

God Sets the Qualifications of His Men _____

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God's people in this world and these people are gathered into groups called churches; the Bible calls them the churches of Christ. We know them today as Baptist churches. They recognize no earthly head and are ruled by the Word of God alone. In these congregations of baptized believers, Christ the Bishop of our souls appoints pastors. Men whom he calls and the church recognizes as his servants are installed or ordained to be the overseer or pastor the church.

These men are called in Ephesians chapter four "gifts" to the church. These men are given to the church "for the perfecting of the saints...for the edifying of the body of Christ". No doubt most of the readers of this paper have experienced the blessing of this gift. A pastor is a gift and those churches that are without a pastor know that and miss it.

Now we need to ask a few questions: Who are these men? How can we know who they are? What does the Bible say?

Who these men are is obvious after they've been recognized by a church as being God's servants. So we need to look and see what the Bible says so that we can know who these men are.

In the Old Testament the Lord told Moses to set apart the sons of Aaron to be his ministers. The Levites were a unique group of people among Israel's tribes. It was the tribe of Levi alone who was not given a portion in the Land of Promise; the Lord gave them something better.

Numbers 18:20: "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel."

The LORD was their inheritance, they alone would be able to serve in the place of offering, they only would be able to enter the Holy place where the LORD said He would dwell

above the mercy seat. I ask you "What could be better than the LORD himself as your inheritance?"

But, not all the Levites were allowed to serve in the Tabernacle. The servants of the House of the Lord had to meet some standards before they would be deemed acceptable to serve in the house of blood. We can see these limitations in the twenty first chapter of Leviticus. The restrictions covered who he married 21:7, 13-15, and what his physical characteristics were 21:17-21.

We point these out to show that from the first days of the Lord having ministers for His people. The corps of servants was not open to all comers, not even to all the sons of Levi! In the New Testament Churches the same principle is found! Not all Christians can serve as the pastor, and not all

men in the church can labor in the pulpit; it is a limited office. The Holy Spirit gives, in 1 Timothy and Titus, the qualifications or the characteristics that a church should use to determine if a man is qualified. It is from these passages that we are taught what constitutes the candidate for the bishopric in the Lord's church.

In this day of apostasy (which has been present since the legalist(s) descended on the Galatian churches) we need to be reminded of what the Bible says.

In these qualifications of a bishop (1 Timothy 3:1-7) God, as He did in Leviticus 21, covers all facets of His minister's life. Paul records what kind of character God's man is to possess in relation to His:

1. His Morality— verse 2 points to his past, blameless
2. His Manner— verse 3 points to his prospects, not greedy, not covetous
3. His Marriage— verses 4, 5 point to his present, rules well his family, in love, judgment, correction, and mercy. This gives a good view of how he will lead the church
4. His Maturity— verses 6, 7 point to his principles, must have good report that he is settled in his doctrine (essential, blood atonement, inspiration, salvation, etc.), steadfast in his duty as husband, father and pastor, and surrendered to his destiny the will of God.

It is abundantly clear that the Lord expects a great deal from the men He chooses for His churches. It should be the desire of His men to live up to our Lord's expectations, or it leaves open the probability that they desire the prestige, power and praise of the position more than the holiness and humbleness that is required in it. There are many Baptist ministers who are mere hirelings. Men who are in it for what they get out of it, rather than solely for the "glory of God".

When men are in the ministry to gratify their own selfish purposes, they will skirt or reason away God's qualifications. Sadly, this is why churches have no power with God in a real sense. And when successes are measured in numbers of members or baptisms in a year rather than absolute faithfulness to God, you've fallen for the devil's lie.

An unqualified minister may be very persuasive, personable and likable to a congregation and has apparent outward success, but if he does not meet God's qualifications, no

matter how it looks, he is unfit to offer the bread of God to a hungry world. These qualifications can be, and are in fact, controversial in this day. Nevertheless, they should be followed in ordaining men to the ministry and in recalling ordination of men who become disqualified.

Also, it should be remembered, in the OT the offerings were made for the priests as well as the people to cover their sins, but the blood of those offerings could not remove the blemish in the eye, crooked back or fix the flat nose. (See Lev. 21) These Levites were still disqualified to offer the bread of God. Therefore, in the NT, salvation certainly fits you for heaven, but not necessarily for the office of Bishop or deacon.

The blood of Jesus does cleanse from all sin, but the scars of some those transgressions can remain and be disqualifying from the bishopric. A qualification is a requirement that must be met. These are not options to twist to fit personal manners or moral purview.

If a man desires the office of a bishop, his character and conduct of life must be to the level of God's qualifications. And God, being sovereign, knows every thought and intent of the heart and He will only call those that meet the criteria for His church officers.

1 Timothy 1:12-13:

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

There are things, as Paul says, that a man may have done before he was saved, but there are things also that leave a blemish that cannot be removed. Such could be, a child out of wedlock, child molestation, divorce and remarriage. These can be destructive to a man's testimony and to the Lord's church he is trying to pastor.

There was a man who was a pastor that held strong convictions and a very dynamic preacher. Earlier before he was saved and married, he had an illicit affair. It produced a child. He later was saved and believed he was called to the ministry. However, this mother of his child spent years chasing him all over country to get him to take responsibility for his child. When they would locate him, he would resign from the church and move to another state. He would then become pastor of another unsuspecting church. At the least, he would be disqualified under the first qualification, blameless. 1 Timothy 3:2, "A bishop then

must be blameless..." Even, though his salvation occurred after the child's birth. He never married this woman, but did marry another lady and had children with her.

The husband of one wife issue is a hot topic of today. Marriage is a sacred institution that should not be entered into lightly, no matter whether the couple is saved or unsaved. It is to be a lifelong commitment of a man and woman. "Husband of one wife" has been interpreted and reinterpreted over and over, but here are verses that should never be overlooked in connection with 1 Timothy 3:2. Romans 7:2-3:

"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

A man may be divorced by the law of the land but according to God's law the woman is still his wife. Therefore, if he marries another, he has two living wives rendering him disqualified to offer the bread of God to the Lord's churches.

Suffice to say, humility is the most essential quality of God's man. It keeps you quiet when you want to lash out or lay blame somewhere else.

This writer realizes this is a controversial issue and it is not his intent to run what he perceives as disqualified men out the ministry. It is his intent to teach the Lord's churches what kind of men they need for the offices of pastors and deacons. By the way, women are never qualified for either of the two offices of the church.

Finally, men of the Lord's churches and the congregation need to keep in mind:

1. The Ministry is a High Calling.

Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The Holy Ghost has placed His men in their position as overseers of His possession (church) that Christ purchased with His own Blood. That is a special calling, a serious calling and a selfless calling making it a High Calling by the most High God where there is no room for selfishness on the part of His men.

2. The Ministry is an Honorable Commitment.

1 Timothy 1:11-12 "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."

The Lord has honored His men by committing to us His GLORIOUS GOSPEL. What a privilege to be put in trust of something, so pure, so precious, so powerful it raises sinners from the dead. Therefore, as God's men, we should honor Him by being committed to this great trust, proclaiming His given truth and above all, practicing every precept that the Holy Spirit guides us into without fear, favor or fleshly motive.

