviour, that it did not exist before. Seven reasons are found in the New Testament to support the contention that the Church did not begin until after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord, until after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Let us notice these:

1. The prediction of Christ to Peter is very interesting for it intimates that the building of the Church was, at that time, yet future (Matt. 16:13-20).

2. The foreshadowings in the Old Testament of the mystery that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body as the Jews had to be fulfilled as the Church was being brought into existence (Eph. 3:1-10). An example of this was seen in the work of Paul at Corinth. In writing to the saints there he cautioned them, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32). The Corinthians were no longer Jews and Gentiles, they were members of the Church of God; the mystery was fulfilled at Corinth.

3. The cross work of Christ had to be accomplished before that mystery could be fulfilled. Through His death Jews and Gentiles are brought together. "He is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14). Reference was made to this by James at the council in Jerusalem: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first

(That is, in the house of Cornelius.) did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14).

4. Christ had first to be exalted and in His exaltation be made the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:19-23) before that body could be organically linked to the Head.

5. The Holy Spirit had first to descend in order to baptize all believers into one body; this He did at Pentecost (1 Cor. 12:12-14).

J. R. Caldwell has a note on this reference in which he says: "Verse 13 is correctly rendered in the Revised Version, 'For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.' The Spirit is thus shown to be the element in which they were baptized, not the baptizer. It is the Lord that baptizes in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:2) where 'with water' and 'with the Spirit' should be 'in water' and 'in the Spirit,' according to the margin of the Revised Version. The reference is to some past action." That action was, without doubt, on the day of Pentecost.

6. The ministry of the apostles formed the chronological foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:18-20). To fulfill that ministry they needed the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Since the Church was brought into being on the day of Pentecost, its development and progress through the ministry of the apostles began on that same day, not before it.

7. The Holy Spirit had to come in a rather unique sense, and, according to the prediction of Christ (John 14-16-18), remains to progressively erect the spiritual building that will be God's eternal habitation (Eph. 2:-21-22).

From the evidence of these passages of Holy Scripture the Church did not exist before the ascension of our Lord; it was brought into being on the day of Pentecost, and its development results from the work of the Holy Spirit that is accomplished through the ministry of the apostles and those that follow them.

Having considered this matter, next month we shall look into the different relationships which Christ bears to the Church.

J. G.

The Forum (Nov 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 9, Nov 1966.

The Bride Of Christ

Part 3

The examination of the figures of speech used in the New Testament to describe the Church forms an interesting part of our investigation into who or what the Bride of Christ is.

Our correspondent states in his communication, and we quote his exact words, inserting only the articles for clarity, “Scripture always uses the figure of (a) man to describe (the) present Body, (the) Church. Ephesians 1:22 to 2:22: Goal is to make one new man. This would be a contradiction, to say this man was the wife of Ephesians 5.”

Let us first search the Scriptures to see whether or not they use other figures than that of a man.

The Church is a flock (John 10:16; 21:15-25. Acts 20:28. 1 Peter 5:2). Believers of this era could not be confined within the walls of Judaism; they must be led out of such a restricted area. The Lord Jesus said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.” The words in the last clause should be rendered, “One flock, and one Shepherd.” Dr. Alford’s comment reads, “The one flock is remarkable — not one fold, as characteristically, but erroneously rendered by A.V. — not one fold, but one flock: no one

exclusive enclosure of an outward Church, but one flock, all knowing the one Shepherd (Heb. 13: 20. 1 Pet. 2:25).

The Church is a temple (Eph. 2:21. 1 Cor. 3:16. 2 Cor. 6:16): In the marginal reading of the R.V. for temple we read, “Into a holy sanctuary.” God is enshrined there.

The Church is a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5-9) and Christ is the Great High Priest (Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 8:1; 10:21).

The Church is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17. Gal. 5:15) and Christ is the Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45).

The Church is a household (Eph. 2:19. 1 Pet. 4:17) and God is the Father over that house. There is a similar figure in Hebrews 3:6 where Christ is seen to be over His own house.

The Church is a Body and Christ is the Head (Eph. 1:22). This metaphor suggests not only that each member is vitally united to the Head, but that they are controlled by the Head.

The Church is a building (Eph. 2:20. 1 Pet. 2:4-5) and Christ is the Foundation and Chief Corner Stone; all His children are living stones built into the spiritual structure.

Let us now examine the figure of the new man mentioned in our correspondence. It appears only in this sense in Ephesians 2:15. In this passage, the words, “For to make in Himself,” literally mean, “in order to create in Him.” Here we are confronted by a new creation. This figure is used in 2 Corinthians 5:17 of the individual believer; here it is used of the entire community of the saints of this era. Christ is not only the Head of the material creation but Creator as well. We read, “All things were made by Him, and without Him

was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). In this material creation God created a man; that man fell and became so sinful that God repented that He had made him. The animosity and hatred between Jew and Gentile was only a proof that man was really fallen. In the new, the spiritual creation God removes the bitterness and enmity and creates a new man, one in which there is no antagonism but only peace.

The general subject of this passage is reconciliation. God reconciles Jew and Gentile racially, and then spiritually He reconciles both unto Himself. The new man is the figure of speech the Lord uses to picture for us oneness in the Body of Christ.

