



Volume XV. No. 8 MELBOURNE, 1st AUGUST, 1932
Price —Twopence Halfpenny

Faith Healing, Miracles, Unknown Tongues.

The Purposes They Served, Counterfeits Foretold— Strong Delusions.

WHAT is termed the Pentecostal movement among “holiness people” of various sects and parties— “Missions” as their meetings are often called, claims to have continuous pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, resulting in gifts of “Faith” healing, miracles and unknown tongues. We doubt not the sincerity of these people, some of whom possess, anyway, a superficial knowledge of the Bible. Generally, however, they are more swift to speak than to hear, and seem to neglect any systematic study of the Word of God and thus appear to come under the heading mentioned by the prophet (Hosea 4:6), “My people perish for lack of knowledge,” being deceived by the snares of the great fowler, who “puts light for darkness and darkness for light.” We are living in the days, of which our Lord forewarned, that great deceptions would be permitted so that “if it were possible they would deceive the very elect.” How necessary then it is that we should not put our trust in anything that will not stand the test of the Word of God.

“I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.”

Reports of the movement in various directions are so absurd that they seem unbelievable. However, those who have had ocular demonstration of this delusion can verify the statements.

What we see here corresponds well with the general reports from elsewhere. The meetings are “bedlam.,” everything is confusion, prayers to God are yelled or groaned. Now and then someone “gets the blessing,” and falls in a trance-like condition on the floor, to remain rigid, perhaps, for hours. Another begins to talk some sort of gibberish, interspersed with English. Another, in a different guttural, mumbles, and then gives an interpretation in English. These are said to have the “unknown tongues”: of Pentecost ; but we remember that foreigners present did recognise those tongues as bona fide, and got a gospel message from them (Acts 2:8).

The people in attendance pay little heed to what is uttered by these “tongues” or their interpretations. Some, are simply curious; others are too engrossed with their desire to have a trance or an “unknown tongue”-’-. to do anything else than groan their prayers to God for those “gifts,” as evidence of His favor. Frenzied rolling on the floor are amongst the evidences that these poor people are surely under some spirit influence. And it certainly- is not “the spirit of a sound mind” (2 Tim,1:7) .

EVIL WORDS FROM. EVIL SOURCE.

It is quite true that there was wonderment at Pentecost, caused by so many speaking at once in foreign languages; but nothing in the record implies insanity or fanaticism; nor could we expect either from such sound logicians as their writings show the apostles to have been. On the contrary, our experiences corroborate the declaration of St. Paul, that the operation of the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts and minds has been favourable to the development of greater soundness of mind, by reason of our heed to the Word and its wisdom, which cometh from above. A correspondent in Los Angeles, California, wrote at one time that a neighbour woman got this so-called gift of tongues, and that a reputable Chinaman, hearing her, said that he understood her quite well—that she spoke his dialect of Chinese. Pressed for an interpretation he declined, saying that the utterance was the vilest of the vile.

In our judgment, the facts justify the conclusion that these “flames” are of an unholy spirit, of Satan; that he is now producing a poor counterfeit for the deception of a class whom he cannot reach through Spiritism, Christian Science, Hypnotic New Thought, nor Higher Critic Evolution theories.

It is asked, “Why would the Lord permit Satan to delude honest souls?” We reply, that He has permitted “doctrines of devils” these many centuries amongst the heathen (1 Tim. 4:1), some of whom doubtless are also sincere. The time for the binding of Satan is not yet—though we believe it is very near (Rev. 20:2). Doubtless Satan realises better than we can how the binding or restraining is coming, and is actively manoeuvring to avoid it; while God, on the other hand, is willing to permit his activity because it can now serve a purpose—a sifting work—which must reach and touch every class and condition of professed Christians everywhere—to test and prove them. Thus we consider this one of the many delusions of our day. Mark the Apostle’s forceful words respecting this day of trial with which this age ends, and the next is ushered in. He says: For this cause “God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie.” Why? “That they (who fall) all might be (thus) condemned”—be manifested as not right, as out of harmony with God—as unfit to be of the “Bride” class. But why so? “Because they received not the truth in the love of it,” but “had pleasure in untruth” (2 Thess. 2:10, 12).