3. The Ministry is a Humbling Challenge.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Someone once said, "God gives us enough success to keep us going, and enough failure to keep us humble." It has also been put this way, "The successes belong to God and the failures belong to me." Suffice to say, humility is the most essential quality of God's man. It keeps you quiet when you want to lash out or lay blame somewhere else. It keeps you patient when you want to react at criticism, or during seasons of opposition, obstruction or oppression.

The Apostle makes it clear in the previous verses that God intended to keep him humble. Paul gloried in his weakness for these were opportunities to experience the power of an almighty God. Every opposition by the world: government restriction or regulation, compromising influences, etc.

Every obstruction by the flesh: family disagreement, financial shortfall, female temptation, etc., and every oppression by the devil - doubt, fear, defeat or setback - are the times when God shows Himself faithful and mighty. The Bible is replete with episodes that when His men or

people are in hopeless and helpless situations to where they are humbled that He gloriously reveals Himself in powerful and spectacular ways. And He alone is glorified. That is the ministry. Meeting God's qualifications for the ministry is all about our humility and His Glory. May we His ministers fall prostrate before Him and watch as He shows himself mighty in His power to save, strengthen and sustain

His people. Ephesians 3:21: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."



The Duties of Church Members Towards Each Other

J. A. James

From *The Baptist Manual*, 1849 – (Part 2 of 3)

II. Church members should cultivate PEACE and HARMONY one with another.

"Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephes. 4:3)

"Be of one mind, live in peace." (2 Cor. 11)

"Follow after the things which make for peace." (Rom. 14:19)

It is quite needless to expatiate on the value and importance of peace. What society can exist without it? I shall therefore proceed to state what things are necessary for the attainment of this end.

1. Members should be subject one to another in humility.

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you, be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. 5:5)

Now from hence we learn that some kind of mutual subjection ought to be established in every Christian church. This of course does not mean that some members are to make an entire surrender of their opinions and feelings to others, so far as never to oppose them, and always to be guided by them. It is not the subjection of an inferior to a superior, but of equals to one another; not that which is extorted by authority, but voluntarily

conceded by affection; not yielded as matter of right, but given for the sake of peace. In short, it is the mutual subjection of love and humility. Young and inexperienced persons ought to be subject to the aged, for what can be more indecorous than to see a stripling standing up at a church meeting, and with confidence and flippancy, opposing his views to those of a disciple old enough to be his grandfather?

Youth loses its loveliness when it loses its modesty. They should hearken with deference and most reverential attention to the opinion of the aged. Nor does the obligation rest here; it extends to those who are equal in age and rank. Church members should be subject to each other. They should not be determined at all events to have their own way, but should go as far as principle will let them, in giving up their own views and predilections to the rest.

Everyone should hearken with respectful attention to the opinions of others, and be willing to sacrifice his own. The contention ought not to be for rule, but for subjection. Instead of haughtily exclaiming, "I have as much right to have my way as anyone else," we should say, "I have an opinion, and will mildly and respectfully state it, yet I will not force it upon the church, but give way to the superior wisdom of others if I am opposed." There should be in every member a supposition that others may see as clearly, probably more so, than himself.

The democratic principle in our system of church government must not be stretched too far. The idea of equal rights is soon abused and converted into the means of turbulence and faction. Liberty, fraternity, and equality, are words which both in church and state have often become the signals in the mouths of some, for the lawless invasion of the rights of others.

It has been strangely forgotten, that no man in social life has a right to please only himself; his will is, or ought to be, the good of the whole. And that individual violates at once the social compact, whether in ecclesiastical or civil society, who pertinaciously and selfishly exclaims, "I will have my way." Such a declaration constitutes him a rebel against the community.

Yet alas! How much of this rebellion is to be found not only in the world, but in the church, and what havoc and desolation has it occasioned. Unfortunately for the peace of our societies, it is sometimes disguised, by the deceitfulness of the human heart, under the cloak of zeal for the general good. Church members should enter into these sentiments, and thus comply with the apostolic admonitions, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." (Phil. 2:3); "In honour preferring one another." (Rom. 12:10)

Let us then deliberately determine that, by God's grace, we will not be easily offended. If such a resolution were generally made and kept, offences would cease.

2. To the preservation of peace, a right treatment of offences is essentially necessary.

We should ever be cautious not to GIVE offence.

Some persons are rude, dogmatic, or indiscreet; they never consult the feelings of those around them, and are equally careless whom they please and whom they offend. They say and do just what their feelings prompt, without the least regard to the consequences of their words and actions. They act like an individual, who because it pleases him, discharges a loaded musket in a crowded street, where some are almost sure to be wounded. This is not the charity which is kind, courteous, and civil.

A Christian should be ever afraid of giving offence; he should be anxious not to injure the wing of an insect, much more the mind of a brother. The peace of his brethren should even be more sacred than his own. It should be his fixed determination never, if possible, to occasion a moment's pain. For this purpose he should be discreet, and mild, and courteous in all his language, weighing the import

of words before he utters them, and calculating the consequence of actions before he performs them. He should remember that he is moving in a crowd, and be careful not to trample on or jostle his neighbours.

We should all be backward to RECEIVE offence.

Quarrels often begin for want of the caution as I have just stated, and are then continued for want of the backwardness I am now enforcing. An observance of these two principles would keep the world in peace. There are some people whose passions are like tow, kindled into a blaze in a moment by the least spark which has been designedly or accidentally thrown upon it.

A word, a look, is in some cases quite enough to be considered a very serious injury. It is no uncommon thing for such persons to excuse themselves on the ground that their feelings are so delicately sensible that they are offended by the least touch. This is an humiliating confession, for it is acknowledging that instead of being like the cedar of Lebanon, or the oak of the forest which laughs at the tempest, and is unmoved by the boar of the wood, they resemble the sensitive plant, a little squeamish shrub, which trembles before the breeze, and shrivels and contracts beneath the pressure of an insect. Delicate feelings! In plain English, this means that they are petulant and irascible. I would have

a text of Scripture written upon a label, and tied upon the forehead of such persons; and it should be this—"Beware of dogs." (Phil. 3:2)

We should never suffer ourselves to be offended, until at least, we are sure that offence was intended; and this is really not so often as we are apt to conclude. Had we but patience to wait, or humility to inquire, we should find that many things were done by mistake, which we are prone to attribute to design. How often do we violate that charity which thinketh no evil, and which imperatively demands of us to attribute a good motive to another's conduct, except a bad one is proved?

Let us then deliberately determine that, by God's grace, we will not be easily offended. If such a resolution were generally made and kept, offences would cease. Let us first ascertain whether offence was intended, before we suffer the least emotion of anger to be indulged; and even then, when we have proved that the offence was not committed by accident, let us next ask ourselves whether it is necessary to notice it. What wise man will think it

worthwhile, when an insect has stung him, to pursue and punish the aggressor?

