
Shield of Faith

A Primitive Baptist Publication

March 2006

Leaning Upon Her Beloved

“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned” (Song of Solomon 8:5-7).

The Song of Solomon is also called the *Song of Songs*. The expression *Song of Songs* is a Hebrew idiom meaning *most excellent of all others*. The Hebrew language may therefore be designed to express “a song of the utmost perfection; one of the best that existed, or had ever been penned.” Inspired by the Holy Spirit, no one book of Scripture can reach a higher standard than the others. The title may thus have a reference to the poetical compositions of Solomon, of which this is the most excellent.

This book has the form of a drama, with several speakers, chiefly, the bridegroom and the bride, and the friends or companions of each.

The design of the book is to describe the love and happy marriage of two persons. The meaning goes beyond the love between a man and a woman, however. This book is to be understood allegorically concerning that spiritual love and marriage between Christ and his church.

It is often difficult to follow the conversations and to determine the identity of the speaker. In verse 5 of the above passage some scholars believe the “daughters of Jerusalem” speak in unison. Others believe the bridegroom speaks; others the bride. Some understand the words to be

those of the angels in heaven. The identity of the speaker can change our understanding of the meaning of a passage; thus there is much disagreement concerning the meaning of the book and especially of certain passages.

We must seek to understand this, and all Scripture in such a way that it is not in contradiction with other Scriptures. “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (I Corinthians 14:33). We must also understand the passage in a way that is edifying and profitable to the church *today*. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

It is likely that the question, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem; who were charged, in the previous verse, to disturb not Christ and his church, who were enjoying communion and fellowship with each other. They look more earnestly at she who enjoyed such privilege. They seem astonished and surprised at her carriage and beauty while she is leaning on the arm of her beloved, and are filled with admiration.

Why does *she* attract attention rather than the bridegroom, who is without question glorious? Perhaps attention is drawn to her because the speakers wonder where He Who is glorious could find one worthy to walk with Him. Some might suggest that she is noticeable because she is inferior to Him and not worthy to walk with Him. If her condition by nature were visible, that would surely be the case. The words of love that He speaks to her, however would cause us to reject that idea. There is no inferiority seen in her because she leans on her beloved and shares His glory. We who have the great blessing of knowing the complete gospel know that

He has made her worthy to walk with Him.

The daughters of Jerusalem, who asked, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” now hear the intimate words of love that the Bridegroom speaks to His bride: “I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.” In Song of Solomon 2:3, the bride praised the bridegroom by comparing Him to the apple tree. “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” Under the Law dispensation, the gospel church was as one who slept in a barren wilderness. Unknown to the world, she was known by the all-knowing Bridegroom, Who overshadowed her with His great love until the day He would awaken her from her sleep and bring her forth out of the wilderness.

She is described in this her ascent out of the wilderness, as “leaning upon her beloved,” and this is the only way in which she is able to walk and come out of the wilderness. She has no strength of her own, so she must lean upon her Beloved. Her leaning upon Him is expressive of much confidence in him, and familiarity with him which she was allowed by him to use. He, upon whose arm she leaned, stood in a near relation to her, being both her husband and her brother. Five times in the Song of Solomon the bride is called *my sister, my spouse*. “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!” (Song of Songs 4:10).

The Hebrew word translated *leaning*, is only used in this place, and means *joining or associating, or cleaving to*. The bride had given up herself to the bridegroom, to be his for ever and was resolved, through grace, to abide with him, and to go with

(Continued on page 2)

Leaning Upon Her Beloved

(Continued from page 1)

him, whithersoever he went. She would cleave unto him with full 'purpose of heart;' (Acts 11:23). She resolved, as Ruth, that where he goes, she will go; where he lodges, she will lodge; that his people shall be her people, and his God their God.