The general subject of his passage in Ephesians is reconciliation; God reconciles Jews and Gentiles in Christ, and also reconciles both to God. We have, therefore, both racial and spiritual reconciliation.

To press any metaphor beyond the meaning supplied by the context can only lead to an erroneous conclusion. The same logic as employed by our correspondent also makes other metaphors appear similarly incongruous. For example, could the flock of Christ, referred to throughout the New Testament, be the new man of Ephesians two? Or could the temple be the household, or the priesthood the Body?

The failure to interpret figurative language by its context has led to the erroneous Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. The words of Christ, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John 6:27), must be understood in their immediate context. Consequently, we must call in question the statement

that God always uses the figure of a man to describe the Body of Christ; obviously, this is not the case.

Let us close this part of our investigation with the warning given by Dr. Angus in his volume, The Bible Rand Book:

“In order to determine the sense of the figurative language of Scripture, the rule of attention to the context…must be carefuly observed. That a given expression is figurative is sometimes stated or implied, the meaning being then appended. But sometimes it is necessary to look to the general argument or allusions of the passage…

“It is needful, in these and many other instances to pay regard to the purpose and context of the passage. This needs much discrimination, and there is no more fertile source of error than that which arises from misapplied symbols.”

— J. G.

The Forum (Dec 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 10, Dec 1966.

The Bride of Christ

Our correspondent makes a statement which must be investigated before we proceed any further in our research; it reads, “Paul speaks as a friend of the Bridegroom. See John 3:29, and note contrast 1 Corinthians 6:15-16. Paul speaks as: painfully anxious mother, loving father, friend of the Bridegroom.”

In regard to this statement we concur that Paul expressed his anxiety for the Thessalonians, for their spiritual development and care, as a mother might, he says, “We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children” (“As a nurse would cherish her own children” J.N.D. 1 Thess. 1:7). He also manifests a mother’s concern for the saints at Galatia; he wrote to them saying, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). Scripture certainly supports the idea that Paul used, as he described himself, the simile of a mother in her concern for her children.

Furthermore, he also likens his relationship, his counsel, and his attitude toward God’s people to those of a father. To the Thessalonians he wrote, “Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged everyone of you, as a father doth his children” (1 Thess. 2:11). To the Corinthians he wrote, “Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1

Cor. 4:15). Paul, undoubtedly, was the spiritual father of the church at Corinth.

The first two parts of our correspondent's assertion are as we have seen, well supported by Scripture, but what about the third? It reads, "Paul speaks as a friend of the Bridegroom." We have searched in vain throughout the Pauline letters for any statement or allusion to support this contention. John the Baptist claimed to be a friend of the Bridegroom; he said, "The friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29). Nowhere in all Paul's writings does he make any similar claim.

Since we know from history, and from his own statement, that Paul was the spiritual father of the Corinthian church, we should expect that as a father he would act toward her, write to her, and write about her; and this he does. It is not as a friend of the Bridegroom that he writes in 2 Corinthians 11:1-3, but as a spiritual father. The connotation of the entire passage presents Paul espousing the church at Corinth as a virgin daughter to Christ the one Husband. The picture is a beautiful one; let us not marr it by a human misconception.

Our correspondent writes, "2 Corinthians 11:2 does not declare church is bride, but rather is figure of speech (See 1 Corinthians 4:15. Galatians 4:19)." Yes, it is a figure of speech. There are many figures of speech in the Word of God used by the Holy Spirit to bring divine concepts within human comprehension. The church at Corinth was a building, a husbandry (1 Cor. 3:9), a sanctuary (1 Cor. 3:16), a letter (2 Cor. 3:2), a virgin (2

Cor. 11:2), and etc. All these are figures of speech and must therefore be understood within their own context, and not confused. Much difficulty arises from the mixing of the similes and metaphors used by the Divine Spirit.

To say, as does our correspondent, that “Scripture always uses figure of man to describe present Church body,” is to ignore other figures used by the Holy Spirit; as for example, the figure flock. The Lord Jesus said, as we have already noticed as we looked earlier into the many figures used to describe the Church: “I have other sheep which are not of this fold (Judaism): those also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock (the Church), one Shepherd” (John 10:16. J.N.D.).

The statement by our correspondent, “Scripture always uses figure of man to describe present Church Body,” is called in question by our consideration of 2 Corinthians 11:1-3. Here we have a feminine figure of at least part of the Church Body, if our correspondent means by his designation the Universal Church.

If it be argued that the local aspect of the church is altogether different from the Universal, we would be forced to reply, in accord with New Testament teaching, not in nature or in character. In her operation and testimony she may differ but not in essence. The local church is a facsimile of the Universal; she is a miniature of the mighty whole, which in essence is virgin, chaste and pure. “Holy and without blame before Him (in His presence) in love” (Eph. 1:4). “For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). “For both He that sanctifieth, and they who are

sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11).

Eve stood in the purity of innocence as she came from her Creator, but she was, nevertheless, deceived (2 Cor. 11:3). The Church's state in Christ does not immunize her from the craftiness of Satan. Paul feared that the church of God at Corinth might be deluded as Eve. The comparison between Eve and the local church made in this passage substantiates the idea of the feminine picture of the Church.