In other words, the “Present Truth” has been sent hither and thither throughout Christendom that, like as a magnet would attract all the particles of steel within the radius of its influence, the Truth might attract all the Israelites indeed, for further schooling and ripening, preparatory to their “change” to Kingdom glory. Meantime, the Lord allows Satan to organise various human agencies, those not of His “very elect,” that such may fall farther and farther from the Truth, until finally none will “stand” except the elect, and they “on the sea of glass mingled with fire” (Rev. 15:2). All others are to fall more or less, though some will subsequently be rescued from the catastrophe—“saved so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

AN UNINSPIRED RECORD.

“These signs shall follow them that believe: in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17, 18).

We refer to this special text for two reasons: (1) Because it is the one most frequently quoted by those who advocate the thought that all Christians should be known by the peculiar gifts it specifies, and able to speak with unknown tongues, to cast out devils, to heal the sick, etc.. (2) Because we wish the more pointedly to call attention to the fact that these words are not a part of the original Gospel by St. Mark. It is well known to all critical students that St. Mark’s Gospel closed with the sixteenth chapter and eighth verse. From the ninth verse to the conclusion, as shown in our common version, was an addition to the original manuscript. This is demonstrated by the fact that these verses are not found in the original MSS. of the New Testament. The oldest Greek MSS. and the most authentic every way, are known as the

Vatican MSS 1209, and the Sinaitic MS.—'both written somewhere near the year 350. Neither of these contains verses nine to twenty, including this text. The earliest Greek MS. containing these verses is the Alexandrian, the date of which is credited to the fifth century. It seems rather remarkable, therefore, that there should be amongst scholars any who would use the words of this text as though they were of divine inspiration or apostolic authority.

However, the conclusions based upon these words deserve our consideration every way, because of the fact that the Scriptures clearly show that our Lord and the apostles and some members of the early Church did possess many of these gifts of the Holy Spirit, and did exercise them somewhat after the manner described in these interpolated words. We, therefore, invite your attention to what we believe to be the Bible teaching on the subject of the "gifts of the Holy Spirit" and the "fruits of the Spirit."

THE "GIFTS" IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

That our Lord ever spoke in unknown tongues is not stated; but that He did cast out demons and heal the sick and awaken the dead is recorded, and the fact that He sent forth His disciples clothed with power and authority to do the same things is also declared. We are to notice, however, that although Jesus did many wonderful works, they are expressly stated to have been for signs—"These things did Jesus, and manifested forth (beforehand) His glory"—the glorious work of His Kingdom, which is to completely liberate mankind from the thralldom of sin, sickness, demons and death, in proportion as the laws of the Kingdom shall be obeyed. We are not, then, to understand that it was the divine will in our Lord's day, nor since, that all sickness should be cured by divine power, that all demons were to be cast out, etc., but rather that just a sufficiency of this kind of work was to be accomplished to give evidence of the change of dispensation—to testify of Jesus and His disciples—to authenticate their ministry and teachings as divine.

Nor were these healings merely 'performed upon those who were converts to the Lord—upon those who had accepted Him as the Messiah, had believed in Him, and had become His disciples. On the contrary, the miracles recorded came not to those who were the Lord's disciples, but to those who were pronounced sinners. As an illustration, take the case of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. Its five porches were continually crowded with the sick, as we read: "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, the blind, the halt, the withered." Yet, to only one of these did the Lord address Himself, saying, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk, and immediately he was made whole, and took up his bed and walked." And that this man was not a believer in Jesus is evidenced also by the narrative, for we read: "He that was healed wist not who it was that had healed him." That he was not a saint is also testified by the narrative, for we read that Jesus later said to him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee" (John 5:3, 13, 14). Other evidences in the same line might be given, but are unnecessary.

After our Lord's death, resurrection and ascension came the Pentecostal blessing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As an evidence or witness to this baptism, but not a part of it, were gifts similar to those which Jesus had exercised, and these were generally distributed amongst all believers at that time, as we read that a measure of the Spirit was granted to every man in the Church 'to profit withal—for his profit and for the general advantage of the cause with which all were identified—the establishment of the Church. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12:4-31), clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit operated in the early Church. Some had the gifts of tongues, others a gift of healing, others a gift of interpreting tongues, etc., while some had several tongues or languages at their command, and some, notably the apostles, apparently enjoyed all of these gifts. The Apostle exhorted the Church in general to not only covet and desire these gifts, but to recognise a distinction between them—that some were preferable to others. The Apostle says, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" "Covet earnestly the best gifts." The Apostle suggests, further, that one who had the gift of tongues should pray that he might

also receive the gift of interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:29-31; 13:13).