When we have received an injury which is too serious to be passed over unnoticed, and requires explanation in order to our future pleasant intercourse with the individual who inflicts it, we should neither brood over it in silence, nor communicate it to a third person, but go directly to the offender himself, and state to him in private our views of his conduct. This is most clearly enjoined by our divine Lord—"Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." (Matt. 18:15)

Many persons lock up the injury in their own bosom; and instead of going to their offending brother, dwell upon his conduct in silence, until their imagination has added to it every possible aggravation, and their minds have come to the conclusion to separate themselves for ever from his society. From that hour, they neither speak to him, nor think well of him; but consider and treat him as an alien from their hearts. This is not our religion. Our duty is to go, and to go as speedily as possible, to the offender. The longer we delay, the more serious will the offence appear in our eyes, and the more difficult will it be to persuade ourselves to obtain the interview.

Others, when they have received an offence, set off to some friend, perhaps to more than one, to lodge their complaint, and tell how they have been treated. The report of the injury spreads further and wider, exaggerated and swelled by those circumstances, which every gossip through whose hands it passes, chooses to add to the original account, till in process of time it comes around to the offender himself, in its magnified and distorted form, who now finds that he in his turn is aggrieved and calumniated; and thus, a difficult and complicated case of offence, grows out of what was at first very simple in its nature, and capable of being adjusted. We ought to go at once to the party offending us, before a syllable has past our lips on the subject to a third person; and we should also close our ears against the complaints of any individual, who would inform us of the fault of a brother, before he has told the offender himself.

Sometimes when persons have received a supposed offence, they will endeavour to gain information from others in a circuitous and clandestine manner, in order, as they think, to conduct the affair with prudence. This is crooked policy, and rarely succeeds. It is next to impossible to creep with a step so soft, and to speak with a voice so muffled, as to escape detection; and if the individual

surprise us in the act of ferreting into holes and corners for evidence, it will be sure to excite his indignation and disgust. No, go to him at once, AND ALONE.

This is the command of Scripture, and it is approved by reason, Matt. 18:15-17. This single admonition is worth all the volumes that philosophy ever wrote, and ought to be inscribed in letters of gold. It cannot be too often repeated, nor can too much stress be laid upon it. Third persons, whose ears are ever open to catch reports, should be avoided as the plague; they are the mischief-makers, quarrel-mongers, and pests of our churches.

Great caution, however, should be observed as to the spirit in which we go to the offending brother. All the meekness and gentleness of Christ should be in our temper and manner. We should dip our very tongue in the fountain of love. Every feeling, every look, every tone of anger, should be suppressed. We should not at once accuse our brother of the injury, for the report may be false; but modestly ask him if it be correct. All attempts to extort confession by threatenings should be avoided, and instead of these, nothing should be employed but the appeals of wisdom, the gentle persuasions of love.

There is a very interesting description of the manner in which private offences should be treated, in that inimitable book, *Social Religion Exemplified*. Part of a dialogue, I here transcribe, as showing the manner and spirit in which this very difficult matter ought to be managed:

"NEOPHYTUS: If Epenetus please, and with the good leave of the company, I would further request a brief account of private offences that probably occurred among these professing brethren.

"EPENETUS: I shall then gratify my young friend, which I am persuaded will not be ungrateful to the company. Upon a time, in some discourse which Egwan (of whom you have heard something before) and one Hyderus had, wherein they differed in opinion, the latter told the former that he was an insignificant fellow, whose thoughts were not to be regarded. Egwan said in answer, that he took it very ill of him.

The other replied, 'You may take it as you please.' So their conversation ended in a cloud. Egwan had but little rest that night.

'Is it so, then,' he says to himself, 'and yet did Christ redeem me? Did the Spirit of the Lord visit my heart? Did the church of Christ receive me? And must I (though weak and feeble) be called insignificant?'

Tossed through the night in much uneasiness, he thought to go in the morning to one of the elders to complain. He got up and as usual, in the first place committed himself to God: but while he was at prayer mourning over his present uneasiness, that word came into his mind, 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.' He quickly saw that it was not his immediate business to divulge it to anybody,—no, not to an elder; but to go directly to the brother who gave him the offence. Accordingly, he desired God to give him meekness of wisdom from above, and to bless his design. So he went to Hyderus, and spoke to him as follows:

Egwan: Brother I have had a very uneasy night; you spoke, I think, very unadvisedly with your lips, to say no worse of it; you have grieved me much, and surely you have sinned against God. I have judged it my duty to come and have some talk with you about it; and have mentioned it to none but the Lord. You know you called me, in disdain, 'An insignificant fellow.' Pray, what do you think of the expression, and of the spirit in which it was spoken?

Hyderus: Truly, I think it was not worth your while to come to me about it. I charge you not with pride; yet pray does it not look very much that way that you should make it your business to come hither to prove yourself valuable and significant?

Egwan: I came with no other design than to tell you my grievance. For if I am such a person as, with disdain, you described me, then am I not regarded by the Redeemer; have no portion in him; nor doth his Spirit dwell in me; nor hath he ever taken notice of me; otherwise, sure, I should be entitled to a place in the esteem of his children. Why did the church receive me? You have censured the whole church, as, well as myself.

Hyderus: I do not pretend to justify what I said, but think you greatly aggravate it; whereas, you might as well have been easy without taking any notice of it.

Egwan: And suffer the sin to lie upon you? Brother, nothing is desired but repentance for sinning against God. I hope I am willing to think meanly of myself; but am not so willing that anything appertaining to the

Redeemer's kingdom should be treated with derision or disdain.

Hyderus: Dear brother, I disdain you not; you discover yourself to be a Christian of good improvement. I am sorry to have so sinned against God and you, and desire that brotherly love and tender respect may continue.

Egwan: Amen; I am satisfied, dear brother.

CHRISTOPHILUS: What a speedy, happy end was put to this offence! Oh, what endless strife of tongues, evil surmisings, animosities, and popular clamour, spring and prevail in some places, for want of observing such a method as this!

NEOPHYTUS: But what if Egwan had gone to the elder first as he thought once to do?

EPENETUS: Why, then he would have been reprov'd for taking such a wrong step; he would have been better informed, and sent about his business.

NEOPHYTUS: But what if Hyderus had justified himself and persisted in his sin?

EPENETUS: Then Egwan must have taken another opportunity, and desired a brother or two to go along with him; that they might use their joint endeavours to bring the offender to repentance.

If the offender should refuse to acknowledge his fault, and it should be necessary for us to take a witness or two, which is our next step in settling a disagreement, we must be very careful to select men of great discretion and calmness.

If we succeed in such a private interview to gain our brother so far as to produce a little relenting, we ought to cherish, by the kindest expressions, these beginnings of repentance, and to avoid all demands of unnecessary concession, all haughty airs of conscious superiority, all insulting methods of dispensing pardon. "Brother," we should say, "my aim was not to degrade you, but to convince you; and since you see and acknowledge your fault, I am satisfied, and shall forgive and forget it from this moment."