The fact, to which our correspondent calls attention, that "the title 'virgin' may be used of either sex and indicates chastity and purity," must not be used to divert from its contextual meaning. In Revelation 14:4, it is used in the masculine sense; but in 2 Corinthians 11:1-3, where the reference is to the church, it is used in the feminine sense.

It is worthy of note here that the spurious church, the satanic counterfeit, Christendom, is likened to an impure woman, not a virgin but a whore (Rev. 17:1; 19:2). The true Church is a virgin; the false church, a whore; the figure in both cases is feminine.

The Forum (Jan 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 1, Jan 1967.

The Bride of Christ

Our examination in our last number of 2 Corinthians 11:1-3, certainly indicated that the Church, in spite of the assertion to the contrary by our correspondent, is pictured throughout the New Testament in the feminine, and that both by comparison and contrast she is virgin in her purity before God. We must now investigate the possible meaning and application of Ephesians 5:24-33.

Obviously, the Apostle is dealing with sundry exhortations and these direct his thoughts into the matter of domestic relations. As an illustration of the love of a husband to his wife, he uses the picture of Christ's love for the Church, and as an illustration of the wife's submission to her husband, he uses the submission of the Church to Christ. He draws a perfect parallelism between a husband and his wife and Christ and His Church. The connotation of the entire passage gives another picture of the Church in the feminine.

Part of the statement of Chrysostom might well be quoted: "Do you wish your wife to obey you, as the Church obeys Christ? … even if you suffer all for her, you have not yet done anything that Christ did: for you do this being already joined in marriage to her, but He suffered for a Bride who rejected and hated Him … He brought to His feet her who rejected Him and despised Him, with wonderful care and affection."

The language of this Ephesian passage makes an allusion to the building of Eve and her presentation to

Adam, and the affectionate welcome he extended to her. Eve was brought to Adam in the purity of innocence; the Church will be presented to Christ in the purity of positional sanctification. God, the Creator, brought Eve to Adam; Christ the Sanctifier will present the Church to Himself.

It might be proper to digress and notice carefully the words, “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.” Generally, this statement is interpreted to mean that this is a process being now experienced by the Church. It has been stated that here we have the answer to the prayer of the Lord in the Upper Room: “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17). It is commonly taught that the sanctifying results from the Church having been already cleansed.

This interpretation is seen to be faulty when it is noticed that both verbs, to sanctify and to cleanse, are in the same tense. Dr. Moule comments, “The Church was decisively “sanctified,” separated from the claim and dominion of sin unto God, when she was decisively “cleansed,” accepted as guiltless.” This was accomplished by the washing (lit. laver) of the Word at conversion. See Titus 3:5. The logic of all this is seen as we return again to the interesting parallelism. Eve was brought to Adam pure and innocent; the Church will be presented to Christ by Himself, for He is the only cleansing agent, pure and sanctified.

When Eve was brought to Adam, he said, “This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). The Holy Spirit applies this statement to the Church, but with a delicate and significant adaptation: “We are

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." More literally this would read, "We are limbs of His body, out of His flesh and out of His bones." Our divine life is derived from Christ, the Last Adam. As Eve was built from a rib taken from Adam during a deep sleep she was a partaker of his very nature; even so, out of the death of Christ the Church has been built; she is a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

That the presentation of the Church as a Bride to her heavenly Bridegroom in future seems clear from similar passages in the New Testament: "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Cor. 4:14). "That I may present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight" (Col. 1:22). "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Surely, the thought here is the presentation to her Bridegroom of a pure Bride at the time of their marriage, an event yet future.

These studies were commenced with an open mind, a readiness to accept an alternative, but the more the study is pursued, the more it is evident that the Spirit of God does imply that the Church is the Bride of Christ. Notwithstanding, we shall continue our studies next month.

The Forum (Apr 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 4, Apr 1967.

The Bride Of Christ

For the marriage, the Lamb's wife made herself ready. There is a difference of opinion in regard to this statement. Some interpret it as her doing righteous acts, but the word "acts" is not in the original. There could be a reference here to an Old Testament passage. "The Lord… He hath clothed me with garments of salvation (The plural indicating abundance), He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels" (Isa. 61:10). The Bride of Christ is seen as she prepared herself in His righteousnesses, His intense and abundant purity; even as it is said of some, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14).

While the marriage establishes the intimate and eternal relationship between Christ and His Church, the marriage supper suggests the pleasure of others as well as that of the Lamb and His wife. There is social and general delight in others that distance has been bridged, differences dissolved, and that at long last the Lamb and His wife are one.

The marriage supper of the Lamb is the antitype of the marriage in Cana of Galilee. The Lamb in His fully revealed glory, the very personification of joy, is the observed and the adored, and in close association with

Him is His wife reflecting His sublime excellency. She is the Bride He purchased, sanctified, and glorified.

The eternal destiny of the Bride, the Lamb's wife will be the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9) that will descend from God upon the New Earth (Rev. 21:1). That city in appearance will be as lovely as a bride, but this simile, of course, does not suggest that the city itself is the Bride; it merely attests the beauty of the city.