With the words of the next verse, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame" (Song of Solomon 8:6), it is difficult to determine who is speaking. It is probably the bride, but could as well be the bridegroom. For a marriage to be successful, there must be mutual love. The Bridegroom expects to receive in return the love He has given His bride. He desires that His beloved "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." He desires an inward and abiding principle of love and affection in her towards him. The church's love to Christ is highly valued by him, especially when it comes from the heart. Expressions of love, no matter how sincere they might seem, without an inward principle of love in the heart, are not satisfying to him. He requires, her to "love him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is what he seeks for, and what is highly esteemed by him.

The love that the Bridegroom has for His bride is a perfect love, an everlasting love. His love will never fail. The bride, on the other hand, has failed at times. She has not always leaned upon Him, so this is probably her plea the He love her despite her weakness.

She has already recognized her weakness and her failure. "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept" (Song of Solomon 1:6). She has at times slumbered as she waited for her Beloved and has been slow to respond when He came. "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?

I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" (Song of Solomon 5:2-3). With whatever faults she may have her "heart waketh." She loves Him and desires His love. She thus pleads, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."

The high priest wore over his heart a breastplate set with twelve precious stones. Upon each stone was engraved the name of one of the tribes of Israel. On each of his shoulders he bore an onyx stone, with the names of six tribes engraved on each stone. Two chains of pure gold of wreathen work connected the onyx stones to the breastplate. Exodus 28:12 states, "And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial." It is such a memorial that the bride desires. She desires that her name be upon His heart so that she would always be the object of His perfect love. She also asks that her name be set "as a seal upon thine arm." Her desire is to be held closely to Him and be protected by His almighty arms.

The bride speaks of her love for the Bridegroom when she says "for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." The word *jealousy* here means *zealous*. Her love for Him burns as a fire. Her love is strong because He has excited that love in her. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The bride loves her Lord because He first love her and placed His love in here heart.

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (Song of Solomon 8:7). Floods of persecutions, afflictions, trials, temptations, and all manner of hardships have rushed over the church for many centuries and have not quenched the love of the church for Her Saviour. They that truly love Him and only drawn closer to Him in times of trial. Countless numbers have willing given "all the substance of his house" in order to stand in His love and demonstrate their love for

Him. They happily say with Paul, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:7-11).

Can such expressions of love have meaning today as Jesus' words are being fulfilled, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12)? Floods cannot quench our love for Christ, nor can Satan rob us of it. There is a real danger, however, that we may leave that love. "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:1-5).

We see so many who have left their first love, and mourn for them. We see in our own lives times when are hearts begin to drift away. Do you "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37)?

It is time that we all "repent, and do the first works" of loving Him as He has loved us.

Bible Quiz

One of the first Bible people that children learn about is Joseph. Match the following facts about Joseph found in Genesis.

1. Home country
 2. Father
 3. Master
 4. Oldest brother
 5. New country
 6. Purchasers
 7. Mother
 8. Grandfather
 9. Temptress
 10. Interpreted dreams
 11. His hostage
- a. Jacob, 30:25
 - b. Reuben, 35:23
 - c. Simeon, 42:24
 - d. Potiphar's wife, 39:7
 - e. Canaan, 33:18
 - f. Egypt, 37:36
 - g. Rachel, 30:22-24
 - h. Ishmeelites, 37:28
 - i. Pharaoh, 41:25
 - j. Laban, 29:5-7
 - k. Potiphar, 37:36

Answers on page 5.

