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Organization

The Watchtower Reprints, March 1883, p. 458

“We believe that a visible organization and the adopting of some particular name, would tend to increase our numbers and make us appear more respectable in the estimation of the world ... We always refuse to be called by any other name than that of our Head - Christians - continually claiming that there can be no division among those continually led by his Spirit and example as made known through his Word.”

The Watchtower Reprints, September 1, 1893, p. 1572

“The endeavor to compel all men to think alike on all subjects, culminated in the great apostasy and the development of the great Papal system.”

The Watchtower Reprints, September 1, 1893, p. 1573

“There is no organization today clothed with such divine authority to imperiously command mankind. There is no organization doing this today; though we are well aware that many of them in theory claim that they ought to be permitted to do so.”

(continued)

The Watchtower Reprints, December 1, 1894, p. 1743

“In view of these facts and also of the nature of the harvest work, and the additional fact that each one so gathered is expected to enter into the harvest work as a reaper, and will do so to the extent of his ability and opportunity, it is plain that the forming of a visible organization of such gathered out ones would be out of harmony with the spirit of the divine plan.”

The Watchtower Reprints, September 15, 1895, p. 1866

“Beware of ‘organization’ It is wholly unnecessary.”

The Watchtower, May 1, 1957, p. 274

“The world is full of Bibles, which Book contains the commandments of God. Why, then, do the people not know which way to go? Because they do not also have the teaching or law of the mother, which is light...If we are to walk in the light of truth we must recognize not only Jehovah God as our Father but his organization as our mother.”

The Watchtower, October 1, 1967, p. 587

“Thus the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah’s visible organization in mind.”

(continued)

The Watchtower, February 15, 1983, p. 12

“What does God require of those who will reside forever upon his Paradise earth?...requirement is that we *be associated with God’s channel*, his organization...To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.”

The Watchtower, June 1, 1985, p. 20

“Although walking with confidence in Jehovah’s leadership may not be easy at times...To turn away from Jehovah and his organization, to spurn the direction of the ‘faithful and discreet slave,’ and to rely simply on personal Bible reading and interpretation is to become like a solitary tree in a parched land.”

(done)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Wherein consists the difference between "the Bride" and the great company if both have spiritual bodies?

A. Angels are spiritual bodies; but "unto which of the angels said God at any time, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee?" (Heb. 1:5.) But "when he bringeth the first-born (Jesus) into the world (first-born from the dead, to the divine nature, at his resurrection) he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him"—render the homage due to his nature and office. (Heb. 1:5, 6.) He became a partaker of the divine nature, and it is fitting that all other forms of life should worship divinity. "God hath highly exalted him (Jesus) and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven (heavenly beings—angels) and things in earth, (men) and things under the earth, (the dead when raised to life) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (master, ruler) to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11.) From 1 Cor. 15:40, 41 we learn that there are different degrees of glory on the celestial, or spiritual plane, illustrated by sun, moon, and different stars, just as verse 39 calls attention to the fact there are different degrees of glory on the terrestrial, or earthly plane.

Though both companies will be spiritual beings, the Bride is joint-heir with her Lord, who is "appointed heir of all things; being made so much better than the angels, (other spiritual beings) as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Heb. 1:2-4.) Thus, though the "great company" will be the companions of the Bride, spiritual beings, (Psa. 45:14; Rev. 7:15) there will be a very great difference in the degrees of glory.

Q. What is the work of the Bride in making herself ready?

A. The Bride, as we have seen, is a company composed of many members. Paul says, "Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular;" and again, "Ye are members one of another;" and one is not to say to another, I have no need of you: The foot member must minister to the hand and the hand to the foot, and all, by a mutual and vital union of spirit with the Head, are to build each other up. (Jude, verse 20.) All the members have one aim, one joyful hope, one work of preparation—adorning for the marriage. She is to put on the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness (imputed to her by faith in the ransom) and to keep the same "unspotted from the world." And not only so, but she is to adorn it with fine "needle work." (Psa. 45:14.) The Christ-like character is to be wrought out in her life. As Paul expresses it, she is to "add to her faith" the various Christian graces. We must help one another in this important work.