The different inhabitants of the lovely city, obviously, retain their distinctive existence. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Ye are come (by faith to the divine provision) unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels (Angels will be inhabitants of the city); to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn which are written in Heaven (The Church will be there for she too will retain her separate identity, and as such will glorify God ages without end — Eph. 3:21); and to God the Judge of all (The New Jerusalem will be the eternal habitation of the Triune God in the midst of the redeemed); and to the spirits of just men made perfect (All the Old Testament saints will be there, made perfect through the blood of Christ (Heb. 12:22-23). Furthermore, Israel will also be in that wonderful city for her seed and name shall remain in the New Heavens and in the New Earth (Isa. 66:22).

It was for that city that Abraham looked (Heb. 11:9-10), and into it the nations of all the redeemed shall bring their glory and honour (Rev. 21:26).

The New Jerusalem will be the capital city of the New Earth, and in that state of eternal glory all the redeemed

of God out of all nations in the earlier and last dispensations, all the redeemed of Israel, and all the redeemed of the Church, the Bride of Christ, shall enjoy His presence in a sinless society.

These hours of research lead the writer to but one conclusion, the Bride of Christ and the Lamb's wife are one and the same. Other Scriptures have been examined and more might be written, but further space is not available. Our prayer is that what has been written may prove helpful and thought provoking. The day is coming when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly for all will be plain.

J. G.

The Forum (May 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 5, May 1967.

Dear Editor:

Feb. 21, 1967 I have decided not to renew (Food for the Flock). See other side (application form) for part of my reasons.

I seem to find that all our Assembly magazines indulge too much in generalities in doctrine, which is all we appear to care about. There is, to me, a sad lack of real practical, down to earth teaching; too much showing off our erudition and our knowledge of Greek idiom. As one said to me recently, “We are made so ‘heavenly minded that we are of no earthly use.’ “

As on page 29 (February number Food for the Flock), I might suggest that unmovable might mean not to be motionless, as so many Christians among us are. Many could confess if they were honest enough that they never give out a tract from one year end to the other, never speak to a person about his soul. Some do not even subscribe to one Christian magazine. I subscribe to 13 (not all assembly mags.). The others are much more for practicality than ours. Some scarcely ever read a Christian book; many have not purchased one in years.

The worship meeting Sunday morning is mostly the morning meeting. The lack of reverence! Eider brethren cannot pick out a worship hymn. The stereotyped prayer! We in U.S.A. will have to learn the deference, homage, and obedience due to a throne-occupant. I have seen three queens, two kings, and a prince in my time, and were we to come into their presence, we would not

be allowed to adopt that lolling, crossed-legged, sloppy attitude that so many of our people affect. When these things are mentioned, one is put down as addicted to malice and evil speaking.

We are now divided into two camps, the young people and the rest of us. The young with their love of sports. Now they are going around performing cantatas. The sisters, some old enough to be grandmothers, with their short knee-exposing skirts. Some in the morning meeting sitting opposite me exposing their thighs. Were our teaching brethren to mention these things, they would be accused of scraping ministry and that would hurt their prestige, their reputations, and their offerings; they have to be so gracious, yea, circumspect. “Don’t disturb the status quo, and don’t, for any sake, tread on my toe.”

All the weakness in the church is not in the pews, watch our peregrinating brethren, hundreds, yea, thousands of miles between stops. To my critical mind, this doesn’t seem like Spirit guidance.

I could go on, but doubtless you are shocked by this time. I have even overheard elder brethren discussing football, between meetings at a conference. As soon as the morning service is over, some of our brethren are talking about Monday golf, and the sisters, the dress sale down town. I rebuked one of our young men when he said that he had been watching a baseball game on television on a Sunday afternoon. “What’s the matter with that, it’s a sport isn’t it?” was his reply.

I could go on, but I refrain lest I weary you or perhaps antagonize you; I am not griping; I am mourning.

R. R. B.

Dear R. R. B.

We are puzzled by the many general indictments against the assemblies in this letter and by its only word of commendation, a commendation of non-assembly magazines.

That there is weakness and carnality, all admit, but we are exhorted to strengthen the things that remain. Food for the Flock endeavours so to do. Such articles as “Feminine Fashion” by Dr. James Naismith; “The New Morality” by Dr. Paul Irwin, both have a direct bearing on conditions described in this letter. For both of these, requests for reprints have been received.

Daniel did not say, “Our elders,” this, that, or the other, he prayed, “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces … We have sinned against Thee … We have rebelled.” He then records, “Whilest I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people,” his prayers were answered. Recovery for Israel began with Daniel upon his knees in prayer before the Word of God; recovery for us does not lie in indictments but in confession and prayer.

The Apostle Paul in three statements indicates the proper attitude and the proper motivation of ministry even in a carnal church: “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:26). “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). “Let all your things be done with charity-love” (1 Cor. 15:14). Any practical ministry written in this attitude and thus motivated will be acceptable to the Editorial Committee of Food for the Flock.