Solomon declared that a man who rules his own spirit is better than the one who takes a city. That is, the conquest of one's own mind and passions and heart is a greater victory than to overcome everything that outside of one's self. Alexander conquered the world without and made all kings pay him tribute and acknowledge his authority; but he failed to overcome the world within, and died from the effects of liquor and debauchery. His passion for conquest might have been spent on the world within and he could have been another Socrates or, with divine illumination, another Paul. If he had sought God with the indomitable will with which he sought worldly glory, what a conqueror he might have been! if he had been as thirsty for the "new wine of the Kingdom" as he was for the liquors of Babylon, what an Apostle of Pentecost he would have been! Julius Caesar read the story of Alexander and shamed himself by saying, "Why, he died before he was as old as I am, and yet I have scarcely made a beginning." He picked out one of the meanest towns in Gaul and said he would rather be the first man in that town than to be the second man in Rome. How he would have gone from "glory to glory" if his passion had only been directed toward the conquest of the Christian's Canaan! Ulysses S. Grant was the hero of many a campaign, but when he was old and dying of cancer he acknowledged that he had never had the courage to come out definitely for Christ, as he had felt all along that he should have done.

J. B. CHAPMAN in *SOME ESTIMATES OF LIFE*

Sheep Notes

There are moments around the sheep camps that are difficult to comprehend. In the corrals at shearing, or when loading for trucking, the *makhila* can be placed about knee-high across the narrow alley to slow down progress and avoid jamming. The first few sheep will leap the rod, and then it can be withdrawn. The animals will continue to leap the invisible staff, their hoofs reaching the takeoff point and rising. They are leaping over nothing.

There are mean, vengeful, gluttonous sheep as well as docile, temperate ones, and different groups form in any flock or band. Sheep societies. Perhaps twenty in one group; ten in another; even twos and threes. They can be seen, day after day, in their tight little enclaves, perhaps communicating in some strange way. There are also the outcasts, seldom the black sheep, that the groups generally avoid. These are the animals that push and shove while grazing; force others away from the watering troughs; act greedy and belligerent. There are good, visible reasons why they are outcasts. Markedly human reasons.

If a stranger, a stray from another owner, enters the band, the sheep will gather around it and butt it, murmuring displeasure over the intrusion. They smell it and know it is not one of their own. But if the newcomer goes to the edge of the band and behaves itself, it is finally accepted. Human behavior?

Sounds of the band can be read by an expert. The bleat of the ewe looking for her lost lamb is different from any other bleat. The blether of the ewes at dusk is different, a mother's call to the lambs. Mostly, the sheep stay silent. Aside from the water bleat, the only other time they address the herder is for salt, a diet necessity. As they circle the camp to demand it, the cry is a surly flutter, ru-ru-ru-ru-ru-ru-ru. If the herder wants to lead them quickly from danger, he mocks that cry.

Sheep eyes cannot really be fathomed, though they often seem inquisitive. The only time there is a direct but silent message is when they are hungry and there is no feed. They stare at the herder accusingly and he wants to vanish.

When cattle stampede, they grumble and bawl. When sheep stampede, they run in eerie silence. The only sound is the pounding of hooves. Unless stopped, they may run until they drop. A shift of wind on a hot day, bringing with it the scent of water, can cause two thousand sheep to U-turn at once and begin this silent, relentless dash toward a slough. If the herder makes the water call, he does well to step aside. Thirsty sheep, bleating meee-maaaa-meeee-maaaa can quickly become hysterical. One day, the water truck broke down and a band of our sheep ran five miles to where they'd had water the year before.

Louis Irigaray in
A Shepherd Watches, A Shepherd Sings

TULIP

By Elder Samuel W. Johnson

The teaching of God's Word concerning Total Depravity of the natural man indicates he will not, yea, cannot chose God.

The second letter in the word TULIP is *U*. With our Lord's help we will undertake to apply this letter to unconditional election. We will try to keep away from showing why God chooses some and not others. It will be enough just to say, "But our God is in heaven: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:3,4). This Scripture speaks of the blessings of His people (chosen) blessed with here in time; and these blessings come because of His choice of us in Christ Jesus. God the Father made a choice of His people in Christ before the foundation of the world. If we understand what the foundation of any work is, it must be and is the first work done on which everything and in this case all things of God rest. So the election was made even before the foundation was laid. God the Father chose the elect in Christ before any work was manifested to show that man had no part in his being elected.