Each member has a work to do in the making ready: Some may travel and preach, some may write, some publish the grace of God by printing it, some may teach more privately, some may publish it by furnishing of the Lord's funds entrusted to their care, some may seek out the "meek" (see Isa. 61:1) and put words in their ears and reading into their hands, and the work of all is thus to build up yourselves in the most holy faith. It is thus that the "Bride makes herself ready." It was by the faithfulness of some of the other members that these "glad tidings" ever reached your ears and gladdened and sanctified your heart; and now you, if a member of that company, are doing what you can to "make ready" others. To be ready to help each other, we must diligently hearken and incline our ear to the Word of truth, forget the world and worldly associations. (Psa. 45:10.) "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord." (Verse 11.)

Q. Please explain 1 Pet. 3:19, 20. I have not gotten clearly in mind what becomes of the spirits of men from death until the resurrection.

A. (By Bro Smith.) Does not the Scripture you quote state the condition of "spirits in prison?" The first question that would naturally occur, in examining this passage, would be: *When* did Christ preach to them? We find the answer in verse 20: "When once the patience of God waited in the days of Noah." Gen. 6:3 refers to Noah's days: "The Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man." It is not unreasonable, then, to say he was at that time striving with man.

The general belief, that Christ preached to these spirits during his death, we think, unscriptural, for then other spirits than those of Noah's day could have heard him.

None knew better than Jesus that Scripture: "There is no knowledge nor device in the grave;" hence he would never go there to preach. Isa. 42:7; 49:9 and 61:1 state that Christ is to deliver death's prisoners. He did not do so at his first advent (excepting the temporary deliverance of Lazarus and a few others), but will in due *time* set at liberty all the captives and open the prison doors of *hades* (the tomb) to all captives.

Our understanding, then, of 1 Pet. 3:19, 20 is this: Those of Noah's day who were disobedient, and to whom Christ preached by Noah, are now in *prison*. If any Scripture teaches otherwise, we shall be glad to have our attention called to it.

Q. "Would not an earnest, aggressive organization (or sect), built upon Scriptural lines, be the best means of spreading and publishing the *real* Good Tidings? We must have fellowship and sympathy. Union is strength. It is not the skirmishers that win the battle, but the disciplined and solid battalions."

A. We believe that a visible organization, and the adopting of some particular name, would tend to increase our numbers and make us appear more respectable in the estimation of the world. The natural man can see that a visible organized body, with a definite purpose, is a thing of more or less power; therefore, *they esteem* the various organizations, from which we have come out, in obedience to the Master's call. But the natural man cannot understand how a company of people, with no organization which they can see, is ever going to accomplish anything. As they look upon us, they regard us simply as a few scattered skirmishers—a "peculiar people"—with very peculiar ideas and hopes, but not worthy of special notice.

But, though it is impossible for the natural man to see our organization, because he cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God, we trust that you can see that the true Church is most effectually organized, and in the best possible working order. (See the plan of our organization, as stated in October issue, under the caption "The Ekklesia.") The Apostle Paul urges all to unity of faith and purpose (Phil. 3:15, 16—*Diaglott.*) All led by the *same Spirit* may and do come to a knowledge of the *same truth*. Under our Captain, all the truly sanctified, however few or far separated in person, are closely united by the Spirit of Christ, in faith, hope and love; and, in following the Master's command, are moving in solid battalions for the accomplishment of his purposes. But, bear in mind, God is not dependent upon numbers (See Judges 7, as an illustration).

Recognizing this organization, which is of the Spirit, and desiring no assimilation whatever with the worldly, who cannot see or understand it, we are quite willing to bear the reproach of a peculiar people. We always refuse to be called by any other name that that of our Head—Christians—continually claiming that there can be no division among those continually led by his Spirit and example as made known through his Word.

