Reverence

"The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."
—Psalm 111:10

REVERENCE HAS BEEN defined as respectful awe, veneration; a truly humble attitude toward God and holy things. First and foremost, this must be the attitude of every child of God toward the great all-wise Creator, his Heavenly Father.

The psalmist says, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." (Ps. 89:7) This is a primary quality that must be possessed by all who would approach God acceptably, with any possibility of learning of him and his ways. None can approach God to learn of him and receive the first elements of the wisdom from above without this quality of reverence.

When God appeared to Moses out of the burning bush and Moses was drawing near, the LORD addressed him, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exod. 3:5) Thus was emphasized the importance of a reverential approach to the great Jehovah.

Especially must the spirit of reverence be ours when we approach God in prayer. This is the first

item in the model prayer Jesus gave to his disciples—"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (Matt. 6:9) This suggests that one of the things we are to desire above all others is that our Heavenly Father's name be 'hallowed,' reverenced, venerated, regarded as supremely holy.

God's name represents his character, composed, as the Bible reveals, of four great cardinal qualities, or attributes—Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power. These attributes, while appreciated to some extent by all Christians, can only be seen clearly in their fullness, as we view the outworking of the Divine plan of the ages; in other words, by "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord."—II Cor. 3:18

JUSTICE

First of all, we see the quality of justice as represented in the just sentence of death which came upon our first parents, and passed in a natural way to all their children. "In Adam all die." (I Cor. 15:22) This attribute becomes outstandingly prominent when we see that before anything further could be done for mankind, before God's love could reach the condemned, justice must be satisfied. Hence another perfect man was privileged to appear who would be willing to give in sacrifice his perfect, uncondemned life. This our Lord Jesus was willing to do. So Paul says, "The man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all."—I Tim. 2:5,6

Again Jesus tells us, "My flesh . . . I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:51) This makes possible, in due time, the release from death of Adam

and all condemned in him. Paul says, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (I Cor. 15:21) How appropriate that we should seek to reverence this quality of justice in God's character, reverencing its every manifestation in his dealing with us, or others of his children.

LOVE

God's attribute of love, although it always existed, was especially manifest through the coming of Jesus, and the work he did as the Father's agent on our behalf. As John says, "In this was manifested the love of God." (I John 4:9) The love of God had always been an integral part of the Divine character, for "God is love." (vs. 8) It is the very essence of his being, and could be to some extent appreciated by the endless train of pleasures and joys bestowed upon his loyal and obedient creatures on many planes of life. But never had circumstances arisen to make it necessary for God's love to operate at great cost to himself.

John tells us that the time arrived for displaying God's love when Jesus came into the world—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) We may truly love another under circumstances that call for little or no sacrifice, and then a time may come when a great sacrifice must be made if that love is to continue. A similar time occurred in the experiences of our Heavenly Father when, in due time, he "sent forth his Son" for our redemption.—Gal. 4:4

POWER

It is always possible for the reverentially minded to see God's material universe. It is truly wonderful the way its affairs are ordered—all things being upheld by "the word of his power." (Heb. 1:3) But in relation to the outworking of the Divine plan, power will especially be manifested by the setting up of the kingdom and its iron rule, the awakening from death, and the restitution of countless billions.

WISDOM

Finally, as the great work of salvation is reviewed, with the close of the Millennial Age, God's wisdom will shine out in all his dealings, and men will sing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, . . . just and true are thy ways." (Rev. 15:3) Even the destruction of the incorrigibly wicked at the close of the Millennial Kingdom will be regarded as an act of wisdom, calling for reverent acquiescence on the part of all creatures. "They shall go forth, and look upon [look upon with approval, *Strong's Bible Concordance*; gloat over, *Moffatt Translation*] the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me, . . . and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (Isa. 66:24) This last clause suggests men's approval of the action as a manifestation of God's infinite Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power. As previously intimated, all this is included in that first item in the prayer our Lord gave to his disciples, 'Hallowed be thy name.' How proper it is for all the Lord's people to earnestly desire and pray for the time to come when God's name, his holy character, will be

properly appreciated by all his creatures! "Holy and reverend is his name."—Ps. 111:9

WORSHIP

It is proper for us to hold our Heavenly Father in deep reverence, thus adding to our faith the quality of piety. (II Pet. 1:6, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) It is equally important that we reverence the Lord Jesus, the active agent of the Father in all his works of grace—"He is thy Lord; and worship thou him." (Ps. 45:11) It is obvious that there cannot be true worship without reverence; and that it is the Father's good pleasure that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."—John 5:23

We should approach the life and teachings of the Master as set forth in the gospels very reverently. We should seek to understand all that he said and did in the light of the Divine plan, remembering that we are called to follow him, to copy him, if we would be with him in the heavenly phase of the kingdom. No part of the Word of God therefore—so much of which reveals the character and work of our Master—should be treated irreverently, or quoted lightly.

The right attitude that will bring us the LORD's favor and insight into the Word of Truth is surely that suggested by the LORD's words through the prophet, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66:2) Hence all of God's people properly seek to hold in great reverence every part and item of the Word of God, coming to God continually in prayer that he would open

up his Word to us, that we might reverently walk in the light of his Truth and seek to be sanctified thereby.

THANKFULNESS

Finally, as a part of our cultivation of the spirit of reverence for our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, and for whatever they have to say to us through the revelation we have been given, we must at all times reverence his providence, especially his providential dealings with us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. We have the assurance that all things (chastenings as well as blessings) are the result of the operation of his perfect Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power. The blessings that come to us in such abundance should therefore all be received reverently, and used in ways that will help our own progress in the narrow way.

Even the earthly blessings given by his hand must be received reverentially, unselfishly, in accordance with his will, and used so far as possible in his service. When chastenings, trials, and difficulties come—they, too, must be received, not in a rebellious or complaining spirit, but reverently, submissively, with an earnest desire to know why such things are permitted, and what lessons the LORD has for us to learn from them.

Thus as the years in the school of Christ pass, we learn that the reverence of the LORD is not only the beginning of wisdom, but is the middle and end of wisdom too. We find that the more we know of God and seek to follow the Lord Jesus, the more do we know of the great plan they are unitedly working out, and of the experiences and lessons which

day by day come to us, all working together for our good. Thus the more we see them to be worthy of our reverence, the more we desire this quality of reverence to be deeply engraved upon our hearts.

Further, it is true to say that our Lord has supreme reverence for his Father. God himself has respect for his perfect laws and for his intelligent creatures, and is truly grieved should one become defiled by sin. He appreciates every true and noble quality possessed by his children, especially when these have been developed by an earnest endeavor to copy him and his well-beloved Son, who was sent forth as an example that we should follow in his steps. So our reverence for things that are holy is but a trait of character perfectly exemplified in Jesus.

How glad we are also to know that this spirit of reverence possessed now by God's children of the Gospel Age will, during the period of the kingdom, extend to all mankind. The Revelator wrote, "Who shall not fear [reverence] thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? . . . for all nations shall come and worship before thee." (Rev. 15:4) Again the prophet says, "From the rising of the sun [the opening of the Millennial Day] even unto the going down of the same [until its close] my name shall be great [magnified, hallowed, *Strong's Bible Concordance*] among the Gentiles." (Mal. 1:11) "So shall they fear [reverence] the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." (Isa. 59:19) "Every thing that hath breath [shall] praise [and reverence] the LORD."—Ps. 150:6 ■