Although our election of God in Jesus Christ is sure and secure, we need to make this sure to ourselves. God teaches us how we may do this. Paul by the inspired Word assures those to whom he wrote, that their election was of God the Father and they were chosen in their, and our Lord Jesus Christ and we repeat again, before the foundation of the world. Then He puts the 'monkey on our backs.' Don't misunderstand me, all of God's elect will be in eternal heaven. The election was made of His people, "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

How do we please God? By finding out what He requires of his elect. It is amazing and wonderful that the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter saw "eye to eye" on this matter. Peter in the first chapter of his first epistle addresses the elect. In the first chapter of his second epistle, he instructs those (elect) whose faith were being

tested, to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. These things in our lives will make our calling and election sure to ourselves.

"Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if we do these things" - (these things? - the adding to our faith) - "ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto your abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:10,11).

We may be, rather will be, happy in Jesus when we "trust and obey." Those who trust and obey will have an abundant entrance into the kingdom. The Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter were in harmony with the descriptive language of God's kingdom. The Word of God as read in Romans 14:17 and II Peter 1:10, 11 harmonize perfectly and completely. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Such a joyful entrance into this kingdom makes our calling and election sure. Note the connection: calling and election.

"For this is the word of promise, at this time will I come and Sarah shall have a son" (Romans 9:9). This was God's promise to Abraham the son of promise could not be born without God. Abraham being 99 and Sarah 90, this was totally against nature. Nothing is impossible or too hard for God; yet, Abraham laughed at the possibility of he and Sarah having a son. "O that Ishmael might live before thee" was the cry of Abraham. His desire was for Ishmael to be the promised Son. What was God's answer to Abraham? It seems Abraham could not understand why Ishmael could not be the son of promise. Even this man of faith, the great patriot, spoke as a man. God had something to say to him. "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed"

(Indeed is a word used here to remove all unbelief and doubt. Before we criticize Abraham, remember the times, and there may be more in the future, when the Lord helped or will help our unbelief.) "And thou shall call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him" (Genesis 17:19).

Isaac is a type of Jesus Christ and Paul speaks of him in this manner, Isaac, "our father." In the prophecy of the birth of Jesus Christ, one of the names by which He would be called is "the everlasting Father."

Back to Romans 9:9-13, "For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. A son being born to Abraham and Sarah was brought into being by the Lord of heaven and earth. Without intervention of God, there would not have been the possibility of the promised son. This was a miracle! Now the choice of Jacob, the passing over of Esau was of God's volition. The boys (children) had no say in the choice. It was made before they were born, and when God makes the choice it cannot be changed. It will stand.

For a selection made by the God of heaven and earth, it is important to note the teaching of God's Word concerning this matter. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" (in making such a choice) "God forbid." "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (such a choice is governed by the will of God.) "and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (He, God, declares this truth twice) "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Man's will does not enter in this choice. "nor him that runneth," all of man's efforts put forth will never number him with the elect. God's will and mercy, and compassion brought and brings "this" into being. When one realizes this: my election is of the Merciful God, this will or should be his cry: "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people" (Psalm 116:12-14)

Devotions:

Daily Devotion

By Elder Bill Taylor

Abide In Me

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." John 15:4

The words of Jesus telling His disciples to abide in Him came immediately after He proclaimed Himself to be "the Vine ." All to whom he spoke understood the importance of His words. A vine was the source of sustenance for many of the things the people of Jesus' time depended on. Every family had in their garden a vine whose branches provided grapes. They understood that the vine not only provided support for the branches, but that it also provided the life flow to the branches that they must have to produce fruit.

In order to produce good and abundant fruit, the vine's main branches would be pruned, or "cut back" pretty severely from time to time. This was to rid the plant of unproductive (although still alive) smaller branches. After all, the only purpose for the branches was to produce fruit. These unproductive branches took away from the branches that were productive, and were cut off (purged, in the words of John 15) to ensure the best fruit possible could be harvested from the plant - the vine and its branches.

