

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

A few words on
TRUE ENJOYMENT AND CHURCH UNITY

Published by

D.N. Long, Williamsville, N.Y.

1886

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The main object to which the human family is devoting their energies is to secure happiness, but, as a rule, they do not attain the enjoyment which they desire. When we consider the creation, observing the universal harmony and perfect adaptation of cause and effect, means and ends, desire and gratification, noting how each object attains a perfect end when it remains in the sphere for which it was created, we are led to inquire why man seems to be an exception by having desires for enjoyment which are ungratified. Can it be that he is less perfectly formed than the brute, or is he moving outside of the sphere in which he was created? We cannot believe man to be an imperfect creation, and consequently must conclude he has departed from the sphere in which the perfect enjoyment he desires is to be found.

Man was created superior to all other creatures by the endowment of a mind or reasoning faculties, which enables him to look for enjoyment in any direction he chooses; and he realizes such satisfaction as the object on which he sets his affections is able to yield. If man were to return to the sphere for which he was created, no doubt he would find it perfectly adapted to the fulfillment of his desires, in harmony with the rest of the Creation, and he could find the happiness he longs for.

Man longs for perfect and never-ending happiness; but it is self-evident that some change must take place in the condition in which we usually find him, before this can be attained, and Christ is the only means whereby the necessary change can be wrought.

The principle that underlies true enjoyment is love. We cannot enjoy anything unless we love it, while the amount of enjoyment we derive from any object is precisely in proportion to our love for it. We cannot help loving something. If our affections are not directed in a proper channel, they will take an improper one and yield disappointment instead of enjoyment. Man's enjoyment consists in having some object worthy of his affections to which he can devote himself, and perfect enjoyment would necessitate this object to be perfect. The only object which can command our supreme admiration is God and

his attributes. In him alone we see perfection of love, wisdom and power, and he is therefore the object on which our affections should be centered.

MAN, BY NATURE, IS SELFISH, and inclined to set his affections on this world and consequently is not adapted for true Christian fellowship. His selfishness ever inclines him to take advantage of his fellowmen to promote his worldly interests. In every department of life, we see this is a great source of unhappiness, and doubtless the parent of nearly all the folly and crime in the world. True fellowship cannot exist unless these selfish promptings are subdued by the grace of God, which can only be accomplished by the change which Christ mentioned to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—John 3:3. If the only means of seeing the kingdom of God consists in being born again, it certainly is necessary to experience that change before we can realize the perfection and consistency of the requirements of the doctrine of Christ. This can only be done by a change of disposition; and since so much then depends upon this change, it is very important that we become acquainted with the manner in which it is effected. Man is incapable of accomplishing it. He may check his disposition and partially modify it so as to improve his moral deportment, but still its promptings are the same, hence it requires a power superior to himself. The word of God teaches very clearly that Christ possesses the power to create new aspirations, new desires, and new promptings in the mind; in fact, to make an entire new creature of man, as Paul teaches: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."—2 Cor. 5:17. Man, then, in order to be changed, must be sensible that a change is necessary in order to be fitted to have fellowship with God, and must believe that Christ can effect it. For without this belief or faith, no one can approach him, and therefore will never find the avenue that leads to true enjoyment here and eternal felicity hereafter. Infidelity rejects this view, simply because it cannot fathom it; for as Paul truly teaches, "the natural (or unconverted) 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."—1 Cor. 2:14.

HAVE OUR LEARNED MEN, OR PHILOSOPHERS, ever advanced a practical theory able to yield true happiness? Although nearly all have admired Christ's teachings as being able to improve man's temporal condition, and make him a more agreeable social being, they have rejected any further appreciation of his doctrine without offering anything better; and they may study and conjecture until the end of time but they will never be able to contrive a plan by which the inmost desires of man can be gratified. Solomon said: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."—Prov. 1:7. So long as the fear of the Lord has no effect upon us and we are guided by our natural understanding, we are unable to comprehend the laws and principles that control the spiritual part of our being.

The experience of life proves that in this world we cannot realize the complete enjoyment we desire, as all that we attain here is perishable, connected with uncertainty and coupled with imperfection. And when we see how intent mankind is in seeking enjoyment in the things of this world, we have reason to question whether the mass of mankind comprehend the object on which their affections should be centered to afford true happiness. Since man is created with longings which cannot be gratified in this world, there must be a condition in the future in which perfect enjoyment can be attained. This condition is found in heaven, which is perfectly adapted to yield the unalloyed felicity we desire.