We disown none of our Lord's dear children. The weakest child of the household of faith (in Christ, our Redeemer) we gladly recognize as our brother. Some, in ignorance of their privilege of the communion of saints, are mixed with the various worldly organizations, to their great detriment. Though we cannot follow them there, we gladly welcome them when they come among us. Wherever we have hope of finding any such, in the various nominal Churches, etc., we tell them the "good tidings of great joy," and, by word and example, say, "Come out from among them (the worldly, though professing Christians) and be ye separate." How could we deliver this message if we were not obeying it? We have unbounded faith in our Captain; and this perfect organization, invisible to the world, marches on to certain and glorious victory.

"From victory unto victory,
His army he shall lead;
'Till every foe is vanquished,
And Christ is Lord indeed."

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Extracts from a lecture by H. L. Hastings before the Massachusetts Annual Convention of Y. M. C. Associations.

The question as to the inspiration of the Bible is not a question raised by me. It is a question that is already up for discussion through the length and breadth of this land. What are we to do with this book? How are we to regard

it? Is it the best book in the world, or the worst? Is it a true book, or is it a false one? Is it God's book, or man's?

Over and over again this Book says, "Hear ye the word of the Lord." Now, the message is the word of the Lord, or it is a lie. It is the Word of the Lord, as it professes to be, or else it is a cheat, a swindle, a humbug, a fraud.

rary: Paul's letters, weighty with logical reasoning, do not even mention the subjects upon which sectarians do most insist, and which are by them generally made tests of fellowship.

Paul said nothing about an everlasting torture of sinners; he said nothing whatever about a mysterious trinity, in which three Gods are incomprehensibly one God and at the same time three Gods; he said not a word about man being of a nature such as *could not die* but *must live* everlastingly, in a place of either pleasure or woe; he said nothing, either, about the present life ending all trial for all classes; and he entered into no entangling discussion about the bread and wine used in commemoration of the Lord's death—as to transubstantiation or consubstantiation; yet it can easily be discerned that he was not in harmony with any of these errors.

Notice particularly, however, that without so much as mentioning a single one of these sectarian tests of fellowship, Paul declares: "I have not shunned to declare unto you *the whole counsel of God.*" (Acts 20:27) From this it is very evident that none of these points, which are today regarded as the very essence and substance of Christian doctrine and as the proper tests of faith, are the *one faith*, or in any sense or degree parts of "the faith once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3.

The *one faith*, which all should hold, was a very simple one; one so simple that all, the learned and the unlearned alike, could grasp it and comprehend it, and be "*fully persuaded* in their own minds" concerning it. It was not a dose of incongruous mysteries, inconsistent with themselves and inharmonious with reason as well as with the Bible, to be swallowed by the ignorant with credulity, and by the learned with hypocritical mental reservations; but it was so simple, and clear, and reasonable, that any and every honest follower of Christ could be *fully persuaded in his own mind* concerning it.

What was this *one faith*? The basis of it is stated by Paul, thus: "I delivered unto you *first* of all, that which I also received [first of all—as a foundation truth or doctrine, upon and in harmony with which all other doctrines must be built], how that *Christ died for our sins*, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3, 4) "There is *one God* and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

This, in a word, confesses sin and utter helplessness; it acknowledges God's loving plan for our redemption; it owns that our Lord's death was our ransom price; and that forgiveness (justification), and reconciliation to God, and the restitution of believers, come as a result of *faith* in this Redeemer, when in due time it is made known to each and all.

These brief statements contain the whole gospel, in the same sense that an acorn contains an oak tree. Without this gospel kernel, the true gospel can never be possessed; hence *this must be insisted on* as a test of Christian fellowship. This must be received, else the gospel is not received. When it is received, the gospel is received. Then a work of growth begins—a development of *this* gospel. It may vary in rapidity of growth according to temperament and surroundings; it can develop into a twig, a sapling, a sturdy oak successively, but the nature of the seed will appertain to it in every stage of its development. So is *faith*—the true *faith*: it must begin with the *one kind of seed-faith* in all, no matter what stage of development each may attain. This *one* gospel acknowledges man's fall and evilfulness, and God's mercy and love manifested through Christ's great work of redemption, forgiveness and final restoration of all the willing and obedient, but of no others. All theories, and they are many, which omit any of these items are spurious.