J. G.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Brother:

There’s an abundance of, diagnosing going on these days and I’m sure most Christians are aware, to some degree, that the Church of Jesus Christ is sick. There is an endless list of symptoms and their causes, and we must confess that we are guilty! But, where do we find the remedy?

One of the, needed medicines is suggested in the scathing rebuke of the Lord speaking through the prophet Jeremiah:

“An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land:

The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests rule at their direction; MY PEOPLE LOVE TO HAVE IT SO,

But what will you do when the end comes?”

Signed,

Galatians 2:20.

The Forum (June-July 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 6, June-July 1967.

Dear Editor,

Re Leslie S. Rainey's article in your April issue, the article shows a careful study of words in Isaiah 53, but I must take exception to some parts of it, especially to the following: "He was stricken or plagued, God was its source, Jerome said, 'Christ was afflicted with leprosy,' even some Rabbis refer to the Messiah as the Leprous One because in verse eight, it actually says in the Hebrew, 'For the transgression of My people the plague was upon Him.' This is the same word for the plague of leprosy. He was smitten,' or as the great Hebrew scholars render it, 'He was defeated in His cause.'" I can see nothing edifying in the above exposition of verse eight — far otherwise. It is true the word translated stricken is used over and over again in Leviticus for the plague of leprosy, but the same word is used in Deuteronomy for stroke (i.e. to strike) where it could not possibly be rendered plague, for instance, "Stroke for stroke" (Deut. 17:8). To connect the person of Christ with leprosy is horrible. We must distinguish between sin itself and its consequences, or even the type of it. Christ became identified with sin, not joined to it, as Mr. Rainey says.

L.R.F.

Dear L.R.F.

Many thanks for your kind letter of criticism. An editor frequently is caught between two extremes, the one, in respecting too much the judgment of a well reputed

author; the other, of correcting and deleting from an article until it becomes an expression of the editor's mind and not that of the author. Our endeavour throughout the many years has been to avoid as much as possible, the second.

We agree with L.R.F. that there is nothing edifying in these statements of the Jewish Rabbis; they are unfortunate and misleading, and have resulted in an interjecting into the article what was not intended. It might have been better had the objectionable paragraph been deleted.

Nothwithstanding, I can assure you that brother Leslie S. Rainey believes as strongly as you and as strongly as myself in the impeccability of the Lord Jesus. We all alike would emphasise that Christ was holy in His birth, harmless in His life, undefiled in His death, separate from sinners in His burial, and made higher than the heavens in His glorious ascension.

We believe what the Word of God says about the Man Christ Jesus: "Who did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22); "Who knew no sin" (1 Cor. 5:21); "In Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). Yet, withal, He was made sin for us; that is, by imputation only; that we, by imputation, might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

That brother Rainey would quote from Jewish Rabbis is logical and, to be expected. He served the Lord for years as a missionary to the Jews; he lived in Jerusalem. From their own writings our brother in dealing with them would attempt to prove that their Messiah was a suffering Messiah who would assume the guilt of the nation, yes, of the entire world, not only a Messiah crowned and glorified. It is understandable that he

would refer them to the writings of their ancient Rabbis to show them this. We do disapprove of their extravagant language, but one can see how this entered into brother Rainey's exposition of this remarkable Messianic passage.

Brother Rainey is now serving the Lord as a missionary in Africa; we shall forward your letter to him. He may personally reply to your criticism.

Many many thanks for your communication.

J.G.

The Forum (Aug-Sept 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1967.

Dear Brother:

I felt deeply grieved when I read the letter from R.R.B. in the May edition of Food for the Flock.

How much better it would have been, if our brother, being so advanced in experience and learning, had been more like Nehemiah when he heard of the sad condition of the people of God. He sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven, confessing his sin and the sins of the people, The result was the Lord heard his prayer, and he had the joy of being used of God for the revival and the restoration of testimony for a period of time.

These are the last days of the testimony of the Church of God, and there are plenty who can pull down, but may we all seek to build up, that the name of the Lord may not be dishonoured in the local assemblies. His word to us is, “Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Sincerely in His precious name,

—E. B. G.

Dear Sir:

I too was quite puzzled by the general indictments against the assemblies in the letter by R.R.B. in the May issue of Food For The Flock in the “Forum” section. As one read and re-read the letter it was searched in vain for a note of mourning such as would be expected from an experienced and matured brother.

As for his reference to “Unmoveable” on page 29 (February issue Food For The Flock), that it might mean not to be motionless is without warrant. As pointed out in the February issue, the word means or suggests “adherence to the faith, as against forces that would turn them aside from it and so from allegiance to Christ.” Not to be motionless as far as giving out tracts, speaking to a person about his soul, subscribing to Christian magazines, is concerned has nothing to do with the word at all. It literally means, not-to-be-moved from the faith. In its primary association “Steadfast” (1 Cor. 15:58) means, “not turning away from the faith of the resurrection through inward doubt; unmoveable, i.e., not turning aside from that doctrine by the reasonings of others.”