THE USE AND VALUE OF THOSE “GIFTS.”

The Apostle distinctly foretells the discontinuance of these “gifts,” saying, “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away” (1 Cor. 13:8). He clearly intimates the reason for the discontinuance to be that the Church would gradually come into a more developed condition, in which these gifts would no longer be necessary, but give place to a higher, nobler and more certain manifestation of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He says, We know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.” He illustrates this by saying, “When I was a child I spake as a child, and understood as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:9-11). We have not yet reached the standard of perfection and full membership in Christ, and shall not reach it until our change in the First Resurrection; but as members of the Lord’s body, His Church, His Ecclesia, we properly have made progress from the infantile condition at the beginning of this age. This is in harmony with the Apostle’s injunction that milk is for babes and strong meat for those more developed, and that it is our duty, as the Lord’s followers in the School of Christ, to grow in grace and knowledge and love.

These “gifts” in the Church had prevailed for several years at the time the Apostle addressed the saints at Corinth, whom He exhorted that they should desire the best gifts. He found them, like children; interested chiefly in speaking with unknown tongues, and gently reproveth them for considering these a high attainment and evidence of great favour with God. Not that He discouraged the speaking with tongues. For, as He explained, he could thankfully say that He could speak with more tongues than they all; but He did wish them to realise that they might have these gifts, and yet come very far short of being acceptable to the Lord. He would have them understand that the “fruits” of the Spirit were a higher manifestation and better testimony than the “gifts.” The “gifts” were miracles, tongues, interpretations, etc.; the “fruits” were faith, hope, joy, love. When exhorting them to desire the best “gifts” he added the suggestion respecting the “fruits” of the Spirit as still better, saying, “Yet show I unto you a more excellent way”—an evidence of divine favor far beyond that of the “gifts.”

To demonstrate the better value of the fruit of the Spirit, love in the heart and in the life (with its concomitants of joy, peace, kindness, etc.), he gave an illustration, saying, “Though I could speak with the tongues of men, and with the angelic tongues also, if I were devoid of love, it would indicate that I had become like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” The power to work miracles might be there, and operate through them, and yet they might have no more relationship to it than the cymbals have to the power which strikes them. Taking the still higher gifts of prophecy and understanding of mysteries and knowledge, and even rising in the scale of attainment to the position of mountain-moving faith, all these, as the Apostle declares, would amount to nothing unless the fruit of the Spirit were developed, namely, Love. These various gifts might serve a purpose, but without Love the purpose would only be for others, and not a blessing to the individual himself.

Progressing still further in his comparison, the Apostle shows that even generosity is not sufficient, for though he were generous and self-sacrificing to the extent of giving all his goods to feed the poor, and yielding up his body to be burned in his faithfulness to the Lord, yet should he not develop the great fruit of the Spirit, Love, he could have neither part nor lot with the Lord in His Kingdom, and all these other gifts would profit him nothing as respects membership in the Heavenly Kingdom, as a member of the body of Christ. Therefore, he concludes that love, the greatest of the graces, is far beyond all gifts, however honorable and useful they may be. Progressing in his argument, he shows that while the gifts would depart, this grace, this fruit of the Spirit, would continue—continue down to the end of the age—yea, and go far beyond into the eternal future. Referring to the “fruits” of the Spirit, which he desired them to cultivate and to esteem as preferable to the “gifts,” he says: Now abide, faith, hope, love, but

the greatest of these (the most important of all) is love, for love never faileth. It will not only be the essential quality without which we cannot gain an entrance to the life eternal and the Heavenly state, but it will continue throughout all eternity to be the quality or characteristic of all that shall enjoy divine favor forever.

The fact that one may speak with tongues, or be able to heal the sick, or do any such works, does not necessarily indicate a true Christian. We are reminded again of the words of Jesus. "Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord,

Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name have done many wonderful works. Then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me ye that work iniquity.' Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, which is in Heaven" (Matt. 7:22, 23, 21).

THE VALUE OF "GIFTS" IN THE CHURCH.