If the offender should refuse to acknowledge his fault, and it should be necessary for us to take a witness or two, which is our next step in settling a disagreement, we must be very careful to select men of great discretion and calmness; men who will not be likely to inflame, instead of healing the wound; men who will act as mediators, not as partisans.

It is absolutely necessary in order to offences being removed, that the offender, upon his being convicted of an injury, should make all suitable concession; and it will generally be found, that in long continued and complicated strifes, this obligation becomes mutual. Whoever is the ORIGINAL aggressor, a feud seldom continues long, ere, both parties are to blame. Even the aggrieved individual has something to concede, and the way to induce the other to acknowledge his greater offence, is for him to confess his lesser one. It is the mark of a noble and ingenuous mind to confess an error, and solicit its forgiveness. "Confess your faults one to another," (James 5:16) is an inspired injunction.

The man who is too proud to acknowledge his fault, when his conduct demands it, has violated his duty, and is a fit subject for censure. There are some persons, so far forgetful of their obligations to Christ and to their brethren, as not only to refuse to make concession, but even to give explanation. Their proud spirits disdain even to afford the least satisfaction in the way of throwing light upon a supposed offence. This is most criminal, and is such a defiance of the authority of the Lord Jesus, as ought to bring the individual before the bar of the church.

We should be very cautious not to exact unreasonable concession. A revengeful spirit is often as effectually gratified by imposing hard and humiliating terms of reconciliation, as it possibly could be by making the severest retaliation. No offender is so severely punished as he who is obliged to degrade himself in order to obtain a pardon. And, as all revenge is unlawful, we should be extremely careful not to gratify it at the very time and by the manner in which we are dispensing pardon. To convince a brother, not to degrade him, is the object we are to seek, and especially should we endeavour to show him, that his offence is more against Christ than against ourselves.

When suitable acknowledgments are made, the act of forgiveness is no longer optional with us. From that moment every spark of anger, every feeling of a revengeful nature, is to be quenched. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil." (Ephes. 4:26, 27) If we suffer sleep to visit our eyes before we have forgiven an offending, but penitent brother, we are committing a greater offence against Christ, than our brother has committed against us. The man that takes a revengeful temper to his pillow is inviting Satan to be his guest. Such a man would probably tremble at the thought of taking a harlot to his bed, but is it no crime to sleep in the embrace of a fiend?

The word revenge should be blotted from the Christian's vocabulary by the tears which he sheds for his own offences. How can an implacable Christian repeat that petition of our Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." (Luke 11:4) Does he forget that if he uses such language while he is living in a state of resentment against it brother, he is praying for perdition—for how does he forgive them that trespass against him? By revenge? How strong is the language of Paul! "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." (Ephes. 4:30-32)

What motives to a forgiving spirit! Can that man have ever tasted the sweets of pardoning mercy who refuses to forgive an erring brother? Go, Christian professor, go first to the law, and learn thy twice ten thousand sins; go in imagination to the brink of the bottomless pit, and as thou hearkenest to the howlings of the damned, remember -that those howlings might have been thine; then go the cross, and while thou lookest on the bleeding victim, which is nailed to it, hearken to the accents of mercy which breathe like soft music in thine ear, "Go in peace; thy sine are all forgiven thee." What, will you, can you return from such scenes, with purposes of revenge? No; impossible. A "cruel Christian" is a contradiction in terms. Bigots there may be, and have been, of all denominations; but an implacable, irreconcilable, unforgiving Christian, is of the same figure of speech, as a "godly adulterer", a "religious drunkard," or a "devout murderer."

The last step in reclaiming an offender is to bring him before the assembled church. "If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." (Matt. 18:16-17) Every effort that ingenuity can invent, affection prompt, or patience can conduct ought to be made before it be brought to be investigated by the brethren at large. If every trivial disagreement be laid before the church, it will soon become a court of common pleas, and have all its time consumed in adjusting matters of which it ought never to have heard.

An offence ought never to be considered as removed until love is restored. We should never rest until such an explanation has been given and received, as will enable us

to return to harmony and confidence. A mere cessation of actual hostilities may do for the affairs of the world, but not for the fellowship of the saints. There is no actual strife between the tenants of the sepulchre; but the cold and gloomy stillness of a churchyard is an inappropriate emblem of the peace of a Christian church. In such a community we expect, that not only will the discords and sounds of enmity be hushed, but the sweet harmonies of love be heard; not only that the conflict of rage will terminate, but be succeeded by the activity, of genuine affection.

When once an offence has been removed, it should never be adverted to in future. Its very remembrance should, if possible, be washed from the memory by the waters of Lethe. Other causes of disagreement may exist, and fresh feuds arise; but the old one is dead and buried, and its angry ghost should never be evoked to add fury to the passion of its successor. Nor should we, when in our turn we are convicted of an error, shelter ourselves from reproof, by reminding our reprover that he was once guilty of a similar offence. This is mean, dishonourable, unchristian, and mischievous.

Every Christian should bear reproof with meekness. Few know how to give reproof with propriety, still fewer how to bear it. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be as excellent oil, which shall not break my head..." (Ps. 141:5) How small is the number who can adopt this language in sincerity. What wounded pride, what mortification and resentment are felt by many when their faults are told to them. When we have so far sinned as to deserve rebuke, we ought to have humility enough to bear it with meekness, and should it be delivered in greater weight, or with less affection than we think is proper, a penitential remembrance of our offence should prevent all feelings of irritation or resentment.

Scripture is very severe in its language to those who turn with neglect, anger, or disgust from the admonitions of their brethren. "He that despiseth reproof sinneth." (Prov. 10:17); "He that hateth reproof is brutish." (Prov. 12:1); "He that is often reprov'd, and yet hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." (Prov. 29:1) Such persons are guilty of great pride, great neglect of the Word of God, and great contempt of one of the ordinances of Heaven, and thus injure their souls by that which was given to benefit them.

Every Christian should bear reproof with meekness. Few know how to give reproof with propriety, still fewer how to bear it.

Do not then act so wickedly as to turn with indignation from a brother that comes in the spirit of meekness to admonish and reprove you. Rather thank him for his fidelity, and profit by his kindness. I know not a more decisive mark of true and strong piety than a willingness to receive reproof with meekness and to profit by admonition, come from whom it might.

2. If the peace of the church be preserved, the members must watch against and repress A TATTLING DISPOSITION.

There are few circumstances which tend more to disturb the harmony and repose of our societies, than a proneness in some of their members to a gossiping, tattling disposition. There are persons so deeply infected with the Athenian passion to hear or tell some new thing that their ears or lips are always open. With insatiable appetite, they devour all the news they can by any means collect, and are never easy until it is all disgorged again to the unspeakable annoyance and disgust of others around them.

It is one of the mysteries of God's natural government that such should gain a sort of adventitious consequence by the mischief they occasion, and be thus sheltered from scorn by being regarded with dread. The tattler is of this description: I mean the individual who loves to talk of other men's matters, and especially of their faults. For it will be found

that by a singular perversity of disposition those who love to talk about the circumstances of others, rarely ever select their excellencies as matters of discourse, but almost always fix upon their failings and thus, to borrow a simile of Solomon's, they resemble the fly which neglects the healthful part of the frame to pitch and luxuriate on the sore.