Some deny God's love in the matter, and claim that all the love was Christ's, and that he *interposed* and thwarted the Father's original plan; but those of the *one faith* are guided by our Lord's own testimony, that God so loved the world that he devised the plan as it is being carried forward, and sent his only begotten Son to do what he has done and is yet to do for the world. (John 3:16, 17) Others deny that any *redemption* was accomplished by the death of our Lord Jesus, deny that his life was substituted as a corresponding price or "*ransom for all.*" and claim that the Father does *all* by simply *pardoning* the sinners. But again the *one faith* is clearly pointed out by the words of Paul—"There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a *ransom* [corresponding price] for all."

When received into honest hearts, this simple gospel, the

true gospel, will gradually open up and spread its roots of reason and its branches of hope in every direction, feeding upon the promises of God, building itself up as he designed, and grasping, as it progresses, the "*one baptism*" (See TOWER, June 15, '93) and every other feature of the gospel in its fulness.

Note the difference between this, God's test, on the simple first principles of the gospel, and the wrong course of men who attempt to enforce upon all an entire system of faith (and that when they are the merest babes in Christ), so fettering them, then, that their growth is hindered. To ask babes in Christ to assent to thirty or forty articles of faith arranged by fellow-men, and to agree to take those as the infallible truth, and to promise never to believe either more or less than they contain, is like selecting in an orchard one gnarled and crooked tree, as a *standard*, and requiring all the other trees to be padded out to make them look as thick and as gnarled as the sample, and to be bound with iron bands that they might never grow larger or straighter.

This true gospel, this simple faith, easily understood and confessed by the weakest babe in Christ, must also be, and always, and equally, the faith of the most developed sons of God. *This one faith* (and not the endless ramifications and details of faith which lead out from it) Paul placed as a standard or test of all claiming the name Christian. All the consecrated who agreed on this one standard, or foundation truth, Paul counted as in and of the one church. While each member was to grow in grace, knowledge and love, there would always be harmony and oneness in the faith and fellowship of the church, if all growth were kept in line and harmony with his foundation truth.

Here was a perfect basis of union, which allowed for all the various stages of individual *development in the truth*, and which most effectually guarded against errors. For if this simple creed were today made the standard by which all doctrines should be tested, it would speedily lead to the discarding of every error and to the true union of the church in the "*one Lord, one faith and one baptism.*"

The endeavor to compel all men to think alike on all subjects, culminated in the great apostasy and the development of the great Papal system; and thereby the "gospel," the "one faith," which Paul and the other apostles set forth, was lost—buried under the mass of uninspired decrees of popes and councils. The union of the early church, based upon the simple gospel and bound only by love, gave place to the bondage of the church of Rome—a slavery of God's children, from the degradation of which multitudes are still weak and suffering.

The Reformation movement of the sixteenth century came as an effort to regain liberty of conscience; but, deluded by the idea of an *elaborate creed*, insisted upon for so many centuries, the reformers and their followers formed other systems of bondage very similar to that of Papacy, though slight modifications gave liberty to fuller ideas on some subjects. And so it has been ever since: each new reform movement has made the failure of attempting to make a creed just large enough for its prime movers.

A "CHURCH TRUST" UNDESIRABLE

But while division in the church of Christ are very wrong, and very contrary to the will and word of our Lord, they are better far than a *union* in bondage under Papacy's system, creed, etc., Instead, therefore, of attempting to get all the sects to combine in a sort of "church trust," an image or likeness of the Papal system of oneness (though on a higher plane), to regulate and restrict further investigation and further growth, we need to do the very opposite—to abolish all sects and all elaborate creeds and confessions of faith. Instead of being further bound (by such a church trust union—or wheel within a wheel, double imprisonment), all bondage should be set aside, except the simple tests first imposed in the *one faith* once delivered to the saints; and all party sectarian names should be repudiated, and the name of Christ should be the only name borne by his church.

