

The Concordant Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

WE ARE THANKING GOD that we have been able to resume the publication of our newsletter, which we hope to continue on a quarterly basis. Our work involves many difficulties and hindrances; and, over the years, we have undergone many changes, whether in assisting personnel, or in other work-related conditions. The writing, editing, and publishing alone of *Unsearchable Riches* magazine, is a formidable undertaking, requiring much of our time and strength. Suffice it to say that we too have our own struggles, whether from practical conditions, our own shortcomings, opposition from without, or from those within who sometimes discourage or hinder. Now God is able to lavish all grace on each one of us, that, having all contentment in everything always, we may be superabounding in every good work (2 Cor.9:8). Even if none of us, at any time, have possessed the fullness of such abundant grace as this, we glorify God that He is able to give such grace, and, in the day of our own glorification, *will* give such grace. For the present, may we all be seeking to be found faithful, according to the measure of grace given.

The Concordant Newsletter is intended as a complement to *Unsearchable Riches* magazine, as a means by which we can further maintain contact with our friends, while encouraging all in faith. Whether in the case of presenting replies to important questions, sharing a more personal word in relation to faith, or making mention of any actual news we may have concerning the work, we hope somehow to be “sharing some spiritual grace with you for you to be established” (Rom.1:11), and, once established, that we might all

be persevering in faith together, walking in *love*, as beloved children (Eph.5:1).

We extend our greetings in the Lord to all our friends in faith in every place. In presenting the articles which follow concerning true spirituality, speaking wisdom among the mature, even as the various phases and relations of the divine reign, we realize that while for some, such writings may prove very helpful, for others, this may not be so. Yet we long to be helpful to all our fellow believers with whom we have any contact, and are hopeful that at least the greater portion will indeed find blessing through our efforts.

Dear friends, we would not approach these or any other themes of consequence in God's Word, in some spirit of "dead intellectualism," apart from love, seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake or otherwise somehow to exalt the flesh. To the contrary, we would only do so with *rejoicing* in the Lord, *praising* God, out of Whom, through Whom, and for Whom is all. *To Him* be the glory for the eons! Amen! (Rom.11:36).

"Furthermore, brethren, rejoice, *adjust*, *be entreated*, be mutually disposed, be at peace, and the God of love and of peace will be with you" (2 Cor.13:11). J.R.C.

I Know

I know where I came from,
For all is out of Him.
I know why He put me here
(Though my perception's dim).
It is to bring Him glory
(Though I a sinner be).
He'll change me in His love and grace,
From sin He'll set me free.
I know where I am going
(E'en though I don't know when):
I'll rise to meet Him in the air
When He comes from heaven again.

Leila Watts

Testing What Things are of Consequence

TRUE SPIRITUALITY

For is any of humanity acquainted with that which is human except [by] the spirit of humanity which is in it? Thus also, that which is of God no one knows, except [by] the spirit of God. Now we obtained, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may be perceiving that which is being graciously given to us by God, which we are speaking also, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit, matching spiritual blessings with spiritual words. Now the soulish man is not receiving those things which are of the spirit of God, for they are stupidity to him, and he is not able to know them, seeing that they are spiritually examined. Now he who is spiritual is, indeed, examining all, yet he is being examined by no one. For who knew the mind of the Lord? Who will be deducing from Him? Yet we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor.2:11-16)

Literally, we are "matching spiritual—spiritual"; that is, matching "that which is spiritual with those who are spiritual" (CV, 1966 edition); and, "matching spiritual blessings with spiritual words" (CV, 1976 edition). Not only is the soulish man, who does not have the spirit of God (*cp* Jude 19), unable to receive those things which are of God's spirit (1 Cor.2:14), but "minors in Christ" as well, since they are still fleshly, cannot be *spoken to as* spiritual, for they are only able for milk, not solid food (1 Cor.3:1,2).

Nevertheless, the time comes, as it did for the Corinthians, when it is then expedient at least *to present* more mature considerations before those who cannot yet fully

grasp them, that they might somewhat come under their influence even so, and be nourished thereby accordingly.

To be sure, some, indeed many, will continue to resist the very help that they need. For example, many may well fail to see the importance of the subject of this present writing, and so will make little attempt to hear and heed our message. After all, at present, we are not dealing with any single biblical doctrine, as such, in the usual sense, but are “only” considering the underlying principles of understanding vital to them all!