In the case of tattling, there are generally three parties to blame: there is first the gossip, then the person who is weak enough to listen to, and report the tales; and lastly, the individual who is the subject of the report, who suffers his mind to be irritated, instead of going, in the spirit of meekness, to require an explanation from the original reporter.

Now let it be a rule with every church member, to avoid speaking of the circumstances, and especially of the faults of others. Let this rule have the sanctity of the laws of Heaven, and the immutability of those of the Medes and Persians. Let every individual resolve with himself thus: "I will be slow to speak of others. I will neither originate a report by saying what I think, nor help to circulate a report

by repeating what I hear." This is a most wise regulation, which would at once preserve our own peace and the peace of society.

We should beware of saying anything, which by the perverted ingenuity of a slanderous disposition, may become the basis of a tale to the disadvantage of another. It is not enough, as I have hinted, that we do not originate a report, but we ought not to circulate it. When it reaches us, there it should stop and go no farther. We should give it to prudence, to be buried in silence. We must never appear pleased with the tales of gossips and newsmongers, much less with the scandals of the backbiter; our smile is their reward. If there were no listeners, there would be no reporters. In company let us always discourage and repress such conversation.

Let us avoid and discourage the hollow deceitful practice of indulging a tattling disposition under the cover of lamenting over the faults of our brethren.

Many who would be afraid or ashamed to mention the faults of a brother in the way of direct affirmation or report, easily find, or attempt to find, a disguise for their backbiting disposition in affected lamentations.

"What a pity it is," they exclaim, "that brother B should have behaved so ill. Poor man, I am sorry that he should have committed himself. The petulance of his temper is exceedingly to be regretted. He does not much honour religion."

"And then," replies the second, "how sorry I am to hear this report of sister C.; how the world will talk, and the cause of Christ suffer by such unwarrantable things in the conduct of a professor. It will not be a secret, long, or I would not mention it."

"Oh," says a third, "I have heard whispers of the same kind in times past. I have long suspected it, and mentioned my fears some months ago to a friend or two. I thought she was not the person she appeared to be. I am very sorry for her, and for the cause of Christ. I have long had my suspicions, and now they are all confirmed. I shall tell the friends to whom I expressed my fears what I have now heard."

In this way is a tattling disposition indulged in the circle of even good people, under the guise of lamentation for the sins of others. "Odious and disgusting hypocrites," would a

noble and honourable Christian exclaim, with hallowed indignation, "which of you, if you really lamented the fact, would report it? Which of you has gone to the erring individual, inquired into the truth of the matter, and, finding it true, has mildly expostulated? Let your lamentations be poured out before God and the offender, but to none else."

Others, again, indulge this disposition by running about to inquire into the truth of a report which they say has reached them, respecting a brother:

"Have you heard anything of brother H. lately?" they ask with a significant look.

"No," replies the person.

"Then I suppose it is not true."

"Why, what have you heard? Nothing I hope affecting his moral character."

"Not very materially, but I hope it is false."

The tattler cannot go, however, without letting out the secret, and then sets off to inquire of another and another. Mischief making creature! Why had he not gone, as was his obvious duty, to the individual who was the subject of the report, and inquired of him the truth of it? Aye, but then the story would have been contradicted at once, and the pleasure of telling it would have been ended.

There are cases in which a modest disclosure of the failings of others is necessary. Such, for example, as when a church is likely to be deceived in the character of an individual, whom it is about to admit to membership. In such instances, the person who is aware of the imposition that is likely to be practiced, should go directly to the pastor, and make him acquainted with the fact; instead of which some persons whisper their suspicions to any and to many, except the pastor. It is perfectly lawful also to prevent any brother from being betrayed into a ruinous confidence in pecuniary matters by informing him of the character of the individual by whom he is about to be deceived. Silence, in such cases, would be an obvious injury.

BE SLOW TO SPEAK, then, is a maxim which every Christian should always keep before his eyes. Silent people can do no harm, but talkers are always dangerous.



God's Omnipresence

J. L. Dagg

From the *Manual of Theology: A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, 1859*

God is everywhere. (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7; Jer. 23:23)

Every material thing in the universe is somewhere. The sun has its place; the earth also, and every grain of sand, and every drop of water. The drops of water may change their place perpetually, but every drop has, for each moment, its own place, to the exclusion of all other matter in the universe.

In our conceptions of the human mind we assign place to it also, though in a different manner. We do not attribute to it length, breadth, and thickness, as to a block of marble, which can be measured by feet and inches, but we conceive of it as present in the human body, with which it is connected, and absent from another, with which it is not connected.

Each mind is operated on by impressions made on the organs of sense which belong to its own body, and operates by its volitions on the muscles of motion which belong to that body. In this view, we conceive of each mind as present in its own body, and not elsewhere; and we conceive of changing the place of the mind, while its connection with the body continues, only by a change in the place of the body.

When we conceive of finite spiritual beings as angels, we assign to each some place because his operation, though not confined like that of the human mind, to a particular material body, is nevertheless limited. Such conception accords with the teaching of Scripture, in which angels are represented as moving from place to place, to execute the will of their Sovereign. So the angel came to Daniel, (Dan. 9:23); and to Peter (Acts 12:7); and so one is represented as flying through the midst of heaven. (Rev. 14:6)

We must not conceive of God's omnipresence as if it were material. We say that the atmosphere is present at every part of the earth's surface, but this is not strictly true. It is not the whole, but merely a small part of the atmosphere, which is present at each place; God is indivisible. We

cannot say, that a part of his essence is here, and a part yonder. If this were the mode of God's omnipresence in universal space, he would be infinitely divided, and only an infinitely small part of him would be present at each place. It would not be the whole deity that takes cognizance of our actions, and listens to our petitions. This notion is unfavorable to piety, and opposed to the true sense of Scripture: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Prov. 15:3); "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." (1Pet. 3:12)

There are passages of Scripture which speak of God's removing from one place to another; of his approaching and departing; of his dwelling in heaven, and of his coming near to his people, and taking up his abode with them. These are manifestly accommodations of language just as when eyes or hands are attributed to him. They refer to the manifestations of his presence in his various works, and dispensations, in which such changes take place, as are appropriately and impressively expressed by this language.

When we deny a material omnipresence of God, as if his essence were divided and diffused; and when we maintain that the whole deity is everywhere present by his energy and operation, it is not to be understood that we deny the essential omnipresence of God. In whatever manner his essence is present anywhere, it is present everywhere. What the mode of that presence is, we know not.

We know not the essence of the human mind, nor the mode of its presence in the body; much less can we comprehend the essence of the infinite God, or the mode of his omnipresence. To that incomprehensible property of his nature, by which he is capable of being wholly present at the same moment, with every one of his creatures, without division of his essence, and without removal from place to place, the name immensity has been given.