Such a breaking down of sectarian fences would leave the true children of God willing to accept the original and simple test—"all one in Christ Jesus;" and this is what is needed. It would destroy sectarian pride, which so often counteracts true Christian zeal and love, but it would tend to develop the truth, and thereby to develop the real zeal for the truth which our Lord desires in his followers. The term Church of Christ would no longer mean to any "our denomination," but, when they would sing,

"I love thy church, O God,
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand,"

they would think, instead, of the one, true and only church.

Under such conditions, recognizing the true and only test, as above quoted from Paul, those who formerly championed opposite sides of the various questions of doctrine would join heads and hearts in carefully weighing the various statements of the Scriptures; and, truly seeking the divine plan, they would ere long, as promised, be guided into all truth.

They would join hearts and hands as *Christians*, and while their heads might not at once agree on certain points, it would be only a question of a short time; for the unbiased study of God's plan, with no sectarian theory and organization to uphold, would bring the heads of all into union and general harmony, even though, as at first, the growth of faith-roots and faith-branches might vary. All would believe the "same things," even if some could see and believe more elaborately than others.—Phil. 3:15, 16.

This freedom, and yet harmony and union, which is the result of a full acceptance of God's will and Word, will not be attained in the present age except by the few, the "overcomers." Others, the Scriptures show, will continue in sectarian bondage, and even increase their bondage-union by a church trust or "confederacy" (Isa. 8:12), until, in the close of this time of trouble, all this is corrected by the fall of sectarian systems as well as of present political governments.—Dan. 12:1; Rev. 18:2-5.

In the next age, during the *world's* trial, such great deceiving systems will not be permitted; but now they are permitted in order to the testing and manifesting of the "overcomers."

Let the dear saints who now walk the narrow way, and whose names are "written in heaven" as probationary members of the one, true church of Christ, patiently persevere in worshiping God after the manner which others term "heresy"—closely studying and believing all that is written in the inspired Word, however it may conflict with human creeds and the opinions of so-called great theologians. Be simple enough to take God at his Word, however church monopolies or trusts may seek, either willingly or unintentionally, to wrest it to their own advantage. Flee all so-called unions, which are merely bondages. What is needed is *fewer* of such unions, not more. Each individual needs to feel and exercise the same liberty on doctrine that each sect now claims. From this standpoint the bondage-union of the church under Papacy was the worst and most complete enslavement of the individual Christian; and the full breaking up of all sectarianism, so that no two persons will be *bound* to hold one faith (except on first-principles) is the most desirable condition. The breaking of Papacy into a hundred sects, each free from the other, was a good work, tending to the realization of the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. Though at first regarded as a calamity, it soon came to be known as the Reformation. And now the breaking up of these numerous sects, so that *each individual will be free*, is essential to a fuller growth in grace, knowledge and love than is at present possible. This breaking up of sectarianism, now regarded as a calamity, will by and by be recognized as truly the greatest of all religious reformations. The signs of the times indicate that such a reformation is impending, and the Scriptures declare it. A little more light, a little more knowledge, and these sectarian shackles upon the individual conscience will fall. Then whatever union shall exist will be upon right principles—a union of hearts and principles and not merely a heterogeneous confederacy. Recognizing each other's personal liberties, each disciple of Christ will be bound to the other by his love of the Lord and of his Word alone; and others will be separated.

Sectarianism has wofully distorted that beautiful figure of Christian union given by our Lord, recorded in John 15:1-8. To fit it to sectarianism, and to make their error in this appear to be supported by God's Word, it is claimed that the "vine" is the whole church, and that the various denominations of "Christendom" are the *branches*. But that the Lord's words will bear no such construction must be evident to any one who will give the passage candid consideration. The branches are the *individuals*, and "any branch" is defined by our Lord's own words to be "any man." Let this, our Lord's illustration of the proper union of all the branches in *one vine*, connected and nourished by the same sap, from the same roots, teach us of true union and personal freedom in the body of Christ.