Jesus used this example to warn His disciples that they must abide in Him to bring forth fruit in their lives. To abide means to tarry, or stay. We have been brought out of death into life, and out of darkness into His marvelous light, to bear spiritual fruit. We cannot do that if we are not tarrying - staying - abiding in Him. Trying to bear fruit in our own strength may be compared to one of the branches that has been pruned trying to bear fruit after it has been cut off from the vine. It has no source of strength or ability outside of the strength and ability the vine supplies to it. All its efforts will be "fruitless." If we take this to a personal level, it may be that certain spiritually unproductive aspects of our lives are being "pruned" so that our fruit bearing parts will once again be fully productive. The wise Master Gardener knows perfectly well how to do this.

May God bless His people to tarry, to stay, in the will of the Savior - and may we bear much spiritual fruit to His glory.

Elder Bill Taylor

Feel free to pass this on to anyone you wish; only please include my name, e-mail address, and web site address when you do.

Email: wa_taylor@yahoo.com

Web Site: www.primitive-baptist.org/gpbc_index.html

Answers to Bible Quiz

1-e; 2-a; 3-k; 4-b; 5-f; 6-h; 7-g; 8-j; 9-d; 10-1; 11-c

Hymns and Hymn Writers

TELL ME THE OLD, OLD STORY

When Katherine (Kate) Hankey passed away in 1911, many of her former Sunday school pupils traveled long distances to attend her funeral- pupils she had taught fifty years earlier. This gives some indication of the tremendous influence that this lady carried.

Miss Hankey was born in 1834 in Claphan, London, England. She was the daughter of London Hankey, a banker and member of the Claphan Sect of Evangelicals.

At the age of eighteen she began her work for Christ by starting a Sunday school class for shop girls and later for those of her own social standing. From both classes came many people who yielded themselves to God and his service.

In January of 1866 she became quite ill and was a long time convalescing. During this recovery period she fell to writing a poem that she later called "The Old, Old Story." At first she only wrote eight stanzas of four lines each. Later that year, in November, she finished the poem, bringing the number of stanzas to fifty. It is said that any number of hymns could be chosen from the many verses. The poem was written in two parts, the first called, "The Story Wanted," the second, "The Story Told."

In 1867, in Montreal, at a convention of the Young Men's Christian Association, William H. Doane saw Major-General Russell of the English forces stand and read the poem with tears streaming down his bronzed cheeks. He was so impressed that he wrote music to which to set the poem. He called the song, "Tell Me The Old, Old Story." The first stanza is:

Tell me the old, old story, Of unseen things above
Of Jesus and His Glory, Of Jesus and His love;
Tell me the story simply, As to a little child,
For I am weak and weary, And helpless and defiled.

Little did he realize at the time that it would be sung by millions in many lands and be translated into many languages.

Miss Hankey once made a trip to Africa to take care of her invalid brother who had gone there as a missionary. During her stay in this darkened continent she became so burdened for foreign missions that she gave all of the royalties from her publications to mission work.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. (Exodus 15:1-3 KJV)

OF A GOSPEL CHURCH

ADVERTISEMENT

THE Philadelphia Baptist Association, met at Philadelphia October 5th, 1795, judging our former Treatise of Church Discipline to be materially defective, appointed the writer to revise the same, or write a new one against the next association.

At their next meeting, in 1796, he had before them the reasons why it was not done, which were approved of, and he was requested to prepare it against their next session.

Being met at Lower Dublin, October 3rd, 1797, it was read to them, and they appointed a committee of one person from each church to revise it.

The said committee met at Philadelphia, on Wednesday the 13th of December following, and after making some alterations, chiefly verbal, it was agreed it should be printed for the use of the churches.

It will be understood, the writer availed himself of all the help he could derive from such writers on the subject as he had by him, or could find; and he hopes it will appear, he has bestowed some pains to render the work serviceable, both as to comprehensiveness of matter and plainness of manner, so far as the requisite brevity would admit.