Yet the faultfinder will declare, and perhaps not only to himself: “Where is the *love* in such writing! Indeed, where is love in the *life* of such a one who insists on speaking thus! Since other good authors, ones which I far prefer, write in a different tone and manner, how can such a tone and manner as this be either needed or worthy? Since I deem the love of God attenuated at best in any such exposition, surely such exposition is woefully inadequate!”

Yet others, appreciating not being talked down to, while recognizing the indispensability of sound principles in the acquisition of truth, may benefit much by being pointed in the right direction. Perhaps in the process, they may become suspicious as well that we may not be so deficient in love after all, as they formerly had supposed.

But whatever the individual reactions of various believers may be to such efforts, how we rejoice to know that even those who at present may yet be spiritually supine, nevertheless one day “will be made to *stand*, for the Lord is able to make [them] stand” (Rom. 14:4). Hence we would speak of all such ones with respect and fraternity, apart from scorn or spirit of condescension.

A SPIRIT OF SANITY

There is much confusion among believers concerning the nature of the spiritual, even as of the intellectual. Many

disparage the intellectual, or at least minimize its importance. Many imply that it is as well somehow unloving to stress the intellectual, suggesting that we can hardly do so while remaining spiritual ourselves. Some would identify the pursuit of truth with lifeless “head knowledge,” never realizing that one’s quest for truth instead might well be from the heart, out of a love of God and a longing to be faithful and well pleasing to Him.

In our society today, there is much antipathy of the intellectual. Accordingly, there is also much resistance to learning. Specifically, there is much resistance, as adults, to learning that which we did not learn as children or in our youth. So long as we remain intractable, intransigent in our disinclination toward further learning, such a disposition will prove impervious to the communication of knowledge. We resent being told that we “have to think,” and are prepared to justify whatever claim can most convincingly excuse us from this obligation.

It is often supposed that the spiritual largely obviates the intellectual. In some cases, the irrational is maintained on the grounds that, in any case, it *is* “spiritual,” whether rational or not. There is often little concern whether the convincingly spiritual is also the actually sane. Even among those of normal demeanor, ones who are by no means given over to the sensational or the abjectly superstitious, most fail to see the importance of language skills, critical thinking, and logical discipline.

Even those who are zealous Bible students, commonly seem to imagine that there are no special disciplines essential to competency that must be mastered; at least none beyond those in which they suppose themselves already to enjoy a sufficiency. Be they ever so naïve and unaware, so long as they are sincere, studious, knowledgeable in their way, while being willing to glean whatever seems right to them from various helps, they are confident that

they can “know the Bible” quite as well if not better than the next fellow.

Such believers seem to be little aware that it is not so much “study” that is needed, but a special spiritual gift of discernment in the hearing of the Word. Yet they seem even less aware that this gift is not operative apart from a vital connection to certain intellectual abilities, ones that are indispensable and that cannot be circumvented.

It may well be that such ones do not need us, or even our counsel as such; but they are simply deluded in failing to realize that, in any case, they *do* need—and need to gain—both the gift and agency of which we speak.

I would distinguish here between one’s own *possession* of such abilities, and one’s capacity to *recognize* such abilities in others, ones within the ecclesia who are more able to help us than others. It is not at all that we ourselves must have such skill and competency, but that we must, in any case, be able to *recognize* and *value* such proficiencies, wherever they may be found, that we might *avail* ourselves of them.

It is by no means so that every believer must possess great astuteness, transcendent perspicacity, and extraordinary acumen. But it is instead, if we would *understand* truth, that we *do* need to have the ability to grasp simple and sound, decisive points of teaching, while possessing the objectivity and willingness to act upon them, in order that we might follow truth wherever it may lead. Hence, we must pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17), which necessarily incorporates a corresponding spirit of discernment and intellectual capacity. Unless God should grant us this further spiritual endowment, we can only reject the proffered help of those who could help us most, while embracing instead the well-intentioned but misguided efforts of those who can only mislead us.

To say that we neither need intellectual abilities ourselves nor the capacity to recognize them in others but can do without them altogether, while gaining a knowledge of truth instead by immediate divine imposition apart from rational means, is itself an irrational claim. To “know,” is to perceive with the mind, which entails rational activity and precludes irrational activity.