HEAVEN IS AN ASSOCIATION where every cause of discord and contention is removed; peace and love reign supremely, with nothing to mar happiness. And unless we here become changed and renewed in the spirit of our mind, our selfish desires subdued by the spirit of Christ and thereby fitted for this blessed association, we can never enter it. Heaven is a place of unalloyed felicity because the elements of selfishness do not exist therein. If man, in his unconverted state, were admitted there, he would not be in the sphere which affords him gratification and could not be happy; or if all were permitted to remain here forever—as would be the desire of many—without the restraining influences of God's grace to check their selfish inclinations, would there be a possibility of anything but misery? And if God's grace were withdrawn, would the probability of enjoyment be any greater than in the scriptural idea of hell? Man is not

inclined to honor God for his goodness, nor to accept his excellent counsel, but prefers to live according to the desires of the flesh and mind, without being disturbed by the knowledge of God—even feeling annoyed by the fact that a supreme power exists to which he owes reverence and obedience; and he chooses the portion of eternal misery by preferring to live according to the course of this world instead of yielding to the influence of divine love, which would lead him in the way of future happiness; and is alone to blame for the everlasting consequences of the course he takes.

If, with Moses, we had respect unto the recompense of the reward, we would all “choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”—Heb.11:25. This would be a very wise choice, as the Savior says, “We shall receive an hundredfold for all we leave for his sake, and inherit eternal life.”—Mat. 19:29; while Paul adds that “It hath not entered the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love him.”—1 Cor.2:9. Since we are dependent upon God for all our enjoyment, why should we not allow his goodness to lead us to repentance, and to the comprehension of his divine love in sending his only son into the world to die for our sins and open the way to salvation? Can we conceive of any evidence more conclusive of his love? Or anything that should be more effectual to move man to see in him a God of love, worthy of reverence and obedience?

IF GOD IS LOVE then truly we have an object worthy of our affections, and one to which we should look for the means of true enjoyment and perfect fellowship. We can only love God supremely and “our neighbor as ourselves”—Luke 10:27—by “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.”—1 Peter 1:23. The New Testament treats of love directly or indirectly on every page, and if we possess the love of God in our hearts, we will yield to the teachings of the Spirit of truth, whose enlightening influence will enable us to see the vanity of earthly things. We can then fully comprehend the end and purpose of our existence, and the result and reasonableness of obedience to the doctrine and spirit of Christ, and will be brought to true conversion, which is necessary for everyone to experience before he can enjoy true Christian fellowship.

TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP is the result of the love of God being shed abroad in the hearts of the believers by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them.—Rom. 5:5. It is the only means of perfect enjoyment and a direct evidence that those enjoying it are the children of God. But is it not also evident that where this fellowship is lacking, the spirit of self, and not the love of Christ, reigns? Christ said: “If ye love me keep my commandments.”—John 14:15. His commandments were given out of love, and if we have this divine principle in our hearts, its promptings and his teachings will agree, and we will obey his word, and out of love to him, will deny ourselves of all that is contrary to his teachings and the dictates of his holy spirit. Peace and love will exist amongst those thus constituted and the result will be unity of sentiment and practice and the exercise of true “Charity, which is the bond of perfectness”—Col. 3:14, and the never-failing source of true enjoyment.

Inconsistency and discord amongst professors of religion are great hindrances to Christ’s religion and cause much unbelief and infidelity. When we see the striking contrast between the doctrine of Christ and the practice of his so-called followers, is it any wonder that many are prejudiced against religion? And have they not good reason? The scriptures plainly teach that those who believe in Christ will, by the power of his holy spirit, be brought into a united body; and provisions and directions are given therein to meet any circumstance threatening the unity, peace and safety of his followers. Christ’s teachings are as perfectly adapted to preserve unity as are the laws of nature to control the universe; and if the dictates of his spirit and the rules laid down in his doctrine are carried out, it is impossible for divisions to exist amongst his followers.