He thinks it unnecessary to add any thing farther, save that he would beg leave to impress on the minds of the brethren the following particulars.

First; That they should be careful in the admission of members. Let there be pretty clear evidence of a work of grace. Slackness, or inattention here, has been the bane of the church, in all ages.

Secondly; Let there be most unremitting attention to maintain strict discipline. The glory of the church, the credit of religion, and the prosperity of Zion, depend, in a high degree, on the circumspect walk of its professors, and the vigilant zeal of all, especially of the officers, for support of order and gospel discipline.

Thirdly; That the professors of religion should walk together in love and Christian union is of material consideration. Behold how good, says the psalmist, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity. "See how these Christians love one another," was the observa-

tion of the Heathens, respecting the Christians of the first age. What a pity, that the members of the same family, and even children of the same heavenly Father, and who is also the God of peace, should disagree and wrangle like the sons of darkness.

Fourthly; Be very diligent and circumspect in the discharge of the various duties you owe to God, to yourselves, to one another, and to those of the world. Let all have occasion to observe, that you have been with Jesus, and learned of him. Walk worthy, says the apostle, of the vocation wherewith you are called.

I will only add; That you be particularly careful, to maintain and preserve temper, coolness, and impartiality, in your meetings of business. To be rigid, obstinate, partial, passionate, and overbearing, in administering the concerns of the house of God: how unlike the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus! how unworthy of office under their divine Master.

Now, that the knowledge of God may cover the earth, and his saving power prevail among all nations; and that the churches of Christ may shine in purity of doctrine, strictness of discipline, and in the beauty of holiness, is the unfeigned and fervent prayer of, yours in all gospel service.

SAMUEL JONES

Lower Dublin,
Dec. 26, 1797

CHAPTER I OF A GOSPEL CHURCH

1. *Ekklesia*, the word in the original for Church,¹ signifies, *to be called out of*; that is, a gospel church consists of such persons, as have been *called out of* a state of nature into a state of grace, *called* with an effectual calling, *called out of* the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son, or are judged in charity to be so called. Rom. i. 6, 7. viii. 30. I Cor. i. 2. Eph. iv. 1. Heb. iii. 1. 2 Tim. i. 9. I Pet. ii. 9.

2. The word church sometimes means the whole body of the elect, and is commonly called the catholic, or universal church. Eph. i. 22, 23. v. 23. Col. i. 18, 24. This comprehends those in Heaven, called the church triumphant. Heb. xii. 23. Those on earth, called the church militant. I Cor. xii. 28. and those yet to be

born.

3. But the church, of which we now treat, means a number of disciples, saints, or believers, that have been baptized, and united together in gospel fellowship, and is called a particular church. "Were baptized," Acts ii, 41. "Tell it unto the church," Matt. xviii. 17. "The church that is in their house," Rom. xvi. 5. "That the church may receive edifying," I Cor. xiv. 5. "Churches of the saints," I Cor. xiv. 33. "The churches of Asia," I Cor. xvi. 19. "The church that is at Babylon," I Pet. v. 13.

4. A particular church is not parochial, as comprehending all of the same parish; nor diocesan, as if one pastor might have several flocks;² nor yet provincial, for there were many churches in Judea, Gal. i. 22. Galatia, I Cor. xvi. Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1. much less national.

5. A number of believers are united together into a particular church, by an act of mutual confederation. "Gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God," 2 Cor. viii. 5.

6. Whether the requisite number should be twelve or thirteen, because our blessed Lord and his disciples, at the first celebration of the Lord's supper, made that number, or whether three will be sufficient, because of the promise in Matt. xviii. 20. may be doubtful: but there ought to be so many, as to answer the end of that holy institution.

7. When such a number is found in any place, they ought to propose among themselves, or others may propose it to them, to be constituted a church.