Suppose that the salaries and "livings" of all ministers, bishops, priests, etc., were cut off, all churches, chapels and cathedrals destroyed, all theological seminaries broken up, and their professors turned to other pursuits, all religious

guilds and societies disbanded, including all sectarian organizations—what would be the effect?

Who can doubt that it would be a real blessing under the disguise of a great and terrible catastrophe? The effect would be to bring *true* Christians together as the family of God, and not as sectarian bands; to study God's Word, and not human traditions and creeds formulated in the dark ages. Very soon, unhindered, God's Word would be heard by all truly his; and one Lord, one faith and one baptism would soon be the result, while the worldly mass would speedily drift apart, and the true distinction between the church and the world would be discernible. The Scriptures seem to indicate that very much of this sort of destruction of present systems must take place before all the "wheat," the true Church, will be separated from the "tares," the mere professors. Party spirit and love of sect are so strong that, apparently, nothing short of a complete wreck of all the sects will suffice to set free all of God's children now bound and blindfolded in and by them.

This catastrophe—sectarian destruction, the fall of Babylon—is what is referred to in the Book of Revelation under the symbol of the seven last plagues. (Rev. 15-18) The pain from these will consist largely of mental chagrin, the disappointment of sectarian hopes and plans, and the wounding of sectarian pride. When the Master said, "Watch ye, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things coming upon the world," it included the pain of these plagues, as well as other annoyances to which the world will be subject because of ignorance of the real plan of God. It is of escape from these plagues that the Revelator (our Lord—Rev. 1:1) speaks to us, saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."—Rev. 18:4.

THREE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH

Brother Wright sends us the following clipping, with the remark, "Two views well stated. Please give us the third and true one, Brother Russell."

"There are two conceptions of the Church, which, for convenience, I shall designate as the Protestant and Catholic conceptions. The Protestant idea of the Church is that it is a voluntary association of believers in Christ; that those who think alike upon religious subjects join together in a society and choose their pastor, who derives his commission and his authority from them. Consequently they are at liberty to prescribe what he shall and shall not teach, or to unmake their church and make another, precisely as the members of a club, or of a political party, have a right to withdraw and form a new organization. The Protestant theory of the Church is that of an aggregation of individuals, 'who can rearrange themselves at will, and thus create new churches at every re-arrangement.' (*Ewer*.) The Catholic theory, on the other hand, is that it is an organization which God Almighty has founded once for all, to last to the end of time, and into which he invites men: it is his family, his household, his kingdom, his city. Its officers are commissioned by him and hold their authority as teachers only from him. In a word, the Catholic Church is not a democracy but an empire, not a republic but a kingdom. As such, it comes to man with divine authority: its officers are under oath to the Eternal King, and they are to minister to man in his name, and for him."—*The Living Church*.

In presenting the true view of the church, we labor under the disadvantage that for fifteen hundred years people have been taught one or the other of the above views, or combinations of both, while the *true* idea has been generally lost sight of since the second century. The true view, as we conceive it, is as follows:—

God's church, when completed and *organized*, will be all that is given above as the Catholic or Episcopal view. But it is not yet completed, and hence not yet *organized*. When organized, it will be clothed with power, and will be, "not a democracy, but an empire; not a republic, but a kingdom. As such it [will] come to man [the world—during the Millennium] with *divine authority* [and with power to back up that authority]. Its officers are [then to be] under oath to the Eternal King, and they are to minister to man in his name, and for him." All this, it is to be noted, fits exactly to the coming *reign* of the church, when it shall "bless all the families of the earth;" but it does not fit at all to the present state or condition. There is no organization today clothed with such divine authority to imperiously command mankind. There is no organization doing this today; though we are well aware that many of them in theory claim that they ought to be permitted to do so; and many more would like to do so.