TRUE CHRISTIAN UNITY is a positive evidence that the heart is controlled by the love of God; while divisions and discord existing amongst those who profess his doctrine are an evidence that their hearts are controlled by self. If the dictates of divine love are heeded, all who possess it will be brought into one united body or church where strife and contention do not exist, because they “walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing.”—Phil. 3:16. Paul says in 1st Cor. 1:10—“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that we all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be

perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” The practical effect of Christ’s teachings must result in unity. For instance, he gave very plain and practical instructions in the 18th chapter of Matthew, how to labor with an offending brother, which, if followed, will do away with anything that might disturb the unity of the faithful. If these directions were lived up to, contention and slander would be unknown and, as all the teachings of scripture accord with the dictates of divine love, we cannot possess that holy influence and follow its promptings without observing and practicing them.

CAN WE WONDER at the attitude the opponents of religion assume when we see the great inconsistency of those professing to be the followers of Christ? For instance, this plain command of brotherly love, how little we see it regarded and how seldom practiced. In fact, most of the professors of religion consider it impractical and unnecessary and make little or no attempt to obey it. Indeed it is impractical to all except those who possess and obey the love of God. If we possess this love and heed its dictates, we will keep the commands of the savior, and if we do not keep his commands we certainly do not love him; for he says, “If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s, who sent me.”—John 14: 23-24.

If the fellowship taught in the New Testament is not found amongst those who claim to be Christ’s followers, is it not evident their lives are controlled by self; and when they deny the necessity of unity, are they not opposed to the love of God and spiritual fellowship?

OUR CONCLUSION must be that either Christ’s teachings were not given to be obeyed, or that many who look with confidence on their profession and supposed possession of the religion of Jesus Christ will be disappointed. Scripture supports the latter conclusion, for Christ said: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 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 done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”—Matt. 7:21-23. By this it would seem we might think we had GREAT EVIDENCE OF DIVINE FAVOR and still be unacquainted with Christ, by taking our own ideas instead of the Scriptures as our guide. Truly, is there not great danger of being deceived by taking the profession of religion as an evidence of possessing it? For if we profess to follow Christ and do not bring forth the fruits of the spirit of Christ, we certainly have no right to comfort ourselves with a hope of salvation; and many who trust in their morality and good works will be disappointed, for neither faith nor good works will avail, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 13: 2-3, “If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing; and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us, will be that “we will be kindly affectioned one toward another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.”—Rom. 12:10. And we will be moved by this love to “do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”—Gal. 6:10.

As followers of Christ, we are much exposed to the influences surrounding us, and if we should deviate from the straight and narrow way, love would certainly prompt our brethren to warn us of the danger to which we are exposed; and if we are in possession of the love of God, we will be thankful to anyone apprizing us of danger.

True Christian reproof will thus be desirable, as the Psalmist says—Psalm 141:5—“Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.” John says in 1 John 5:2, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”

IF WE LOVE OUR BROTHER and see him exposed to danger of deviating from the course dictated by the word of God, our love for him will constrain us, not to go and tell some other person, but to kindly direct his attention to his

danger. If he hears us, we have gained our brother; but if he does not hear us, this same love will move us to take one or two brethren with us, as it is more likely he will yield to the admonition of several brethren than one alone, and in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word will be established. If he will not hear these, then love will prompt us to tell it to the Church, that the combined influence of the whole Church may be used in his behalf, that he may not be captivated by the enemy of all good but be brought to see his error and the snares of the devil. But if he will not hear the Church, then love will constrain us to hold him as a heathen man and a publican.—Matt. 18:15-17. This is the course love will dictate and accords with what Christ taught, and according to his word, anyone not heeding the counsel of his brethren manifests thereby that he is controlled by the spirit of self and must be separated from the church. If he remained in the Church of Christ when it is evident that he does not possess the spirit of Christ, he would cause a lack of unity to exist therein, which would be contrary to the doctrine of Christ.