A little reflection will make clear to us the value, almost the necessity, of the gifts to the Church in its infantile : stage. The Apostle explains the character of ;their religious gatherings; they met, and One had a psalm, another a prayer, another an exhortation, another a hymn, another an unknown tongue, another an interpretation of that: tongue, another a gift of prophecy. 'Their meetings were thus made interesting, entertaining profitable. The prospect of messages coming from Lord through unknown tongues, and the prospect of getting an interpretation of these also, would draw the believers together and maintain their interest and to give them food for thought and discussion. They had no Bibles at first: the New Testament was not yet written the old Testament, written on parchments, was not only clumsy to handle, but very expensive, and the synagogue which could afford a complete copy were considered fortunate, and these copies were kept and merely read from on the Sabbath of the people who attended. The early church cast out of the synagogues, were really without any particular source of instruction, except as to mind the preaching of the Lord and the prophets as they had heard them in early life; and hence' this provision of the Lord for the gifts of prophecy and understanding of mysteries and communicating through unknown tongues and the interpretation of same, were all designed to teach them their dependence upon the Lord and to draw them together for mutual -instruction. and show them that the Gospel message was not given to them individually, but collectively as a Church. All these good offices were well served by the gifts, and in due time the believers were taught to look beyond the gifts and to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit.

Gradually the New Testament grew—the four Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James, etc.—and with this growth of written instruction the necessity for the gifts proportionately died away. They were not necessary as at first for the establishment of the Church nor for its instruction. It is quite in harmony with this that in general the Apostolic epistles of the New Testament make comparatively little reference to the "gifts" of the Spirit, but persistently counsel the putting away of the filth of the flesh and the cultivation of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. No intimation is given anywhere that the Lord's^ people were to expect a repetition or continuance Of the Pentecostal gifts, tongues, etc., but rather that they were to go on toward perfection—the perfection Which will only be attained in the resurrection, but for which resurrection they were to be prepared by the cultivation of the fruits and graces of the Spirit. We are to notice carefully that the one baptism of the Holy Spirit which came upon the believers at the first was DO-where promised to be repeated, and that it was separate and distinct from the "gifts" which at first accompanied, but which subsequently were to give place to, the fruits and graces of the Spirit, and did give place to these.

"OPPRESSED OF THE DEVIL."

The Scriptures do clearly, teach that Satan had much to do with the bringing in of mother Eye's

temptation which led up to father Adam's disobedience. He is justly in the Scriptures - d a "murderer from the beginning." Indirectly the murderer of our race. Indirectly. at least, all sickness, pain and sorrow may be thus traced back to him. He had still more to do with us through beguilements and temptations of our weakening flesh. He has led the majority of our race from had to worse, mentally, and physically. For it should he recognised that sin in its very form is death dealing—every sinful and impure thought has its reactionary effect upon our minds and bodies, tending to produce therein weakness and disease—dying conditions.

Naturally and quite properly the inquiry comes, Is not the Lord Jesus still interested in releasing all those "oppressed by the devil"? Like the Heavenly Father, He surely "changes not"; hence He is still interested in the release of our race from the power of sin and death, and of "him who bath the dominion of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). And if so, should not we expect that the healing of disease and expelling of demons would be still the Lord's work throughout this age—irrespective of the fact that now His Church has been established in the world upon a good footing, and has no need of the "gifts" for instruction, having instead in the hands of all, the Bible of both the Old and New Testament? We answer, Yes—undoubtedly all this is true. 'Why, then, is it asked, should not the same healing of the sick progress now? Why should not this be one of the main duties and privileges of all believers, after the manner of their Lord and the apostles?

We reply that while the lord proposes a great work as the Good Physician in the healing of the diseases of the world, mental, moral and physical—while He proposes that ultimately this shall he accomplished on a much larger scale than anything which He did at the first advent the time for this is not yet What Jesus and His apostles did in the beginning of the age we have already seen, affected only a very small fraction of the world—only a very small fraction indeed of those with whom they were in contact. The real healing and restitution, according to the Scriptures to the future age, to that epoch which will the second advent of our Lord to His work as the Prophet, Priest and King in the lifting up and blessing of all whom He redeemed with His precious blood. The work of this age is not a restitution work.

'The times of restitution will be, as the Apostle points out, at th e second advent of our Lord (Acts 3:20, 21). Now we are in the time when work the very reverse of this is in operation a sacrificing work. All will admit that our Lord did not use His healing powers on His own behalf, but that, on the contrary, He sacrificed, laid down. His life in the service of truth and righteousness.