The statement that non-assembly magazines are much more for practicality than ours cannot go unchallenged. As one who subscribes to more than 13 magazines, I must say without prejudice that our assembly magazines are far more for practicality than others. In fact they are very well-balanced, speaking generally. As for the ministry of Food For The Flock I believe it is Scriptural, i.e. unto edification, exhortation and consolation. Are not the Epistles of the New Testament first doctrinal, then practical?

The Editor did well to point out that recovery for Israel began with Daniel upon his knees in prayer before the Word of God; RECOVERY FOR US DOES NOT LIE IN INDICTMENTS, BUT IN CONFESSION AND PRAYER. This is the position every God-given elder will take before God if he cares anything for the flock of God. We may surely learn a deep lesson in Daniel falling upon his knees in confession and prayer. We might safely say that

not a single captive Israelite was less guilty than was Daniel, and yet in the spirit of Christ he identifies himself with the sin and failure of the nation. Our blessed Lord and Saviour identified Himself truly with our sin after a manner that no other could. Spotless Himself, He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. In redeeming love He identified Himself with His people's sins in such a way that He bowed His head beneath the judgment of a holy God on their account. "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled," says Daniel, confessing the sin of the nation as his own. "Neither have WE hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, etc." (Dan. 9:5,6).

As to being divided into two camps we must remember that when God speaks He speaks to all. God sent His message not only to young or old but to all the people of the land. When God speaks, every soul of man is responsible to listen and obey. May it be so for His Name's sake.

His grace be with you,

Yours in our exalted Lord,

—H.P.

The Forum (Nov 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 9, Nov 1967.

Baptism And Reception

Brethren:

There are a number of points in “Notes on Hebrews” which could be questioned, among these the attempted interpretation of chapter six.

To be bold enough to state that there is restoration for an apostate does not make the statement correct. Paul was bold enough to call the high priest a “whited wall”, but he spoke unethically and unscripturally, as he acknowledged in his apology. Something more than assumed courage is necessary to substantiate such a contention.

In the interpretation of chapter six, and one admits that it is a difficult passage, there is an unnatural stressing and straining to force an idea into language that does not support it. To suggest that the statement, “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened … if they fall away to renew them again unto repentance,” could mean that they had repented once and were now real Christians, therefore, they could not return to an initial repentance for that was a once for all experience, is to ignore the true value of words, and to disregard the immediate and remote contexts.

The verb to renew means to make different, to make entirely new, to make again; consequently, in verse six, to make again a former entirely different condition from that which at present prevails. The context implies that

to renew that former condition of repentance on the part of some of the Hebrews would be desirable but because of another conflicting condition it was impossible.

The author is here writing of some who had apostatized from Christianity, some who had rejected Christ as really and actually as had the Jewish leaders at the time of His crucifixion; these were as guilty as they for they had put Him to an open shame as had the rabble crowd which mocked Him in the hours of His agony.

The verb to taste in verse six is a contrast to the verb to drink in verse seven and suggests a matter of degree, varying degrees, not necessarily full participation or possession. A child may ask a taste of the coffee its parent is drinking, and may receive that taste without becoming even in later life a habitual coffee drinker.

The author uses the verb to drink in as a figure to show that the reception of the gospel benefits does not always give the same results. This is sometimes beneficial as in the case of the true believer; it produces that which is acceptable (V. 7). Then, at other times it results in a curse (This is the portion of those who receiving the message do not believe it.) of which thorns and briers are the symbol.

Yours truly,

M.M.G.

The Forum (Dec 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 10, Dec 1967.

Hebrews 6

Dear Brother in Christ:

Thank you for your comments with respect to our suggested interpretation of Hebrews chapter six.

First of all, we would agree with your statement that the chapter is indeed a difficult one and the notes made on the chapter were not dogmatically set forth but rather were presented as points of consideration on a most difficult passage.

Your letter suggests that the proper interpretation of the passage is that it was impossible for the apostate to find salvation because of circumstances then in existence. It seems highly unlikely that the writer would make such a statement without more facts concerning the circumstances. We also feel that it is entirely dangerous to suggest that salvation for the apostate is impossible (notwithstanding the circumstances in force), and thus placing a limitation on the grace of God. We strongly feel that such limitations are not known in the New Testament.

We were not clear as to your interpretation of the word “to renew.” There are two words for new in Scripture, neos and kainos. The first indicates new at a point in time; whereas, the second indicates newness in character and nature. It is the second word that is used here with the prefix ana, meaning again. It is therefore saying that it is impossible to experience this newness of

character and nature again and this is the point we were trying to make. This interpretation seems logical particularly in the light of the latter part of chapter five where his injunction of “grow up” is clearly to Christians.

The verb to taste, you suggest, is in contrast to the verb to drink in verse seven, and does not mean to fully participate and possess. The same verb is used in chapter 2:9 where the writer says concerning the Lord Jesus, “He tasted death for every man.” We are sure you would agree that our Lord entered into and fully participated in death. Does it not seem reasonable to apply the same interpretation to the same verb here in chapter six? Incidentally, the Greek verb is guomai and is translated to eat in Acts 10:10 and Acts 20:11.