Except in the trivial sense of merely formally holding a correct position, it is likewise irrational to speak of *possessing* truth, apart from *recognizing* truth. Truth is “that which corresponds with the actual facts, in contrast to the false” (KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p.310). We do not possess truth with our hands or feet, but with our minds. We cannot possess truth apart from rational mental activity. Therefore, besides becoming fond of what is “good . . . just, benign, [and] self-controlled,” may we be becoming fond as well of what is “sane” (Titus 1:8).

WALKING ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE

If we would know what it means to be “spiritual,” we must first define “spirit.” “Spirit” (*pneuma*, BLOW-effect) is “the imperceptible, intangible *power of life, action, and intelligence*. The divine power as manifested in His invisible, intangible operations” (KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p.282). We are only truly *spiritual*, then, to the degree that we *know* the truth and *live* according thereunto.

The spiritual is not indicated by the illogical, not to mention the irrational; nor is it reflected by strange “religious” mannerisms or vocalizations, any more than by quarrelsomeness or uncleanness. Nor is the spiritual reflected by contempt for or failure to deal graciously with those who may err in such intellectual or behavioral matters.

The spiritual is instead manifested in a mind that *understands* the evangel of grace, even as in a walk which has

come under the *influence* of the evangel of grace. As vital as *living* according to truth surely is—and it is certainly possible to live contrary to what we know—it must be realized that we cannot live according to (i.e., based upon) that which we do not yet know.

Above all, to be spiritual, we must be motivated and characterized by *love*, even if we should often fail therein. Love's greatest goal is to promote the welfare of the beloved, even if the beloved, in his own indiscernment and suspicions, may sometimes doubt love's presence or question love's motives. Even so, love is patient, and love is kind. Love finds no satisfaction in the shortcomings of others. Love no more exhibits contempt than it creates unrest; love rather manifests pity, in a spirit of humility.

INTELLIGENCE VS. STUPIDITY

As such, it is of no importance whether we express ourselves through the use of technical terms and in an academic manner, or in the most elementary speech and uncultivated way. It is only a question of whether what we say is *correct*, even as *sufficient*, whether expressed formally or informally.

Fundamentally erroneous notions concerning education, however, whether sins of commission or omission, ones that are of such a nature as to greatly hinder or even preclude one's growth in truth, must be repudiated before greater progress in truth can be made. These include: (1) anti-intellectual bias; (2) the presumption that non-scholars do not need and may safely ignore scholars; (3) the claim that understanding exists even where its professed possession, when expressed, evinces a profound lack of understanding; (4) ignorance of the fact that it is over-simplification and sheer inaccuracy which are the real dangers, not needless complexity, which constitutes only an unnecessary burden.

The plain person who understands key issues correctly, even though conceived in the simplest of terms, may be far advanced in truth beyond the most erudite scholar who fails to understand key issues correctly. The plain person, however, who understands key issues incorrectly, does not understand truth, and lags far behind the erudite scholar who understands key issues correctly.

Both the ordinary person and the scholar need to be *humble* believers. Prideful ignorance is no more a virtue than pride of knowledge. And, both the ordinary person and the scholar need to be *intelligent* believers.

"Intelligence" simply speaks of the ability to learn or understand. In the Scriptures, "stupidity" does not speak of a lack of normal intelligence, in the everyday sense, but of being insipid or dull; of lack of *sensibility*, in certain respects, in relation to truth.

The "stupid" are in a *stupor*; they are "stunned," or in a state of stupefaction. "Because, knowing God, *not as God* do they glorify Him or thank Him, but *vain* were they made in their *reasonings*, and *darkened* is their *unintelligent* heart. *Alleging* themselves to be wise, they are *made stupid*" (Rom. 1:21,22).

A "stupid" man, then, lacks discernment; he fails to *recognize* the truth. He has no *taste* for it, and so cannot distinguish it from the false. Of course this may only be so in relation to certain subjects, not all subjects. Indeed, the most brilliant of men, whether on the whole or in relation to their field of expertise, may be altogether "stupid" in certain other connections.

In speaking of our need to be "intelligent" believers, we have in mind the ability to learn what is necessary in order to understand vital points. In consideration of aptitude, we refer primarily to wisdom, good sense, and a willingness to learn, whether one's general intelligence

quotient, in the conventional sense, should be high or low. Intellectuality, then, thus understood, is *not* some elitist advantage for the few (much less is it a superiority complex or spirit of aloofness), but is rather the privilege of all who would recognize their need to *think* with their mind, even as to speak with their tongue.