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and, therefore, without such dimensions as may be measured by feet and inches, and because, in whatever sense dimensions may be ascribed to it, these dimensions are boundless.

Time has a dimension not to be measured by feet and inches, and we may say of time that it is omnipresent. The same moment exists in Europe and America, at Saturn, and at the centre of the earth. The omnipresence of time does not explain the omnipresence of God, but it may help us to admit the possibility of omnipresence without division of essence, or removal of place. But the omnipresence of time is not immensity; for time has its measure, and a moment is not eternity.

It is not derogatory to the dignity and glory of God, that he is present everywhere. There are foul places where human beings would prefer not to be, but they do not affect the Deity as they affect men. The sunbeams fall on them without being polluted, and the holy God cannot be contaminated by them.

There are scenes of wickedness from which a good man will turn away with abhorrence, and, in the figurative language of Scripture, God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil." (Hab. 1:13) Yet, in another place of scripture, language no less figurative teaches us that the eyes of God behold the

evil as well as the good. (Prov. 15:3) He witnesses while he abhors.

A man, who sincerely believes the omnipresence of God, cannot be indifferent to religion. To realize that the moral Governor of the universe is ever near, in all his holiness and power, and as much present as if he were nowhere else, must awaken solicitude.

When a sense of guilt oppresses, the presence of such a companion becomes intolerable. The guilty man strives to flee from the presence of God, as Jonah did, but the doctrine of God's omnipresence teaches him that the attempt is unavailing. The power of conscience tormenting the guilty man, wherever he goes, is terrible, but the presence of the God against whom he has sinned, and whose wrath he dreads, is still more terrible.

To the soul, reconciled to God, the doctrine is full of consolation. In every place, in every condition, to have with us an almighty friend, a kind father, is a source of unspeakable comfort and joy. We need not fear, though we pass through fire or flood, if God be with us. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, we may fear no evil. (Ps. 23:4) In every circumstance and trial, it conduces to holiness, to know that God is present.



The Intercession of Christ

J. M. Pendleton

From *Christian Doctrines: A Compendium of Theology*, 1878

Atonement by sacrifice, being the first branch of the priestly office of Christ, is appropriately followed by intercession, which is the second part of the same office. As the literal meaning of intercession is "going between," it will be seen that in this sense it might be used as synonymous with mediation, since Christ in the whole of his mediatorial work occupies a position between God and men.

The Scriptures, however, employ the term in a more limited sense, not as including the atonement, but as related to it and founded on it. This is the import of the word in theological writings. In treating of the intercession of Christ it will be well to consider the following points:

1. The fact of his intercession. Proof of this fact is found in such passages as these: "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34); "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25); "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1)

In the first two of these passages it is affirmed that Christ makes intercession. We are not left to infer that he intercedes, but the assertion is positive that he does. In the

last passage he is termed "an Advocate with the Father." His advocacy is his intercession. Let us accept with gratitude the blessed fact that Christ intercedes, and notice:

2. Where he intercedes. The place is heaven. I do not mean that his prayer as recorded in the Gospel of John (Chap. 17) is not properly termed his intercessory prayer, but that heaven is emphatically the place in which he makes intercession. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24) There is here reference to the entrance of the Jewish high priest every year into the holy place, or rather the most holy place, of the tabernacle or temple.

As the high priest was a type of Christ, so the most holy place was a type of heaven. The high priest entered within the veil by the blood of a slain animal, but of Christ it is said by his own blood "he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. 9:12). Peter says of Jesus, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." (1 Pet. 3:22) Heaven is the place in which Christ ever lives to intercede, "a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 6:20)

3. The basis of his intercession.

This is manifestly his own atoning death. The plea which he urges in the presence of God for us cannot rest on our merit, for we have no merit. It cannot recognize our worthiness, for there is no worthiness in us. Nor does our helpless wretchedness furnish the reason which our Intercessor urges in our favor. This wretchedness, brought on us by our own sin, rather suggests that we be left to ourselves.

There are no considerations personal to ourselves which our great High Priest can plead in our behalf. His atoning death on Calvary is his plea. He died, and therefore pleads that those for whom he died may live. All the reasons connected with their salvation sustain a vital relation to his death. He intercedes in heaven, because he died on earth. The heavenly intercession was preceded by the earthly sacrifice, and the value of the sacrifice makes the intercession efficacious.

It is said that "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." (Eph. 5:2). This language denotes that the sacrifice is acceptable to the Father, and for this reason the intercession of the Son is also acceptable. The words heard more than once from the excellent glory, "This is my

beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matt. 3:17) are full of meaning. They are suggestive of the idea that, as God is well pleased with his Son. He is well pleased with his atonement, and therefore well pleased to grant, through the atonement, the requests presented by his interceding Son. Hence, when we are told that "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," (1 John 2:1) we are told also that "he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 2:2). Thus the advocacy of Christ is inseparable from his atonement, for his intercession is the outgrowth of his sacrificial death.

4. His qualifications as Intercessor. Of these I shall refer only to the more prominent:

(a) He has authority to intercede. In referring to the Jewish priesthood the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest: but he [glorified him] that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." (Heb. 5:4, 5) It is true that this language is as applicable to Christ in his work of sacrifice as in that of intercession; but the latter topic is now under consideration.

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Christ has the right to intercede, and his intercession is therefore authoritative. He does not appear as an intruder in the court of

heaven. He has rightfully entered within the veil, for his own atoning blood has given him the right of entrance. He appears in the presence of God for us, and he does so in pursuance of the provisions of the covenant of redemption. As already said in substance, he bases his intercessory pleas on his atonement, made by appointment and approval of the Father, and therefore his presence as Intercessor in heaven is in accordance with the Father's good pleasure. Christ intercedes with rightful authority.

(b) The righteousness of his character. This differs from rightful authority. A king may have rightful authority, his occupancy of the throne may be constitutional, yet he may be an unrighteous man. Historical illustrations of this truth are without number. The character of Christ is perfect. It is the bright focus in which all the rays of glory meet. Eulogy is exhausted when it is said of him that he is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Heb. 7:26) In the same connection we are told that "such an high priest became us" that is, was suitable for us.

This truth we are obliged to accept, for it is self-evident that an intercessor of unrighteous character could not be

permitted to plead our cause in the presence of a God whose name is The Holy One. He who mediates between a righteous God and sinful men must himself be righteous. Any defect of character would be a fatal disqualification. Sin has so disgraced and degraded us that it cannot comport with his majesty for God to permit us in person to approach him.

We dare not personally draw near to him. Every attempt to do so would be repelled. We must approach him in the name of an Advocate. We must appear before him by Attorney. Jesus is our Attorney, and in connection with his advocacy he is termed "the righteous." It is certain, therefore, that in his intercessions there is an inflexible adherence to the principles of righteousness. There is no connivance at sin, but a decided condemnation of it, and at the same time a plea for its pardon through the blood of the cross. It is a most encouraging fact that our Advocate in the court of heaven is Jesus Christ the righteous.