There are passages in the Epistle where the dividing line is drawn between professors and real Christians but we feel that chapter six is not one of those passages. The content of the chapter, it seems to us, clearly indicates the eternal security of the Christian. We are urged in verse one to consider the strength of the foundation and to go on to build unto perfection. In verse 19. we are reminded that the Christian’s anchor of hope is not dropped into any earthly sea but soars through the aerail oceans mooring us to the very throne of God.

Yours by grace,

D. and R. McC.

The Forum (Feb 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 2, Feb 1968.

Dear Brother:

It has been on my mind for some weeks to write you a few lines in pursuance of the correspondence in the columns of the magazine re the exposition of Hebrews 6 in the September issue, which for some reason did not reach me. I am in the throes of getting ready to leave for India in a few days so my time is rather limited but I believe it would be a help if the portion was viewed in the light of the different pronouns used in vs. 4-8. The whole parenthesis may be divided into seven paragraphs.

Ch. 5:11-12 The pronoun “we” refers to the writers or the writer, whom I take to be Paul. The “ye” are doubtless believers who had ‘become’ such as needed to be taught elementary teaching again. They had “become” babes. These verses are a sharp rebuke.

5:13-14 These verses draw a parallel between what is true in the natural as in the spiritual. The verses are a simple analogy.

6:1-3 are a stern exhortation to go to perfection. This is not to be thought of as an attainment or an effort, but of submission to the Spirit’s teaching to be carried on to perfection. The word perfection is the same as that rendered full growth in 5:14, and the same as found in 7:11-19, 9:9, 10:1-14.

The portion should be compared with Galatians 4. The recipients of the Hebrew letter had relapsed into Judaism as is evident from a reading of Acts 21:20-21.

The exhortation is go on to the perfection there is in Christ as is expounded in Chapter 7-10. When the cloud lifted, as recorded in Numbers 10:11 and the children of Israel journeyed, the Sinai site became an abandoned site. So Judaism with its elementary lessons is an abandoned site.

6:4-8. In these verses, we have a change of pronouns from the “we” and the “ye” to “those” and “they.” Clearly the readers are not in view as is evident from the fact that the pronoun “ye” is used from v. 9 on, and “us” in v.8.

Of Hebrews 6:1. Kelly writes. “It is not an attainment, but simple faith in the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, in a word, Christianity. Entrance by faith into the work that He has done is full growth.”

Without taking time to consider the various explanations given of these verses 4-8, I will simply draw attention to the fact that in Israel there were two groups. In the Epistle to the Romans they are referred to as “The remnant according to the election of grace” and “the rest.” There were those who availed themselves of the offer of salvation based upon the fact that the crucifixion was charged as manslaughter…” I wot that through ignorance ye did it…” They are in the city of refuge v.18. and are perfectly secure. But “the rest” are charged by Stephen with being the murderer of the Lord Jesus, and for murderers there was no access to the city of refuge. In connection with this group, this company referred to as “those” three things are brought before us.

1. Their plight. This is described and illustrated.

a. Described. It is impossible to renew them to repentance. This word cannot be diluted as may be seen from its other usages in the Epistle. It is impossible for God to lie, etc.

“The word “renew” does not signify to renew again, or change, but to make new” (J.N. Darby).

Their judgment was irrevocable. They had committed the unpardonable sin. This is illustrated in the case of those of whom we read in Numbers 14. 14:2, 28-29.

b. Illustrated (v.8): The land which produced nothing but thorns and briers is rejected, no longer to be cultivated. Its end is to be burned.

2. Their privileges: These are also described and illustrated.

a. Described: Five are listed. Note should be taken of what is not said of them. It is not said that they are born again or justified or reconciled or cleansed.

With regard to the word “taste” it is generally agreed that the expression “tasted of the powers of the age to come” refers to the miracles performed by the Lord as being the evidence of credentials of His Messiahship and thereby the nation tasted of that which would characterize the Kingdom age, as prophesied in Isaiah 35:5. His three and a half years of ministry with its miraculous healings, etc. were a true and genuine taste of what the Kingdom age would have brought them. The Lord tasted death, in all its bitterness and pain. But it is to be remembered that the period during which His body was in the grave was a short period. It was not a permanent condition.

No other generation since that one has ever tasted such powers. They had been enlightened by the ministry of the lamp of prophecy, the ministry of John, by the ministry of the Lord. They had tasted of the heavenly gift, the fulfilment of Isaiah “to us a Son is given.” They had been partakers of the Holy Spirit as the Lord by the Spirit had worked miracles. In Hebrews ch. 4 specific reference is made to “that generation” the one that had come out of Egypt, a very highly privileged generation. And in Matthew 11 and 12 the Lord refers to “this generation” which I suggest are the ones in view in Hebrews 6:4-6. They were the most highly privileged generation in all Israel’s long and checkered history.

b. Illustrated. vs. 7-8. The land that was rejected had received the rain and care that the other had, but it is specifically stated that only when fruit is produced that they “receive blessing from God.” That wicked generation had received the rain but had not produced fruit. On the contrary they produced briers and thorns, the fruit of the curse.

3. Their persistent sin. This is also described and illustrated. (a) Described: It is not “if they fall…” but having fallen. The tense is aorist. The word is not to apostatize, but is the same as in Romans 11:11-12. As Mr. W. E. Vine points out in his exposition of Words. (b) Illustrated: They crucify…The tense is continuous. “The change of tense in verse 6 implying continuous action is significant” (Gr. Thomas).