Apostle wrote him respecting his diet, "for thy stomach's sake, and thy often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). All must admit, then, that the healings were done upon those outside the Church, and evidently were for a time only, and would constitute no basis that the Church should expect miraculous intervention on behalf of its members. Quite to the contrary, these were all exhorted to lay down their lives, to seek not to spare them, save them, which implied not praying for their deliverance from those diseases or ailments, which came to them as the result of their self-denials, services, self-sacrifices. Rather they were to delight in these, while exercising a reasonable prudence and care, which would make the most of all earthly advantages as a part of the *stewardship to be used in the service of the Master.

"LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES."

Not only are believers exhorted to present their bodies "a living sacrifice" in, the service of the Lord, and to lay down their lives daily, hourly, on behalf of the brethren in their interest, in carrying blessings to them—but additionally we are told that the ones who will gain the prize, those who will make their calling and election sure, will not be those who prayed for and gained restitution of the things they had consecrated to the Lord's service, but those who spared not their lives even unto death. These overcomers shall inherit all things, sit with their Lord in His throne, in the Kingdom, for they are followers in His footsteps. He prayed not for Himself, healed not Himself, and was not healed by others, but, on the

contrary, said, “The cup which My Father bath poured for Me, shall I not drink it?” and who also invited His followers, saying, “This is cup, drink ye all of it.”

We see, then, that in the Lord’s order, restitution to physical health and strength was not intended either for Jesus, the Head of the Church, nor for the Church, His body, but for the world. We see also that the time is not yet come for the bestowment of this blessing upon the world, but that it delays until the sacrificing of the Church with her Lord shall be accomplished—until the Church glorified, sharers of the Heavenly Kingdom with the Redeemer, shall shower the blessings of restitution, health, mental, moral and physical, everywhere throughout the earth, granting to all the fullest opportunities to come back, to be released from the power of .sin and death, and from all the dominion of the great adversary, who will then be bound for a thousand years that he may deceive the nations no more until the thousand years be finished (Rev. 20:2, 3).

Published by the Berean Biblical Institute, at National Bank Chambers, 226 Glenferrie Ed.,

Hawthorn, Melbourne E 2.

CAN THE SYNAGOGUE CLAIM JESUS?

FOR six reasons," says Rabbi Ferdinand M. Isserman, of St. Louis, in an article in "the Christian Union Quarterly," "the synagogue should claim Jesus. First, He lived as a Jew. Second, He died as a Jew. Third, His religion was the religion of His people, the religion of the synagogue. Fourth, His criticism of _His people was Jewish and in line with the prophetic tradition. Fifth, He glorified Jewish history. And, sixth, His influence on civilisation has been moral and spiritual in keeping with the Jewish genius."

"I think the time has come when we Jews can acclaim one of our greatest sons, through whom we have suffered but through whom also we have been glorified. Even if the (mobs begin to howl and to clamour against us, even if the tide of hatred were to rise, even if pogroms and massacres were to be re-enacted, even if the Christian world should continue to heap its injustice upon the people of Jesus, I would yet plead with my people, because of their religious and moral passions and because of their distinctive spiritual genius, not to yield to prejudice or to passion but calmly to essay the Jewishness and the glory of Jesus, and to recognise Him as a noble product of the religious culture of Israel."—'Christian World.'

Thus we have further evidence that the "Blindness in part which happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25) is beginning to pass away. This confirms the fact that we are living at the end of this dispensation and that soon the Divine favour will again be upon the favoured nation, for the promise is clear that a New Covenant is to be established with Israel (vide verse 27, also Jer. 31:31-34).

This is a further sign that we are living "in the days of the Son of Man." It means that the full number of the elect body of Christ is about complete and that within the life time of this generation, the Church will have all been delivered and he joined to those members who have been raised and are with the Lord. Then there will be no further opportunity of "suffering with Christ," of sharing in the afflictions of Christ (Col. 1:24). Every member of the Body will have been prepared so as unitedly to compose the "Bride of the Lamb." Then the Bride and Bridegroom will be made one. The Church will sit with Christ in His throne (Rev. 3:21), and the age of blessing will commence, for this is the promised seed of Abraham, which is to bless all the families of the earth.

As we view events before us, how our hearts are stirred to press along the narrow way, which, while it is no less narrow, certainly grows shorter, and also to bring the comfort of the present truth to all who are hungry for the Word of God. So while there is so much to discourage and hinder the Christian to-day, the hope grows brighter, and as we draw nearer the goal, "let us press with vigour on." "Thine arduous task will not be done till thou 'last gained thy crown."