a people for the reception of the gospel (whether they had profited by it or not), that they were expected to recognize both the harvest message and the appointed and attested messengers; and their opportunity for either receiving or rejecting them was the first applied test of their worthiness of the special favors then about to be offered to them. It was on this account that the harvesters were instructed to go to that people in a manner to impress them with a sense of their obligations as a covenant people to receive and gladly to entertain the messengers of the Lord to them. Throughout the whole nation the fame of the Messiah and the divine attestations of his power and authority had spread (Matt. 4:23-25; Mark 1:28, 32-34, 45; 6:31-34; 8:26, 27; Luke 4:14, 15, 36, 37; Matt. 9:26, 31; 14:1, 2), and these now sent forth in his name represented him, so that in receiving them they were receiving him, and in rejecting them they were rejecting him. Hence the blessing promised on their reception, and denunciations that followed their rejection. (Verses 11-15) When they departed out of the city or house that rejected them, they were to shake off the very dust of their feet for a testimony against them, because that in so doing they were violating their most solemn covenant with God and bringing upon themselves the just condemnation of such a course. That condemnation, however, was not to eternal death, but to deprivation of the privileges and blessings of the new dispensation then about to be offered to them, but of which they proved themselves unworthy. Nor was the condemnation, either then or at the full end of their age, an individual one; for, although the nation as a whole was cast off from divine favor and blinded, and destined to remain so until the gospel favor had passed over to the Gentiles, yet during this time, if any individual of the nation repented and severed his ties with the nation and family (which the persecuting spirit of the nation has always compelled) he might, through such tribulation, enter into the embryo kingdom—the Gospel church.

In this harvest the circumstances attending the work are in many respects quite different. Though here also the Lord has a consecrated people—nominal spiritual Israel—they are not a local nation within a circumscribed boundary, but they are scattered here and there as wheat in the midst of tares. The reapers here must therefore search them out singly, while there they were grouped in cities and families and a nation.

Again, the circumstances here are the reverse of those there in that the testimony to the truth is given in the midst of a very babel of voices, all claiming to teach the truth; and so great is the confusion that only the consecrated and faithful souls, whose practiced ears know the Master's voice from all others, are able to discern it. They have an affinity for the truth: the holy Spirit within them recognizes the same spirit in the message, as well as in the messengers, and it satisfies their longings as nothing else can do.

Thus the harvest message becomes a test of faithfulness to God's covenant people here, and as a sickle it accomplishes the reaping. These different circumstances and conditions of this harvest make necessary the very reverse of the former method of the dependence of the messengers upon the hospitality of the people. Now, in order to make manifest that no mercenary motives, or motives of indolence, or love of ease, or popularity, or of desire to impose on others prompt the reapers of this harvest, the Lord in his providence has so arranged the work here that all such motives are manifestly eliminated from the harvest work; and it is seen to be a self-sacrificing labor of love, prompted by that devotion and zeal which the truth alone inspires. And this of itself commends the truth to the attention of the Lord's people where the messenger comes in contact with them, though often it reaches them through the printed page alone, where the luster of the truth is its own commendation.

This difference in the two harvests was aptly illustrated by the Lord when he likened the Jewish nation to wheat and chaff, and his work there to a fan for blowing the chaff away—thus indicating the compactness of that people; while here his professed people are likened to wheat and tares, thus indicating their scattered and confused condition and the necessity of careful searching and gathering out.

It would therefore be entirely out of order for the reapers in this harvest to denounce or shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against any city now, for no city or community as such is now in covenant relations with God as was Israel; and so different are the customs and circumstances of this time that a man might brush the dust and denounce the people for a week and not be noticed, or, if noticed, merely considered as of unsound mind, so intent are the masses of the people on pursuing their own course and grasping after gain.

The consequence now to those who recognize and yet reject the truth will be very similar to those which followed Israel's

rejection (their complete overthrow in the midst of great tribulation), excepting that the increased light and privilege of this time will merit and receive the greater punishment—"a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1) Surely, then, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15) in the day of judgment (the Millennial age) than for the condemned house of Israel, either fleshly or spiritual, which are judged unworthy of the grace of God, because they cast it from them. The judgment upon condemned fleshly Israel was a terrible overthrow in the midst of harrowing scenes of war and desolation and famine, leaving them utterly desolate and scattering them as fugitives among all nations; while that which is shortly to come upon nominal spiritual Israel is described as a time of unparalleled trouble, such as never has been and never again shall be.