6:9-15. In these verses the recipients of the letter are again in view. Concerning them great confidence is expressed as there was manifest in their lives the things that accompany salvation — the triple graces — love,

hope and faith. The “you” of verse 9 are in a totally different category to the “those” of verse 4.

6:15-20. In these verses the “heirs of the promise” are those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. In the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle differentiates between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise. It is these two groups, I suggest, are in view in this chapter. The “those” of verse 4-6 are the children of the flesh, and the “you” of verse 9 and the “us” of verse 18 are the children of the promise.

In order not to encroach too much on your space I have not considered the portion as fully as it should be. But I hope that enough has been said to make clear what I believe to be the only satisfactory explanation of this controversial portion.

With sincere Christian greetings to all the readers of the Food for the Flock, and seeking your fellowship in prayer for the work in India as I once again go to that needy land.

By great grace,

J.M.D.

The Forum (Nov 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 9, Nov 1968.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Gentlemen:

My attention has been drawn to the answer of D. McC. to S. B. that appears in the current number of Food for the Flock. A review of the article in question and the letters leads me to agree with S. B.

In spite of the author's claim to "study in depth" and to "principles of interpretation," there are certain features of First Corinthians he has not sufficiently considered. The first part of the Epistle covers the conduct of church members outside the church not "therein" as states the original and as quoted by S. B. The incestuous act was outside the church, so were the court cases, the social invitations and the marital separations, etc.

The second part of the Epistle has to do with conduct in the congregational gatherings of the church. In this part of the Epistle, we read repeatedly, "When ye be come together." The point of transition is not clear until you reach chapter 11:17. Is therefore the premise upon which the author places his logic not questionable?

Why does the author confuse the Lord's table of chapter 10 with the Lord's supper of chapter 11? Is not the

whole Body in view of chapter 10; whereas it is the local church that is in view in chapter 11?

The Lord's table is mentioned in the Old Testament as well as in the New, but the Lord's supper is exclusively New Testament truth.

The headcovering is a sign of authority, that is authority invested in headship. By a head covering a woman shows her submission to headship. Headship is as applicable in the domestic sphere as anywhere else (Eph. 5:22-24). Is it proper to teach that the sign of headship should be shown in the religious and not the domestic aspect of life?

The author would do well to reconsider the Epistle as a whole, and also his "original stand" as he calls it.

Yours truly,

D. S.

The Forum (Dec 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 10, Dec 1968.

This department is provided for the free and courteous discussion of biblical and spiritual problems which may be considered edifying to the people of God. Letters concerning such matters are requested.

Dear Mr. G.

With reference to the excommunication of assemblies discussed some time ago in Food For The Flock, I would like to make a few observations. The statement made at a conference that there is no such thing in all of the New Testament as an assembly being out of fellowship is absolutely correct. It is individuals who are put away, and that for specific sins which are clearly defined in the Word of God.

To substantiate this statement, may I point out two divine principles that are to control the relationship of the churches. Had these been acknowledged, it would have saved the Lord's people from many a heartache and the disgrace of a broken testimony on this continent.

1. Every assembly stands upon its own base and is responsible to the Lord alone. Circles of fellowship, to the exclusion of other saints, is a device of the wicked one. Its purpose is to divide and ruin the testimony of the whole.

No one can draw a line through the churches of the New Testament in spite of their differences. No one can say this one belongs to this circle and that to another circle.

Ephesus is not to interfere with Smyrna, nor Smyrna with Laodicea. Each is held directly responsible to the One Lord who walks in the midst.

Dissolution is the daughter of dissension. Our divided condition is the scorn of the worldling, the delight of the devil, and it leaves us a positive disgrace in the eyes of all men. Certain among us, who lack the grace of God in their lives, will make every little difference an issue in order to divide the saints. The sure evidence of this corrupt, religious fervour is found where the most carnal are the most contentious, not in matters of doctrine, but of procedure.

2. The removal of the lampstand is the prerogative of the risen Lord alone (Rev. 2:5).

This proper and scriptural relationship of the churches is maintained in three ways: First, by their common loyalty to their glorious Lord, not by rules and regulations that would bind them in a cold, lifeless uniformity, but by constraining love. Second, by their acknowledging that each is a part of one great whole (1 Cor. 16:19). The united rays of the lampstands, focussed upon the One in the midst, are necessary to give to the world a full and comprehensive testimony to our blessed Redeemer. Third, by the exercise of the gifts from the risen Head, among the saints. This is for the threefold purpose of their perfection, unity and growth (Eph. 4). Unfortunately, not all who profess to be gifts to the Church bear the “ordination of the pierced hands.” It is to our shame, that these men can move freely among the churches, seeking dominion over the faith and conscience of the Lord’s people. Their aim, seemingly, is to build a confederacy of assemblies patterned after the

Needed Truth system, over which they can assume complete control. This is what has confused the saints and led to such unscriptural expressions as, “This or that Assembly is not in fellowship.”

Yours in Him,

R.McC.