It is irrational to imagine that we can understand what we have never learned. It is not a question of the form of our education, but of whether we have *learned* (not merely assented to) what is to be known. Learning is a means of grace; it is the means of grace which God has ordained with a view toward our possession of understanding. If we know anything, it is entirely of God that this is so. Boasting in self is wholly excluded.

Yet since we would *love* our God and Father, not only with our whole heart and whole soul, but with our whole *comprehension* as well, we long to be found faithful, and realize that for this we must first of all *learn* what is true.

J.R.C.



Question: When should we seek to tell others of the salvation of all mankind even as of universal reconciliation? I would like to share these great truths with everyone I know. In fact, I frequently mention these things to others, even though few indeed accept what I say. Eternal punishment is such a dishonor on the name of God, and I want others to know the truth! Recently, someone with whom I had shared the truth, a person who did not accept it or reject it but only cautioned me concerning it, said, "Even if what you say may be true, you should be reserved in making such a claim, since most are more apt to be stumbled than helped by such knowledge." Can you help me with these concerns?

Answer: Surely not many holding to the salvation of all, even any who may hold it in foolishness and shame, would be apt, on average, to be any *more* injured through such a *misuse* of this truth, than by their unblinking acceptance *instead* of its opposite. I doubt very much that the "sensitive spirits" of those who proved themselves so able to bear the burden of eternal torment with nary a whimper, would have their tender psyches disturbed overmuch by any possible worry that the salvation of all just might be true. The danger we normally face, instead, is that of "fighting" over doctrine (2 Tim.2:24), together with all the sorrows and evils which so frequently attend controversy. Engaging in "controversy for nothing useful, to the upsetting of those who are hearing" (2 Tim.2:14), is neither good for us nor for our opponents.

The truth that God will one day abolish death and become All in all (1 Cor.15:26,28), even as the related truth, that of God's purpose, through Christ, to reconcile all, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens (Col.1:20), should not be announced in isolation, apart from either adequate foundation or competent defense. Nor should we, as such, equate this teaching with "*the truth*," as if to suggest that we are called to be doctrinaires, ones who are overly-occupied if not pre-occupied with this specific "doctrine" itself, as such. Such an unbalanced approach is unseemly, and brings opprobrium upon the very truth for which it seeks to stand.

This is especially so in the case of the immature who need to learn restraint, to whom "God . . . All in all," may mean little more than "no eternal hell—all will be saved." Such "teaching" is often more reactionary against contrary tradition than it is instructive in positive truth. While good intentions are commendable, surely we need to be circumspect and prudent in what we say.

Though what I present below captures my primary

thoughts on this question, I would not be understood in the slightest "legalistic" spirit. Such is by no means my intended sense. I realize that none of us can but approach such ideals, and I would not at all wish to "jump on" others where any may seem to go contrary to such advice. I would only help those to whom God gives help through my efforts, wishing all others well in their chosen course.

This question at hand, which I shall concisely express as, "When and how should truth be shared?" is another question which we often receive. The following writing presents various considerations related to this topic.



WISDOM ARE WE SPEAKING AMONG THE MATURE

WHERE, in reference to his original ministry to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul declares that (during that former period) he decided not to "perceive" anything among them "except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor.2:2), I take him to be indicating that, for a time (*cp* Acts 18:11), he taught them little else beyond this basic theme, even if he presented many particulars within this revelation. He sought to lead them to the level of progress in faith where it was now evident that they had truly *grasped* the message of "Christ crucified," for it is this glorious truth alone which forms the basis of all else. The apostle came to them in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling. His appearance was not impressive (*cp* 2 Cor. 5:12; 10:1; Gal.4:14), and neither did he use the sort of methods that the dictates of human wisdom would commend as "effective persuasion techniques."

Where God truly grants faith, such man-made methods are hardly necessary, but are rather an affront; yet

where such techniques are employed, though many "converts" may be gained, most of them may not be genuine. Indeed, even any among those whom God truly has called who nonetheless are subjected to such improper influences, are not made the better but the worse, as a result of the usual "Christian tactics," which prevailed even in Paul's day. But that the Corinthians' faith might not be in the "wisdom" of men but in the *power* of God, the apostle conducted himself in such a way as he herein relates (1 Cor.2:3-5).