(c) He is full of sympathy. This qualification may be properly considered in connection with the preceding. While the righteous element in the character of our Intercessor makes it certain that he will properly respect and guard the interests of the divine government, his sympathy for the subjects of his intercession leads him to pity them and to make all necessary allowances for them.

What says an inspired writer on this important point?

"Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens [rather, through the heavens, as Jewish high priests passed through the veil], Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:14-16)

Some in apostolic times may have been tempted to believe that the exaltation of the Son of God to the throne of glory precluded sympathy for men. But the sacred writer gives assurance of Christ's sympathy, and gives the best reason for its exercise: "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This double negative is equivalent to an affirmative, and the truth taught is that our High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

It is worthy of remark that in the Greek we have the word from which we derive our word "sympathize," and the

literal rendering would be "to sympathize with our infirmities;" but who can give up the strong phrase, touched with the feeling of"? Christ is a sympathizing Intercessor. His heart is full of compassion—as full of compassion now as when it throbbed and bled with anguish on the cross.

But why is Christ touched with the feeling of our infirmities? The reason assigned is that he "was in all points tempted like as we are." During his humiliation on earth he experienced temptation in all its power and in all its variety. We may not be able to understand how he could be tempted in every respect as we are, but we have the inspired words, "in all points tempted like as we are." The scriptural teaching is that by personal experience of temptation he acquired the habit of sympathizing with his followers in their temptations, and that having "suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor those that are tempted." (Heb. 2:18)

In view, therefore, of the sympathy of Christ and of the reason for its exercise, there is abundant encouragement to come to the throne of grace. The intercession of a compassionate Saviour in heaven may well call forth the earnest prayers of the saints on earth. There is no fact better adapted to excite the spirit of prayer and supplication.

5. For whom does Christ intercede? I shall not take it on myself to affirm that there is not a sense in which Christ may be said to intercede for those who will not be finally saved, even as he offers them salvation in the gospel. Be this as it may, all will admit that Christ intercedes specially for his people, those given him by the Father.

If we wish to know what blessings he asks in behalf of his disciples, we need only refer to his intercessory prayer as recorded by the evangelist John, Chap. 17. There is nothing to forbid the belief that this prayer was a specimen and an anticipation of his intercession in heaven. He says of his disciples, "I pray for them," and his prayer expanded itself into four prominent petitions, as follows:

(a) Their preservation from evil. He said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (John 17:15) Some suppose that "the evil" here referred to means the evil one—that is, Satan—but the more satisfactory view is that evil in general, evil in its connection with the world, is meant. It must be admitted, however, that Satan has much to do with evil in all its forms. Paul speaks of "this present evil world." (Gal. 1:4) The world is full of evil. We see evil everywhere and in all circumstances. It is to be found in

unsanctified prosperity and in unsanctified adversity. It is to be seen in boasting wealth and in complaining poverty, nor is a competency a shield from it. No situation in life protects from the incursions of evil. The world is a foe to grace, and this truth Christians learn to their sorrow. They are in danger from its fascinating smiles, from its disparaging ridicule, and from its intimidating frowns.

(b) Can they in their own strength preserve themselves from the evil to which they are exposed? As well may we ask whether the chaff of the threshing-floor can resist the victorious progress of the storm. There is absolutely no hope for the preservation of Christians from evil, unless they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Pet. 1:5) That they may be thus kept is one of the purposes which Christ has in view in his intercession. He intercedes for his disciples, and asks of the Father that they may be preserved from the evil which surrounds them.

The words of Jesus to Peter are very suggestive: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may

sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:31, 32) We may well console ourselves with the thought that our Intercessor in heaven prays for all his followers that their faith fail not, and that through their faith they may be preserved from all the phases of worldly evil.

Christians themselves pray for the accomplishment of these objects, and their prayers have a blessed connection with the incense of Christ's intercession, as we are probably taught in Rev. 8:3.

(c) Their sanctification through the truth. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17. This is a matter of vital importance, but as the subject of Sanctification is considered elsewhere, it is not dwelt upon here. I only ask the reader to remember that Jesus intercedes for his disciples that they may be sanctified.

(c) Their unity. "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." (John 17:20, 21) In these precious words the first thing that strikes us is the comprehensiveness of this prayer, which embraces all believers, all who shall believe in Christ through the word of the apostles.

It is delightful for the saints in all generations and in all climes to know that Jesus prayed for them on earth and intercedes for them in heaven. In the verses just quoted Christ prays for the oneness of his followers—"that they all may be one." It seems most reasonable that there should be unity among those who have the same faith in the same Saviour. There was for a time in the church at Jerusalem an exemplification of this unity, for it is said that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." (Acts 4:32) Christ recognizes, as the model of the union for which he prays, the oneness between the Father and himself—"as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." (John 17:21)

He refers also to the effect which unity among his disciples would have upon the world—"that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." How important to the best interests of the world is unity among those who believe in Christ! For this unity, Christ intercedes in heaven, and we look for the day when his people shall be one—one in their loyalty to truth, one in faith, one in love, one in hope, and one in consecration to the work of the Lord.

We may well console ourselves with the thought that our Intercessor in heaven prays for all his followers that their faith fail not, and that through their faith they may be preserved from all the phases of worldly evil.

(d) Their admittance into heaven. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." (John 17:24)

This, so far as we know, is the last petition offered on earth by Christ

for his disciples, and it is doubtless repeated in his intercessions in heaven. When this request is granted the work of intercession will cease, or, at any rate, we can see no reason for its continuance. Christ does not in so many words pray that those given him by the Father shall be glorified in heaven, but he says that which is in substance the same—"be with me where I am."

What heaven other than that created by the presence of Christ can the saints desire? Was not this Paul's leading conception of heaven? He wrote, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Cor. 5:8); "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better," (Phil. 1:23)

The same apostle, referring to glorified saints after the resurrection, and including himself among them, says, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17). Christ so loves those who believe in him that he desires to have them with him. He will never see of the travail of his soul, so as to be satisfied, till they are in his immediate presence.

His intercession based on his death will secure their admittance into glory. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. 5:10) Yes, "saved by his life," for he lives to intercede, lives to carry into full accomplishment the purposed of his death.

Prominent, among these purposes was the glorification of his saints in the presence of his Father. He said to his first

disciples, and through them to all his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2, 3) The preparation of this place is, doubtless, connected with the intercession of Christ. What a place it will be! Bright with glory, with what Christ calls, "my glory;" and it is his will that those ransomed by his blood shall behold this glory and exult in its splendors for evermore.



Reiki

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A study on alternative medicine in the January 2008 report in *U.S. News & World Report* focused on the rapid growth of Reiki (pronounced ray-key). The report says the number of Reiki practitioners worldwide is in the millions, with half a million in the United States and over a million in Germany.

According to the American Hospital Association, 15% of hospitals were using Reiki in 2007.

A report in *The Washington Post* for May 16, 2014, was entitled "Reiki Goes Mainstream."

The practice has been praised by Oprah and Dr. Oz.