8. For this purpose it will be necessary to appoint a time and place, when they are to meet fasting. One minister or more should be present to assist, and to preach on the occasion. Acts viii. 14. xi. 22.

9. After a suitable sermon has been preached, the acting minister, being furnished with a list of the names of the candidates, and they standing before him, is to interrogate them: respecting their desire to be constituted a Gospel church, their knowledge of, and satisfaction with each other's qualifications, and their purpose and resolution to walk together in church relation, in love to one another, and in obedience to the requirements of Christ in the Gospel, together with such

(Continued on page 8)

A Stone of Stumbling

It is a great promise concerning the person of Christ, as he was to be given unto the church, (for he was a child born, a son given unto us, Isaiah 9:6,) that God would “lay him in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation,” whereon “he that believeth shall not make haste:” Isaiah 28:16. Yet was it also foretold concerning him, that this precious foundation should be “for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;” so as that “many among them should stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken:” Isaiah 8:14, 15.

According unto this promise and prediction it has fallen out in all ages of the church; as the apostle Peter declares concerning the first of them. “Wherefore also,” saith he, “it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto ye therefore which believe, he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed:” 1 Peter 2:6-8. Unto them that believe unto the saving of the soul, he is, he always has been, precious — the sun, the rock, the life, the bread of their souls — every thing that is good, useful, amiable, desirable, here or unto eternity. In, from, and by him, is all their spiritual and eternal life, light, power, growth, consolation, and joy here; with everlasting salvation hereafter. By him alone do they desire, expect, and obtain deliverance from that woeful apostasy from God, which is accompanied with — which containeth in it virtually and meritoriously whatever is evil, noxious, and destructive unto our nature, and which, without relief, will issue in eternal misery. By him are they brought into the nearest cognation, alliance, and friendship with God, the firmest union unto him, and the most holy communion with him, that our finite natures are capable of, and so conducted unto the eternal enjoyment of him. For in him “shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory;” (Isaiah 45:25;) for “Israel

shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;” they “shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end:” verse 17.

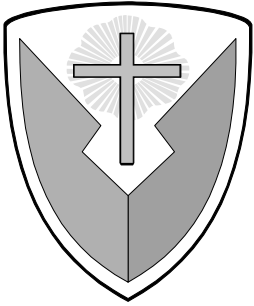
On these and the like accounts, the principal design of their whole lives unto whom he is thus precious, is to acquaint themselves with him — the mystery of the wisdom, grace, and love of God, in his person and mediation, as revealed unto us in the Scripture, which is “life eternal;” (John 17:3;) — to trust in him, and unto him, as to all the everlasting concerns of their souls — to love and honor him with all their hearts — to endeavor after conformity to him, in all those characters of divine goodness and holiness which are represented unto them in him. In these things consist the soul, life, power, beauty, and efficacy of the Christian religion; without which, whatever outward ornaments may be put upon its exercise, it is but a useless, lifeless carcass. The whole of this design is expressed in these heavenly words of the apostle: (Philippians 3:8-12:) “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” This is a divine expression of that frame of heart of that design — which is predominant and efficacious in them unto whom Christ is precious

But, on the other hand, (according unto the fore-mentioned prediction,) as he has been a sure foundation unto all that believe, so he has in like manner been “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense unto them that stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” There is nothing in him — nothing wherein he is concerned, nothing of him, his person, his natures, his office,

his grace, his love, his power, his authority, his relation unto the church — but it has been unto many a stone of stumbling and rock of offense.