Paul taught his brethren in Rom. 16:17-18 to “mark them which are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly: and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.” (New Version) In 1Cor. 5:5-7—“Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.” Here we see very plain and practical directions given, which, if followed, will keep THE CHURCH OF CHRIST pure and free from contamination with evil. By these rules of brotherly love being practiced, Christ as the head of the Church—Eph. 5:5, cleanses it “with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”—Eph. 5:26-27. But if these conditions are not found amongst his so-called followers, is it not evident that the doctrine of Christ is not being obeyed? In Christ’s prayer in John 17:20-21, he said: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe

on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” From this it would seem just as impossible for the Church to be divided as the Deity himself. Does not this apply to us as well as it did to the primitive church? And is it not just as necessary for us to possess the spirit of Christ, which will cause us to live in unity and fellowship and enable us to retain the divine life, as it was for them? And is not the unity of Christ’s followers to be the evidence to the world that he was sent into the world? But this unity not being found amongst his so-called followers, have not skeptics and infidels just ground to question his being the Savior of mankind?

That the primitive church was in fellowship and unity, is evident from Acts 4:32—“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” And Christ taught in John 13:35—“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” As has been shown, if we love one another we will live in unity and fellowship; and the fruits of the spirit of Christ are so unvarying that Christ gave this as an evidence whereby mankind could know his followers. This evidence is at once so positive and conclusive that THE SIMPLEST MIND CAN COMPREHEND IT. As was prophesied concerning Christ’s Church in Isaiah 35:8—“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” This prophecy seems strange when we view the many intricate questions connected with religion and the evidences of Christianity at the present day. But mark, the promise of being able to attain the knowledge of salvation is given only to the wayfaring men: those who do not find their delight and satisfaction in the things of this world but who delight in doing the will of God; who are journeying through this world with their eyes fixed on heaven, and are not conformed to this world; but are transformed by the renewing of their minds, and are thereby able to prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.—Rom. 12:2. According to the popular idea of religion, a man can be a Christian and still live according to the course of this world, finding much of his satisfaction in living after “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” which are

not of the father, but of the world.—1 John 2:16, while the scriptures teach that the followers of Christ are chosen out of the world,—John 15:19, and are a separate, united and “peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—Titus 2:14.

The idea entertained by most religionists, that the Lord will recognize different churches, different faiths, also practices that are inconsistent with his word, is intended to be charitable. But it is unreasonable and unscriptural. And how can it be charitable? For it is antagonistic with love and unity; and contrary to the Apostles’ teachings that “There is one body, and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”—Eph. 4:4-6, and “we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”—Rom.12:5. Many of those who defend modern Religion, and who recognize all who profess Christ as Christians, admit that the primitive Church was united and in fellowship, but claim that in our day this is not practicable, and, therefore, not the will of God. Indeed it is impossible with those not possessing the spirit of Christ. Is not this doctrine at variance with Christ’s words, which shall be our judge in the last day? When we examine the epistles of the Apostles, we find that the church in some instances had departed from the ground upon which it had been established. This necessitated a great deal of labor by the Apostles, and the epistles were written to the different churches to apprise them of the danger that threatened them, and to remind them of the requirements of the gospel, and especially to teach them in reference to THE GREAT APOSTACY which the Apostles foresaw would come. As long as the believers remained obedient to the word, the spirit of truth was able to accomplish what Christ said it would; that is, would lead them into all truth and remind them of what he had taught them to observe.

But when they became disciples of those who arose among them, who spoke perverse things,—Acts 20:30; when they became contentious, and did not obey the truth,—Rom. 2:8; when there was “envying, strife and divisions” amongst them,—1Cor.3:3; when they gloried in their condition while having the leaven of sin among them,—1Cor.5:6; when they were “removed from him that had called them into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel”—Gal.1:6—when these conditions prevailed among them, is it not evident that they had yielded

somewhat to a spirit which was not the spirit of Christ, but a spirit of error? We may say an antichristian spirit, for whereas the spirit of Christ would have directed them to examine themselves by his word and gospel, and would have reproved everything that was contrary to the same, the spirit they were guided by gave them comfort in following ideas that were contrary to the gospel, and in accord with their own desires and fleshly feelings. The result of this was that there were envyings, strife and divisions amongst them, on account of which, the Apostles reproved them sharply, and were moved out of love for their souls to labor earnestly and persistently to restore that which had been lost among them, that they might see their condition and repent of it, so that unity might be restored and they might again enjoy true fellowship.