By his words, "Yet *wisdom* are we speaking among the *mature*" (2:6), I take him to mean just what he says. "Wisdom is too high for the fool" (Prov.24:7); or, "Unattainable to a foolish man are the dictates of wisdom" (Rotherham). Most, indeed, are not truly grounded even in the rudimentary elements of the oracles of God, and so have need, not of "solid food," but of a *proper and adequate* understanding of "milk"; that is, of the rudiments of Christ, as rehearsed in Hebrews 6:1, 2.

Since this counsel, here, however, is to the Hebrews, whose expectation was the new covenant heralded by the prophets, it may not be that Paul would necessarily have those who receive his evangel fully follow this pattern. Still, we all do well to learn of those basics at some appropriate juncture, and to be led forward toward the gaining of an understanding of in what sense it is that any of these do or do not apply to ourselves, even as in the various respects in which we may benefit through an appreciation of God's counsels for others. My most basic thought, then, from this passage in Hebrews, would simply be that of learning the principle: rudimentary elements (milk), *first*; advanced teachings (solid food), *second*.

Yet, alas, like the Hebrews, the situation today among most is one in which even good and moderate teaching is often perceived as "[just so many] words, many and

abstruse . . . *since* you have become dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11). There are not many who, "because of habit, have faculties exercised for discriminating between the ideal and the evil" (5:14). Indeed, this is so, for most take the true to be false and the false to be true; this is especially so where the false is popular or otherwise persuasive.

The immature and infirm mostly do not recognize their true state. Consequently, they take faithful dispensers to be fraudulent workers, yet fraudulent workers to be faithful dispensers. Humanly speaking, the situation seems (and is) quite hopeless. Yet we must go on, seeking to be faithful ourselves, remembering that *God* is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending (Eph. 3:20). On certain occasions, we observe Him doing just this, granting enlightenment and sanity to some, together with corresponding assurance and joy.

LOGIC VS. "REASONING"

We must not deprecate or demean others, no matter how deluded we may suppose them to be. Spiritual delusion is no more to be the object of ridicule, than moral weakness or physical malady. Let us truly be walking in love, manifesting pitiful compassions unto all, besides kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another and dealing graciously among ourselves, if anyone should be having a complaint against any (Col. 3:12-14).

It is not that "correct doctrine" is not important; it is very important. It is simply that the reality is that because of "reasonings" (i.e., both in a pejorative and metonymical sense), there is much infirmity among believers which is the fruit "of reasonings," as reflected in the wide diversity of opinion which prevails (*cp* Rom. 14:1).

Concerning the infirm, in our interpersonal relationships with other believers, Paul would have us be tak-

ing such ones to ourselves, "but not for discrimination of reasonings" (*ibid*). That is, we are not to do so in such a way that leads "into," results in, or otherwise draws to the fore, differences of opinion. The apostle would have us know that these faulty discriminations (as to what is true and what is not) themselves are the fruit of the misuse of the ratiocinative process, and that such mistaken deductions can only be expected from those who are infirm in the faith.

We all must "reason" continually, in the non-pejorative sense; that is, we must ever be logical, deciding according to the facts and the truth entailed thereby. The problem is, though, that most do not know what is truly at issue, are unaware what facts bear upon a question, are frequently illogical, or are otherwise unable to deal sanely and competently with the Scriptures.

The point is that we will be foolish *ourselves*—even if we ourselves are not markedly infirm in the faith as such—if we should nonetheless engage those who *are* infirm, in any sort of dialog which results in "discrimination [or "difference(s)"] of reasonings"; that is, in strained relations as the result of disagreement over contested issues. Such arguments need not even be quarrelsome ones (in the metonymical sense of "argument"), but simply, in the literal sense, the exchange of reasons for or against a certain opinion.

Paul does not here envision, which we only rarely experience anyway, a circumstance in which another truly comes to us for help; in humility, seeking direction and assistance from us. Instead, he contemplates the usual situation which commonly obtains in which one party simply is believing "this," and yet the other party is believing "that"—and yet neither is seeking the other's instruction or assistance. Where we perceive the other person to be infirm in *the faith* (the body of teaching

heralded by Paul as revealed to him by Christ) and yet have occasion to have fellowship with him, Paul would encourage us in this, but not “for [into] discrimination of reasonings.” If others do not seek our help (and few indeed truly *seek* our help), Paul counsels us *not* to engage them in such disputed questions as are apt to result in “discriminations.”