Correspondence,

20/7/32. Dear Christian Brother,

In reply to your note re monthly paper, I often wondered why I was receiving them, so you can thank my kind friend for his kindness in supplying them. There is some very nice reading in them, so I am! enclosing p.n. foT:2/6 for you to continue them.

If you have any secondhand books, entitled "The Battle of Armageddon" and "The New Creation," let me know the price. I have the others, namely "The Time is at Hand" "Thy Kingdom Come" and "The Atonement Between God and Man" "I have enjoyed reading them. They have opened my understanding on many subjects, and I can assure you the future has a more pleasing look than what I was taught 50 years ago.

Wishing you every success,

Yours in truth, W.K.M.

Dear, Friends,—

I feel that the least one can do to those of you who labour for others, is to pass along a few words of encouragement now and again, knowing that such stimulant is helpful to those who most love Jesus. So often we neglect our duty in this direction, failing to give thanks for good things received spiritually. Now I want to be an exception, for once at least, so that I may express genuine thanks to the writer of that article recently appearing in the "People's Paper," viz., "Walk as Children of Light." Before I had read it all, I found myself invoking a blessing, by saying aloud: "Well done, good servant," and was surprised to notice that further along these same words were used in a different manner and with a desire to hear them uttered from the lips of the Master Himself in that day. And so, in conclusion, let those who are weary at times in writing and teaching the brethren what they believe true, take courage that it is not always in vain, even though there is little to show otherwise at present.

With Christian love to you all,

I am, yours in Him, J.W.A.

[The articles and addresses, etc., in the "People's Paper" are contributed by various brethren from time to time, and this co-operation in the work is very helpful and encouraging, and much appreciated. The article, "Walk as Children of Light," was contributed by a brother in another State.]

How much trouble he avoids who does not look to see what his neighbour says or does or thinks, but only to what he does himself, that it may be just and pure!

Percy Austin.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” “If we say we, have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth; but if We walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:3, 6, 7).

HERE it is stated that our fellowship as Christians is with the Father, with the Son and with the brethren. There is also fellowship in prayer and praise, in knowledge, in study and in purpose, in service, in joy, in sympathy:, in hope, etc.

According to Strong’s concordance, the word fellowship means—participation, partnership. A dictionary meaning is—communion, intimacy, joint feeling or interest, joint participation. In the Bible, distribution of worldly goods or substance for the benefit of others is also spoken of as fellowship (Rom. 12:13; 15:26; Phil. 4:15). All are familiar with the fact that fellowship implies kindred qualities of mind and heart. For instance, the generous love the generous, the noble and upright love the noble and upright, the honest love the honest, and the meek the meek, etc.

But among the Lord’s people there are not many wise or great or pure from the natural view point. Yet God’s love goes out to those who are not naturally noble and pure, but who are, however, rich in faith. Is this a Contradiction of the general rule of fellowship; can God fellowship those who are so far below His own purity and goodness? God’s love to us as sinners was that of pity love, compassion and desire to lift us up to His fellowship.

We can only enter this Divine fellowship by accepting Christ as the sacrifice for our sins and ceasing to be sinners. ‘Him lye realise that God is our friend and we also become friends of others similarly regenerated, and as we grow by partaking of God’s Holy Spirit, we begin to love the brethren.

There are two planes of fellowship, a natural plane on which men of like qualities are drawn together, and a spiritual plane on which those who may be unlike in natural qualities, but alike in spiritual hopes, aims and ambitions are drawn still more closely together by a new tie and a fellowship that binds not by fleshly ties but their hearts in Christian love and unity.

What then is the basis of Christian fellowship? The term Christian, from a Biblical viewpoint, is quite an exclusive one. What is necessary in order to become a Christian is clearly taught. A Christian is one who not only believes that Christ is the Saviour , but has gone further than that and shows his faith by offering himself full surrender in consecration to God. He dies to self and takes up his cross and walks,- even as Christ walked, in a new [life.

‘The basis of Christian fellowship is a mutual relationship with Christ and through Christ with all who are in sympathy with Him, joined together as fellow members of His Body. There is at once a joint interest and feeling, a partnership, a participation in Christ.

In 1 Cor. 1:9, it is stated that God has called us unto the fellowship of His Son. This is not something reserved only for the future, it begins already now. St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians desired to know Christ, to realise deeply the power of His resurrection, and comprehend the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10) ; not a mere superficial knowledge of Him, but an intimate acquaintance through deep knowledge and experience.

This same thought of fellowship is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:16, 17, a fellowship, a participation in the drinking of the cup and breaking of the bread.