The Apostles were able with the help of the Lord to labor effectually, never countenancing or excusing anything that would lead to contention or division. They also foresaw that perilous times would come and warned their brethren of them. Paul in Acts 20:28-30 says to the elders of Ephesus: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing, grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men shall arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." In 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." In 2 Tim. 4:3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables." In chapter 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." In same chapter, 1-7, "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, head-strong, puffed-up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof; from these also turn away."

(New Version). Will not these prophecies apply to much of the religion of today? And are we not compelled to see such things in nearly every religious denomination? The Apostles, foreseeing these things, warned the believers of them, and those that heeded their counsel were able to detect the spirit that prompted those who were not obedient to the doctrine of Christ; and by withdrawing from them, they were able to carry out the rules the Apostles gave to preserve unity and fellowship.

FOR A LACK OF UNITY Paul found it necessary to severely censure the Corinthian Church, and wrote to them in 1Cor. 3:1-3: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal...For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord’s supper?”—1Cor. 11:20 (New Version). Why was it impossible? Because they had divisions and contentions amongst them, which were caused by their not walking in love toward one another; consequently they could not partake of the symbols of unity and peace worthily; but would be eating and drinking damnation unto themselves, because they did not discern the body of Christ, which is his united church.—1Cor. 11:29. Is it reasonable to believe that they could have retained the divine life if they had not heeded the Apostles’ warning and repented of their condition? In Rev. 2, we see that the church of Ephesus, with all its acknowledged faithfulness in many ways, yet having lost the divine love in a measure, was thus warned: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first work or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” If the candlestick had been removed, they would have been in darkness and certainly would not have been the church of Christ; but a body of men, following ideas foreign to the doctrine of Christ and devoid of his Holy Spirit.

John, speaking of Christ, says: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to

become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God.”—John1:10-13. Here are four different births mentioned, any of which may be taken as an evidence of true conversion. But it is very clear if we comfort ourselves with any evidence of Christianity except being born of God and possessing his holy spirit, we are deceived by the great enemy of truth. If we are born of God, we are his children and will do his will. Our lives will harmonize with the teachings of scripture and we will be heirs to his eternal kingdom. But if we are disobedient to his word, we are not born of him; and unless we do his commandments we will have no right to the tree of life, nor have the privilege of entering in through the gates into the city.—Rev.22:14. Did the disciples countenance those who lived contrary to the doctrine of Christ, or did they encourage anyone with a hope if he did not obey the gospel? Paul says in Gal. 1:8, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.” John says in 2 John1:9-11, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath the Father and the Son. If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” From this it is evident that those possessing the spirit of Christ cannot countenance or encourage those who do not obey the word in any way, shape, or manner; and they can have no spiritual fellowship with those who are obedient to any influence except the spirit of Christ. Is there not A SEPARATION LINE drawn here that cannot be overstepped by those who obey the gospel? And is it not evident that many who profess Christ have no comprehension of its existence? Paul teaches in 2 Cor. 6:14-18: “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive

you, and will be to you a father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (Revised Version). In accepting these as THE COMMANDS OF ALMIGHTY GOD, must we not conclude that all who possess and obey the spirit of Christ will separate themselves from all who do not obey his doctrine? And that those who hold that the church of Christ consists in the good Christians found in all denominations are deceived? And that all who teach this doctrine are false teachers, perverting the plain commands of scripture to their own and their hearers’ condemnation?

What can be more of an abomination to the Lord than for men who claim to be sent by him to teach their fellowmen that love, unity and fellowship are not essential to salvation; neither obedience to his word, but that Christians have the liberty of suing at law, swearing of oaths, giving bills of divorcement, waging wars, living in the pride of life, and in fact living a life, nearly or quite identical, with those whose lives are devoted to fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind? Is not this an unclean thing that the Lord requires every faithful soul to separate from and avoid? And can they love and obey Christ without doing so?

THE SCRIPTURES MAKE A WAY for every one whose hope is based alone upon the Lord and his word, and who will not yield to the spirit that would lead all mankind to ruin. Paul wrote to the Romans, 16:17: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ye have learned; and avoid them.” In 2 Thes. 3:6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us,” and the 14th verse: “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” In 1 Cor. 5:11: “Now I write unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not to eat.” (Revised Version). We here see very plain directions given for every child of God, that he is to labor in love to have the Lord’s word carried into effect; but never be moved from the foundation, Jesus Christ and his doctrine. A church guided in its practice by these rules will be a

united body and will purge itself of evil, teaching and practicing nothing but the pure doctrine of Christ. But if we are united with a church which refuses or is powerless to carry out these rules, what would be our duty?