Since we are often perceived as “heretics” or worse, most who view us thus simply refuse my fellowship peremptorily. Yet I have a few community or other friends who though they have some notion as to certain distinctives in my faith (ones which they reject), nonetheless enjoy my friendship, both personally and even as a believer in Christ. They know that I am somewhat a knowledgeable person, but this has by no means led them to seek my assistance. So long as we speak of everyday affairs, or even, on occasion, briefly, of the death and resurrection of Christ itself, everything is fine. But years ago, and ever since, whenever I dared to go even a little farther, it soon became evident that my endeavors were not expedient. Hence, in the case of any involvements I continue to have with any such fellow believers, while I seek to maintain their friendship, I do so by being simply a personal friend.

IMITATING PAUL

If any among us should seek to do the work of an evangelist, pastor, or teacher, whenever we are therefore engaged in presentations before others, obviously, we should seek to follow Paul’s pattern and instruction as relates to such service. But even such ones themselves, do well to follow Paul’s advice here (in Romans 14:1) in their everyday “private-citizen encounters” with the “Christian public.”

With Paul, the time came in his service to the Corin-

thians when, even though they were still immature and infirm (many being fleshly [“jealousy and strife”] and boastful; 3:1-4; 4:6-8), it had become needful to write the epistle to them which we call 1 Corinthians. In this letter, Paul *presents* all manner of glorious and intermediately-mature revelations. As to how much of it they understood, even as whether he had an opportunity later on to elucidate and clarify that which he herein simply presents, we can know but little. And, of course he goes even further in presenting the completed teachings of maturity, in his prison epistles.

Thus the facts seem to be that, for the apostle Paul, the time came when he began to present somewhat more advanced, still more advanced, and then finally ultimate, mature teachings. So when he says, “yet wisdom are we *speaking* among the *mature*” (2:6; which decidedly excluded the Corinthians), I take it that he is speaking primarily in a connotative sense, by association, thus indicating that it was his (and Sosthenes’; *cp* 1:1) custom of seeking to elaborate upon and freely consider in a fuller way, “wisdom” among the “mature.”

That is, Paul sought to confine his “speaking” of things of “wisdom,” to those who were at least beginning to be in a position to benefit from such speech. Thus he sought not his own expedience, but that of “the many” (10:33; *cp* Col.4:5,6). Those teachings which are not only “full of wisdom” themselves, but which, the point is, *require substantial wisdom* on the part of the hearer if he would receive them and be benefited by them, he endeavored to be “speaking,” among those who had matured sufficiently to be profited thereby. No doubt, even Paul himself could only approximate this ideal; yet we should endeavor to do the same.

In seeking to apply these considerations to our own situation today, I would conclude that we must first

decide whether we ourselves do well to serve as teachers (*cp* James 3:1). If we soberly conclude that perhaps we are able, sufficient to engage in such service faithfully, then let us by all means do so. But if wisdom should dictate (God giving us wisdom) that such is not our service, this will not be the slightest disgrace upon ourselves. Yet—if I may employ the apt old joke—it *will* be to our disgrace, in God's sight, if we should misinterpret the clouds shaped in the form of the letters "PC," as "Preach Christ," when to us their intended message instead was, "Pick Cotton." In the words of the beloved comedian, Jimmy Durante, "Everybody wants to get in the act!" Yet—and this was his whole point—for most, it would be far better to enjoy the show from the audience, than to spoil the show from the stage.

It is infinitely better to follow well than to lead poorly. Certainly, we should not seek to lead in a range (*cp* 2 Cor. 10:13-16) where we have not been invited to serve, lest our labors become more of an interference than a constructive service. The first principle of doing a good job, is knowing whether we are in a position to do a good job. We must not, in any event and no matter how sincerely, merely try to "get in the act."

Where such counsel goes unheeded, we may be sure that this too is in the purpose of God. But if we desire truly to be "found faithful" (1 Cor.4:2), may we pray for wisdom in a realization of what this entails.