Christian fellowship then is something deeper and stronger than mere fellowship of belief, because our Heavenly Father gives us to partake of things beyond our own nature. We fellowship with Him in His plan, for He has made known unto us secrets that were hidden from generations in past ages. He promises us fellowship in His own Divine nature, meanwhile working in us to do His good pleasure as we work with Him to do His will. We might have a degree of fellowship with all believers, but it would not be Christian fellowship, which is “fellowship in the mystery.” This is illustrated in the tabernacle services. It is a fellowship of priests in the Holy, not with the Levites in the Court, who can come no further.

The Christian fellowship is a family fellowship, “For in love God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:5). “They are all of one (Father) , for which cause Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11). Jesus did not need to grow into this fellowship, for He was always in fellowship with the Father, and there is only one way we can come into this family fellowship, i.e., by accepting the terms laid down by Jesus—faith and obedience.

In John 14:23, it is stated that both Father and Son will come to us and “take up their abode with us” if we keep His commandments. This is a very precious thought—a partaking of food together—lodging together. The same thought is given in Rev. 3:20; also Luke 12:37, which is especially applicable at the end of this age. Jesus will, if we respond, come in and sup with us, and will also spread a feast for us. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son.

Seeing then that Christian fellowship is the portion of all consecrated believers, are there any further requirements for a permanent, workable and beneficial fellowship? How can we best answer this, seeing there are so many individuals and classes of persons who would all say they are consecrated Christians and yet if asked what they believed we would [find quite ‘a variety of doctrines and practices. Is fellowship under such conditions likely to be either possible or profitable ? We think it would be possible if all recognise certain essentials. (1) There would need to be uniformity of faith, not in a humanly prescribed creed nor recognition of any earthly authority or control whose word must be obeyed as the voice • of the Lord, not a seeing eye to eye on mysterious parts of Scripture, types or symbols, but a unity of faith—one faith. (2) A recognition of the clear and essential teachings of the Word of God would also be necessary. Unity on essentials must be maintained, but liberty on nonessentials be granted to all. We would, of course, have fuller fellowship with those who see many points of truth as we do, than we would with those who see only the fundamentals, but we must receive in fellowship those who have taken the necessary steps in harmony with the first essentials and have as much fellowship with them, as possible. We do not fellowship with each other because of non-essentials, nor because of personalities, but because of each being justified and consecrated and living lives in harmony with the fundamentals of the Word. “If we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:7).

There is another essential without which there could be no profitable fellowship. The Christian is to have no fellowship with darkness or error ; he is to do more, “rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11) ; also (2 Cor. 6:14), “What fellowship has light with darkness.”

A further essential necessary to helpful fellowship would be as stated in Rom. 8:9, “If any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Those not having the spirit of -Christ have nothing in common with the consecrated Christian, there is no fellowship of love.

In Eph. 4:1-3, it is stated that each should walk worthy of His calling, but also endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Christian fellowship is thus spoken of as a unity of spirit, a

participation in Christ's anointing—a fellowship of love. The Spirit of Christ will manifest itself prominently in brotherly love, and must be a special feature of

Christian fellowship. When mutual love becomes established among brethren, there comes a sense of rest and naturalness in each other's company, which is the very essence of fellowship. A Christian writer has expressed this thought as follows:—"O the comfort, the inexpressible comfort, of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away."

That is the abiding condition of friends of Jesus, no necessity for reserve or hiding in this absolute confidence borne by the certainty of high unselfish love. Let us then endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, then there will be much building up of each other, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.

We believe all will agree then, that these four essentials are necessary

- (1) That all be consecrated to God.
- (2) That there be a uniformity of faith in the Word of God.
- (3) That all are aiming to walk in the light.
- (4) That all possess the spirit of Christ and brotherly love.

HOW IS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP MAINTAINED?

In the maintenance of Christian fellowship there is, as already stated, a call for effort of each and all. All should endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, and follow after things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another (Rom. 14:19; Heb. 10:24, 25). Fellowship cannot be maintained, except self and self-will be kept under, and in its place be developed the mind of Christ, as pointed out in Phil. 2:1-5, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Nevertheless there will be tests also in connection with fellowship, as stated in 1 Pet. 4:12, "Think it not strange of the fire among you" (Diaglott).