Reiki is an occultic practice that allegedly channels "universal healing energy" for human benefit such as relaxation and physical healing. The word "reiki" is Japanese for "spiritually guided life force energy."

It was developed in Japan in the early 20th century by Mikao Usui. During a 21 day program of fasting, meditation, chanting, and other pagan contemplative practices he allegedly experienced "the great Reiki energy entering" into him and found that he could use the energy to heal others. It came in the form of a light that moved toward him and entered the middle of his forehead (Mohan Makkar, *The New Reiki Magic*, p. 5). Usui allegedly began to heal with his touch and to initiate others into the "energy." Reiki was established in Hawaii

in the 1930s and from there spread to North America. The American International Reiki Association was formed in 1982.

The International Center for Reiki Training says:

"Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. ... Reiki is a simple, natural and safe method of spiritual healing and self-improvement that everyone can use. It has been effective in helping virtually every known illness and malady and always creates a beneficial effect."

That sounds harmless enough, doesn't it?

Reiki has three levels or degrees of initiation, the third level being the master level. The degrees are called "attunements" whereby the student is brought into harmony with the reiki energy and taught how to channel it. The initiations are thought to create channels for the flow of Reiki. Paula Horan says, "Through this channel Reiki then flows in through the top of the student's head, down through the body and out through the hands" (*Abundance through Reiki*, p. 18).

Reiki masters initiate people into the various levels.

Reiki is transferred or initiated by the laying on of hands. The Reiki manual is subtitled "The healing touch." The Reiki practitioner places his hands on the same spot of

the body for three minutes at a time, and the energy is supposed to be mystically drawn out by the recipient. Horan says, "...If I lay my hands on you to do a treatment, your body will naturally draw the appropriate amounts of energy it needs, and to the proper places" (p. 20).

Reiki is largely Hindu in its philosophy. It is described as "an energy incomprehensible to the intellect which flows through everything, transforming all realms of life ... Reiki is oneness" (Horan, *Abundance Through Reiki*, p. 10).

Reiki is founded on the Hindu concept that God is everything and man is part of God. One Reiki Master says that "Reiki will eventually guide you to the experience that you yourself are Reiki or Universal Life Force Energy. ... you and I are that same Universal Life Force Energy." (*Abundance Through Reiki*, pp. 9, 23)

Reiki is thought to open the chakras of the "astral body," which is a Hindu doctrine.

Paula Horan said that her Reiki teacher gave her a new name, *Laxmi*, the Hindu goddess of wealth. He said to her, "I am giving you the name Laxmi, because in this lifetime, you will fulfill all of your desires" (p. 152).

Reiki will eventually guide you to the experience that you yourself are Reiki or Universal Life Force Energy. ...you and I are that same Universal Life Force Energy.

The recipients of Reiki describe it as a powerful sense of warmth and security, "a wonderful glowing radiance that flows through and around you." It is not only supposed to provide healing but also to initiate the recipient into higher levels of spiritual transformation.

The International Reiki Center says that "many people find that using Reiki puts them more in touch with the experience of their religion rather than having only an intellectual concept of it." This is the mystical approach that bypasses thinking with an experiential connection with God or the "higher power."

Reiki involves not only "life energy" but also spirit guides. The International Reiki Center web site says:

"Occasionally witnessing miracles. Feeling the wonder of God's love pass through you and into another. SENSING THE PRESENCE OF SPIRITUAL BEINGS, feeling their touch, knowing they work with you. Being raised into ever greater levels of joy and peace by simply placing your hands on another. Watching your life

grow and develop as your continual immersion in Reiki transforms your attitudes, values and beliefs. Sensing that because of your commitment to help others, BEINGS OF LIGHT ARE FOCUSING THEIR LOVE AND HEALING ON YOU AND CAREFULLY GUIDING YOU ON YOUR SPIRITUAL PATH.

This is the promise of a developing Reiki practice. ... THERE ARE HIGHER SOURCES OF HELP YOU CAN CALL ON. ANGELS, BEINGS OF LIGHT AND REIKI SPIRIT GUIDES as well as your own enlightened self are available to help you. ... There must be congruence, an alignment within you in order for the Higher Power in the form of Reiki to flow through you in a powerful way and in order for THE ANGELS, REIKI SPIRIT GUIDES AND OTHER SPIRITUAL BEINGS TO WORK WITH YOU."

The Reiki practitioner is taught to get in tune with these spirit guides, to pray to them, and to yield to their control.

"Try the following prayer: 'Guide me and heal me so that I can be of greater service to others.' By sincerely saying a prayer such as this each day, your heart will open and a path will be created to receive the help of higher spiritual beings. They will guide you in your Reiki practice and in the development of your life purpose."

Reiki is even said to open up "psychic communication centers":

"During the Reiki attunement process, the avenue that is opened within the body to allow Reiki to flow through also opens up the psychic communication centers. This is why MANY REIKI PRACTITIONERS REPORT HAVING VERBALIZED CHANNLED COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD" (Phylameana Desy, *The Everything Reiki Book*, 2004, p. 144).

The *Reiki Journal* suggests that message therapy is an excellent tool for spreading Reiki.

Lighthouse Trails observes:

"If *US News & World Report* is correct in their assessment that Reiki, Yoga, and other types of healing practices are now mainstream, then Reiki is here to stay. One can only wonder if Reiki is going to

become as popular in Christian circles as Yoga now has. If it does, then as with contemplative spirituality, the spiritual lives of countless people will be jeopardized and the Gospel of Jesus Christ seriously compromised."

Following is another warning about Reiki:

"My mom is into the New Age movement and has had Reiki done on her for years; recently she started practicing Reiki. She does it on friends and family members (I am the only Christian in the family). I live with back pain, and she has wanted to do it on me.

"I have always said no, but after researching Reiki I finally decided to tell her that my beliefs conflict with

Reiki and that the 'energy' is actually demonic (that was a difficult conversation). ...she regularly meditates and talks to 'her angel,' whom she credits with anything good happening. She is getting deeper into this.

"My mother says she prays to 'Jesus' before doing Reiki. ... She does not believe in the Bible or most of it anyway, nor Jesus' deity, but rather He came to point the way to God. ... Obviously this is a false Jesus. ... one of her angels is 'like a best friend' and has a name)" ("My Mother Is Doing Reiki," *Lighthouse Trails*, Feb. 9, 2016).



Men Needed For The Pulpit

Give us men to fill our pulpits
Who have been alone with God —
Men who have a vital message
As the path of life they trod.

Men who love our God and people
More than money, pomp and ease;
Men who seek to do God's bidding
Though the world they may displease.

Give us men whose hearts are yearning
For redemption for the lost —
Men who pray for real revivals
That may come at any cost.

Men who preach the Holy Bible
And believe its truths sublime;
Men who long to bless their fellows
As to God they give their time.

Give us men with hearts o'erflowing
With the fulness of God's grace —
Men who show they've been with Jesus
By the sunshine on their face.

Men who can't be bought with money
Nor with that which points to fame;
Men who want God's blest approval
On their character and name.