You, then, child of mine, be invigorated by the grace which is in Christ Jesus. And what things you hear from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who shall be competent to teach others also. Suffer evil with me, as an ideal soldier of Christ Jesus. No one who is warring is involved in the business of a livelihood, that he should be pleasing the one who enlists him. Now if anyone should be competing in the games also, he is not given a wreath if

ever he should not be competing lawfully. The toiling farmer must be the first to partake of the fruits. Apprehend what I say, for the Lord will be giving you understanding in it all. (2 Tim.2:1-7)

Yet whether we serve as teachers to certain others or not, wherever we encounter those who are infirm in the faith, ones who, in any event, have not come to us seeking our assistance, we ourselves greatly err in not heeding Paul's advice, "Now the infirm in the faith be taking to yourselves, but not for discrimination of reasonings" (Rom.14:1).

Even if we do not teach, where God opens a door, He may still give us opportunity to minister to others in a wonderful and invaluable way, by giving us the service of directing friends or acquaintances to the ministry of those who can best be of service to them in the teaching. As a result, old friendships may be fostered and new friendships made, with much joy and good fellowship among all. Such fellowship may *then* include the blessing of intelligent, edifying discussion in things of consequence, speaking God's wisdom in a secret, "among the mature" (1 Cor.2:6,7).

J.R.C.



THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS

THERE is a perennial interest in the question, What is the difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the heavens? In many instances there seems to be no distinction at all. In Matthew 19:23, 24 we read of both kingdoms in connection with the rich man who clung to his possessions. Their general identity is recognized again and again when the "kingdom" is spoken of with-

out any word to tell us which one is referred to. Parallel passages abound in the gospels where Matthew uses the phrase "kingdom of the heavens" and the other evangelists use "kingdom of God."

The former phrase occurs only in Matthew's account. But Matthew also uses the phrase "kingdom of God." These cases are of special interest, therefore, in helping us to an understanding of the distinction between the two expressions.

"The kingdom of God" occurs as follows in Matthew. The three most ancient manuscripts omit it in Matthew 6:33.

Now if I am casting out demons by the spirit of God, consequently you have a foretaste of the kingdom of God. (12:28)

... for the rich to be entering into the kingdom of God. (19:24)

... the tribute collectors and the prostitutes are preceding you into the kingdom of God. (21:31)

... the kingdom of God will be taken away from you. (21:43)

If we can discover some element in these passages foreign to the rest, which makes it repugnant to our spiritual apprehension if we substitute "heavens" for "God," then we will be able to enjoy the light and blessing which He has intended by using two phrases rather than one only.

The basic thought of the "kingdom of the heavens" is found in Daniel 2:44, where we read: "In their days, that is, of these kings, the Eloah of the heavens will set up a kingdom that for the eons shall not come to harm. His kingdom shall not be left to another people. It will pulverize and terminate all these kingdoms, and it shall be confirmed for the eons." It will not be restricted by treaties with other nations, nor will it be subject to the powers of darkness.

This passage, combined with a close reading of all later references to this kingdom, show us plainly that it is confined to the earth. Its limits do not extend beyond this planet. Besides this it belongs to a people. It is the sover-

eighty of one people or nation over other nations, such as was the case with Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, which once had world-wide sway. It is a future kingdom which is not yet set up.

In contrast to this, the kingdom of God was already in exercise in heaven, though not on earth, as our Lord taught His disciples: "Let Thy will come to pass, as in heaven, on earth also" (Matt.6:10).

The kingdom of God, while it will include the earth, is not confined to it, but embraces the universe, except such parts as are in rebellion against Him. The kingdom of the heavens has no place outside the earth. The former is a present reality in heaven, but neither are yet established on earth.

The kingdom of God is the sovereignty of a Divine Person. The kingdom of the heavens is a kingdom which, indeed, finds all its authority in Him, yet is delegated to a people. "And the kingdom and the jurisdiction and the majesty of the kingdom under the entire heavens will be granted to the people of the saints of the supremacies. Their kingdom is an eonian kingdom, and all other authorities shall serve and hearken to them." The twelve apostles shall be seated on twelve thrones, judging (i.e., ruling) the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt.19:28). Others shall have authority, some over five cities, some over ten. This authority is referred to when he tells them to teach or disciple all the nations (Matt.28:19).

An example may help to impress what we have been seeking to set forth. What, we will ask, was the difference between the kingdom of King George and the kingdom of Great Britain? The king's dominion extended over England and all its dependencies. In England he was the king; in India he was the emperor. But there is a sense in which every Englishman who voted in the home country had a hand in the government of India. So, too, a place in

the kingdom of the heavens, includes a place of authority over the other nations.