OBEDIENCE TO THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST would require us to separate from and avoid spiritual association with all who do not obey the commands of Christ, even if this would include the whole church. Many, who are troubled because members of their church do not walk orderly, are encouraged by their teachers to only do right themselves, and what others do need not concern them. Is this the gospel of Christ and the doctrine of brotherly love? Or is it the voice of a stranger from whom the lambs of Christ will flee? Is this the doctrine of Christ, consistent with divine love and Christian fellowship, or the deception of the enemy of all good?

Christ said, "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my word, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Do mankind fully realize and believe that the scriptures will be their judge by which they will either be admitted into heaven and all its glory, or condemned to everlasting tribulation? If they do, how can they pass over its plain teachings so lightly? Is it not contrary to good judgment, sound reason and human intelligence to treat our eternal interests with such indifference? Christ said in John 3:19—"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." This love for darkness is caused by man's yielding in obedience to THAT SPIRIT OF EVIL which was cast out of heaven because he kept not his first estate. This spirit worketh in the children of disobedience and moves all who are outside of Christ to take the course they do and desires to make all mankind unhappy and miserable. When we consider that his great work is to bring man into a condition in which he will be eternally miserable, is it not remarkable that man, with sound reasoning faculties, and entirely bent on obtaining enjoyment, can so readily yield to such an influence when it is so plainly evident what the object of that spirit is, and also what the eternal result of yielding to it will be? If there were an enemy to threaten the peace of our land,

many would resist; but when this enemy threatens the eternal peace of the soul, they admit him with open arms as if he were their best friend.

THE GREAT DISPOSITION to enjoy the present moment in preference to future good seems to carry all of man's noble reasoning faculties with it. We see this plainly illustrated in the drunkard, who knows, better than anyone can tell him, that he had best abstain. But he sees the only means of gratifying his desires in drinking, and gratification he will have, regardless of consequences. Just so it is with all the worldly minded who find their satisfaction in the lusts of the flesh and eye and in the pride of life. They allow the good judgment God has given them to be distorted by the enemy of all happiness and consequently look to the things of this world as being able to give them the enjoyment which they desire; and unless they open their minds and let the glorious light of the gospel shine in, they will not realize until their doom is forever sealed, what a perfect liberty and great enjoyment is attained by those who live, not after the flesh, but after the spirit; and whose lives are hid with Christ in God. But if our life is not hid with Christ in God, we will be forever barred from all that can yield enjoyment, and unceasing tribulation will be our everlasting portion.

WELL MAY WE ASK with the prophet, (Isaiah 33:14)—“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” At the last day, when all shall appear in judgment, no one will be able to question the sentence he receives; as he will then fully realize that he is receiving according to what he has sown. And his conscience will say amen to the sentence he receives; as he will clearly see its justice. Let us consider well what we are doing and the end thereof; for in a few days or years we will have no more opportunity, forever, to choose our portion. Let us remember that today is the day of grace and the day of salvation, and the only time promised us; and what is put off till tomorrow may be put off forever. When our race here is run, if we have not the oil of divine love in our lamps, “that charity which never faileth, ” and which alone can fit us for the association of heaven, WE WILL HAVE AN ETERNITY to rue our folly in; and the fact of our being wholly to blame, in so fully yielding ourselves to the service of the enemy of our happiness, that we were not able to appreciate the Lord's loving kindness, will but add to our misery.

Truly, have we not sufficient unhappiness and discomfort, pain and misery in this life to satisfy us?

But the extreme indifference manifested by many in regard to their eternal condition would seem to indicate that their greatest desire was for everlasting unhappiness and misery, instead of perfect and never-ending enjoyment. But our innate desire for happiness should cause us to fully consider this matter while we have the opportunity, and allow the dictates of our better knowledge and conscience to cause us to yield ourselves unto the God of wisdom and love, and thereby realize the consistency of Christ's doctrine, and find that true Christian fellowship is the highest condition of earthly enjoyment, and the only object worth living for is heaven.