Trials will come among us because of our inherent weaknesses, conflict with other members' viewpoints or lack of judgment; but fellowship is not a theory, it is a condition which no amount of discussion can bring about or hinder. In nature, birds of a feather will flock together; so it is with the Lord's people (Matt. 24:28). Creed fences or obstacles are no barriers to those who desire and will have fellowship.

Satan, however, will attack the spirit of fellowship and misconstrue that which is good and beautiful. What shall we do then? Be rightly exercised by it and stand up to our experiences. We remember how Peter disfellowshipped himself from Jesus, denied that he knew Him, but it was turned to good account by Jesus, who had prayed for him.

We learn by experiences not to flee from difficulties, but seek the Lord's help and guidance. Think of those who have stood their tests, the steadfast, patient, plodding Christians, through good report and through evil report, so different to those who have not stood their test and have been discouraged and lost fellowship.

If we are sure what God's way is, then we get His blessing in His way. If we take a way that is not His way then we are the losers.

What helpfulness is derived from Christian fellowship ? We might answer this by another question. What benefit does a person get in the gathering of live coals together in the fireplace? He soon gets comfort and warmth out of the glowing coals. So in the gathering together in Christian fellowship there is that comfort of love and fellowship of hope, a sympathy in suffering, a strengthening of faith, patience and humility, a stimulating joy, a lightening of care, and a sharing of spiritual food. just as a live coal separated from the mass would soon grow cold, so those straying from the fellowship of Christians would be in danger of growing cold or lukewarm, missing much of development and instructions and stimulation.

Neither should fellowship be regarded as a duty merely, which we owe to other fellow-members, but should be regarded as a precious privilege, not with the thought only, "How much can I get there," but also, "How much can I help in the giving." Why should we meet together? That we might have spiritual fellowship. Why should we consider the Word of God? 'That we might grow in grace and knowledge and love, grow in preparation for the fellowship in the everlasting future. May the Lord help us to appreciate, more and more His Divine fellowship.

LIFE ABUNDANT.

O God, in restless living
We lose our spirits' peace.
Calm our unwise confusion,
Bid Thou our clamour cease.

Let anxious hearts grow quiet,
Like pools at evening still,
Till Thy reflected heavens
All our spirits fill.

Teach us, beyond our striving,
The rich rewards of rest.
Who does not live serenely
Is never deeply blest.

O tranquil, radiant Sunlight,
Bring Thou our lives to flower,
Less wearied with our effort,
More aware of power.

Receptive make our spirits,
Our need is to be still;
As dawn fades flickering candle
So dim our anxious will.

Reveal Thy radiance through us,
Thine ample strength release.
Not ours but Thine the triumph,
In the power of peace.

We grow not wise by struggling,
We gain not things by strain.
We cease to water gardens,
When comes Thy plenteous rain.

Oh, beautify our spirits
In restfulness from strife;
Enrich our souls in secret
With abundant life.

H.E.F.

AIDS TO BIBLE STUDY.

“Divine Plan of the Ages,” blue cloth, gold lettering, 2/9 (Other editions at cheaper rates)

“Some of the Parables,” 8d, 6/6 a dozen

“Hopes Beyond the Tomb,” 6d, 5/- a dozen “Foregleams of the Golden Age,” 2”6 “Christ’s Return,” 4d,
31- a dozen “Hell, Death, Spiritism,” 4d, 3/- a dozen

“Do the Dead Know Anything,” 3d, 2/9 a dozen “I will Come Again,” 3d “Tabernacle Shadows.” 9d “
Mythology Explained” 3d.

“God’s Covenants” 8d.

“Emphatic Diaglott” (N.T., DeLuxe only), 10/6 “Daily Manna” Cloth binding. 2/3 “God’s Best Gift”
(For Children) 1/

Bibles, Wall Texts. Free Tracts and other Bible Helps.

BEREAN BIBLICAL INSTITUTE,

National Bank Chambers, Glenferrie Rd., Hawthorn, Melb. E2

PATIENCE.

Patience teaches humility; bridles the tongue; restrains the hand; tramples on temptation; endures persecutions; consummates martyrdom. She comforts the poor; moderates the rich; makes us humble in prosperity; cheerful in adversity; unmoved by calumny and reproach. She teaches us to forgive those who have injured us, and to be first in asking forgiveness of those whom we have injured. She delights the faithful; invites the unbelieving; and is beautiful in every sex and age.

Published by Berean Biblical Institute. National Bank Chambers, Hawthorn Printed by Hickling & Powell, Brunswick, Victoria.