Concerning these things have been all the woeful contests which have fallen out and been managed among those that outwardly have made profession of the Christian religion. And the contentions about them do rather increase than abate, unto this very day; the dismal fruits whereof the world groaneth under, and is no longer able to bear. For, as the opposition unto the Lord Christ in these things, by men of perverse minds, has ruined their own souls — as having dashed themselves in pieces against this everlasting rock — so in conjunction with other lusts and interests of the carnal minds of men, it has filled the world itself with blood and confusion. The re-enthroning of the Person, Spirit, Grace, and authority of Christ, in the hearts and consciences of men, is the only way whereby an end may be put unto these woeful conflicts. But this is not to be expected in any degree of perfection amongst them who stumble at this stone of offense, whereunto they were appointed; though in the issue he will herein also send forth judgment unto victory, and all the meek of the earth shall follow after it. In the meantime, as those unto whom he is thus a rock of offense — in his person, his spirit, his grace, his office, and authority — are diligent and restless (in their various ways and forms, in lesser or higher degrees, in secret artifices, or open contradictions unto any or all of them, under various pretenses, and for divers ends, even secular advantages some of them, which the craft of Satan has prepared for the ensnaring of them) in all ways of opposition unto his glory; so it is the highest duty of them unto whom he is precious, whose principal design is to be found built on him as the sure foundation, as to hold the truth concerning him, this person, spirit, grace, office, and authority,) and to abound in all duties of faith, love, trust, honor, and delight in him — so also to declare his excellency, to plead the cause of his glory, to vindicate his honor, and to witness him the only rest and reward of the souls of men, as they are called and have opportunity.

John Owens



Shield of Faith
 Elder Greg Phillips, Editor
 807 Ashwood Lane
 Chattanooga, TN 37415

The *Shield of Faith* is available without charge to any who request it. Request for subscriptions or donations should be directed to the editor at the above address.

«Title» «First Name» «Last Name»
 «Address»
 «Address 2»
 «City,», «State» «zip»

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, Hebrews 10:24

OF A GOSPEL CHURCH

other questions as will involve the leading particulars of a church covenant; and after they have given their assent to the whole, the church covenant³ is to be read to them, which they are then, or afterwards, to sign, and the minister pronounces them, in the name of the Lord Jesus, a regular gospel church, giving them, or their representative, the right hand of fellowship, and wishing them prosperity in the Lord. Is. xlv. 5. Amos iii. Acts xi. 23. 2 Cor. vi. 14. ix. 13.

10. It will be understood, that prayers and singing ought to be introduced in their proper places through the whole, and then a suitable address to the constituted church, with a benediction, will close the solemnity.

11. It is this mutual consent, confederation, and union of persons into one body, as a particular church, that makes that church distinct from any other church, and that makes the members of it, members of that church more than of any other. "Onesimus, who is one of you; Epaphras, who is one of you." Col. iv. 9, 12. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ." Rom. xii. 5.

12. Such particular churches have full power and authority to transact all their own affairs, independent of any other church or churches: such as, to choose their own officers, receive members, exercise discipline among themselves, exclude members, if need be, and, in general, do every thing that concerns them as a distinct religious corporation. Matt. xviii. 17. I Cor. v. 2 Thes. iii. 6, 14. Acts i. 5, 23. vi. 3. xv. 4. xxi. 22.

13. No church, however, can be independent of Christ, who is the head of the body, and who, while he has committed the executive power to his church, has retained the legislative in his

own hands, or rather, has enacted, by himself or his apostles, all the laws that are necessary, and the church must take heed how they execute the same, as they will answer it to their Lord and Master. "One is your Master, even Christ. Hear ye him." Matt. xviii. 5. xxiii. 8. "There is one law giver." James iv. 12.

14. Under the law, every member of the congregation was a member of the church. The church and congregation were then commensurate, but under the Gospel they are distinct from one another. For though the church be in some sense congregational, yet the church and congregation are two distinct things, so that the one word should not be used for the other, as if they were synonymous.

15. A particular church, constituted as above, is said to be a church essential, but not complete, while destitute of officers. These were either extraordinary or ordinary; the first comprehending apostles, prophets, and evangelists; and the other, bishops, or ministers or elders, and deacons; to which some add, ruling elders.

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. {ground: or, stay} And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:14-16)

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.