The earthly kingdom has no jurisdiction over demons. So the fact that He cast them out was a sign that the kingdom of God had come upon them (Matt.12:28).

The case of the rich man (Matt.19:24) is true of both kingdoms, but entrance is even more difficult in respect to God's personal rule.

The tax gatherers and harlots will have nothing but judgment in the kingdom of the heavens. The tax gatherers were traitors to that kingdom. But the self-righteous Pharisees, who had a great deal to say about their own fitness for the divine presence—they had even less right than those whom they despised. And this shows another characteristic distinction, arising from the fact that one kingdom involves subjection to God Himself where no deception is possible, while the other has to do with authority vested in human hands. The kingdom of God will have no such history as the kingdom of the heavens. In the latter there will be feigned subjection, which will break out into rebellion when Satan is loosed from his chains. Loyalty to God Himself has a personal element similar to loyalty to a sovereign, which is much more than the subjection of a dependent realm.

Our last quotation deals with the fruits of the vineyard. There is no question here of the relation of Israel to the other nations. In subjection to God they would have furnished Him with the wine which cheers both God and man (Judges 9:13). So it is not the kingdom of the heavens which is taken from them, but the kingdom of God. This will be given to a nation which will bring forth its fruits. It will be taken from the apostates and given to the faithful and spiritual.

The two kingdoms, then, contain much in common and are often equivalents. But they always keep their own col-

oring and one phrase can never be used where God in His excellent wisdom has been pleased to place the other.

The kingdom of God is very seldom mentioned in the epistles, stress being laid upon its character. It is never, however, spoken of as a present reality upon the earth. It is spoken of as future (1 Cor.6:9,10; 15:50; Gal.5:21; Eph. 5:5; 1 Thess.2:12; 2 Thess.1:5; 2 Tim.4:1,18). It is associated with the Circumcision (Col.4:11).

THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER

The "kingdom of the Father" is another phrase which contains a precious truth in advance of either of the ones we are considering. If the kingdom of the heavens expresses the relation of dependencies to another people and the kingdom of God the personal loyalty to a sovereign, then the Father's kingdom expresses the position of the King's children. This filial relationship promises no political prestige, but speaks rather of provision and character, which his fatherhood implies. He is the Father of the righteous (Matt.13:43). He it is who is petitioned for bread and forgiveness (Matt.6:10), and He will provide the wine in the coming kingdom (Matt.26:29). Its full and perfect expression awaits the consummation, when the Son gives up the kingdom to God, even the Father (1 Cor.15:24). It is a kingdom in name only, for all sovereignty and authority and power are unnecessary and unknown.

THE KINGDOM OF THE SON

There is one kingdom, however, which is in power at the present time. This is the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col.1:13). The authority of darkness, with spiritual forces of wickedness, who are the real sovereigns in this sombre scene (Eph.6:12), is strictly a spiritual kingdom. It does not displace the sovereignties of this world at all. So also is the Son's kingdom. It is a strictly spiritual sovereignty. We were once subjects of the domains of dark-

ness. Now we are subjects of the kingdom of the Son of His love. All the while, however, we are still subject to the human governments under which we live. We are not loosed from them. We are exhorted to be subject to rulers as to God's ministers (Rom. 13:6).

Some day the kingdom of God's Son will find expression on earth. That will be after this old earth has been replaced by a new one. Then God will dwell with all mankind and all will be willing, worshiping subjects of His beloved Son. So perfect will this reign be that the time will come when all sovereignty and authority and power will be abrogated and the Son Himself will become subject to the Father (1 Cor. 15:27).

Just as the early ministry of Paul was the spiritual counterpart of the millennial reign, in which he acted as a priest in the evangel of God (Rom. 15:16), so the present kingdom is a spiritual foretaste of the succeeding kingdom of the Son, which follows it, in the eon of the eon (Heb. 1:8). We have not the powers of the coming eon, but the affectionate perfection which characterizes the rule of God's Beloved.

So long as sin and insubordination hold sway, there can be no happiness apart from government. But when, at length, all is perfect, when sin is gone, and not the least breath stirs contrary to His wish, what need for government? The "kingdom" will exist only in name, giving place to the Father's guiding hand.

Then, when government itself is gone, will we learn the real lesson it was meant to teach: that His will alone is good—good for His glory and for our welfare. And when this is acknowledged by every heart then will God indeed be All in all.

A.E.K.

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