Another point of contrast which this lesson suggests is that between the Lord's methods for the harvest work of the Jewish age and the subsequent methods of the inspired apostles, equally under the Lord's direction and supervision, which not only winnowed the grain of that harvest, but also sought to systematically store it. The wheat of that dispensation was to form the nucleus of the Christian church—the embryo kingdom of heaven—which as a compact and sympathetic body subject to Christ, imbued with his spirit, and representing his truth, was to stand before the world as a living testimony to his truth and to the power of his grace for nearly two thousand years. It was necessary, therefore, as believers multiplied in the days of the apostles, to adopt some simple method of recognition which would serve to unify them and to make them helpful one to another as members of one body.

But as that work of organizing the church of the new Gospel dispensation was no part of the harvest work of the old Jewish dispensation, so the present harvest work or reaping of the Gospel dispensation is also separate and distinct from the work of the new Millennial dispensation now drawing on. But there is this difference between our days and those of the apostles: the wheat of the Gospel age is not to form the nucleus of another church for the Millennial age; and those gathered out from among the tares are not beginning, but are finishing their course on earth, and the time of their sojourn in the flesh is very short and cannot go beyond the twenty years of harvest yet remaining. Their organization for the work of the new dispensation will be beyond the veil, when they are changed to the glorious likeness of the Lord.

In view of these facts and also of the nature of the harvest work, and the additional fact that each one so gathered is expected to enter into the harvest work as a reaper, and will do so to the extent of his ability and opportunity, it is plain that the forming of a visible organization of such gathered out ones would be out of harmony with the spirit of the divine plan; and if done would seem to indicate on the part of the church a desire to conform to the now popular idea of organization or confederacy. (See Isa. 8:12) The work now is not organization, but division, just as it was in the Jewish harvest proper (Matt. 10:34-36) And this harvest, as illustrated by the natural, is the busiest time of all the age, because the time is short and the "winter" is fast approaching. What is to be done must be done quickly, and there is abundant room in the great field for every member of the body of Christ to reap.

While, therefore, we do not esteem a visible organization of the gathered ones to be a part of the Lord's plan in the harvest work, as though we expected as an organization to abide here for another age, we do esteem it to be his will that those that love the Lord should speak often one to another of their common hopes and joys, or trials and perplexities, communing together concerning the precious things of his Word, and so help one another, and not forget the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is; and so much the more as they see the day approaching.—Heb. 10:25.

Let us, then, give ourselves diligently to the great harvest work, observing and carefully following the providential lines for the guidance of the work as indicated by the Lord of the harvest—the same Lord, and just as truly present and active in this harvest as in the Jewish harvest, though invisible to mortal sight. What dignity and grandeur and blessed inspiration does the realization of this truth give our humble services! Truly it is not a glory which the world can discern, but faithfulness to the end of our course will bring an exceeding and eternal weight of glory which will appear to all God's intelligent creatures of every name and order: for in the ages to come he will show forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his loving kindness toward us who are in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7); and, praise the Lord! our exaltation and glory will be for a grand and benevolent service—even the privilege of scattering universal blessings.

prayer and receive that strength and sympathy and consolation and help we so much need. Let us live in the presence of the Father and the Son who have promised to abide with us. It will sweeten our days and comfort our nights and ease our burdens and lighten our cares and brighten our hopes, and, in a word, it will lift us up above the world into a higher and purer atmosphere. Such is the will of heaven concerning us: let us appreciate and avail ourselves of the privilege.

By all the encouragements of precept and example, the Lord assures us that the fervent prayer of a righteous man (a justified and consecrated child of God) availeth much. (Jas. 5:16) We are urged also to come in faith. Jesus said, "If ye have faith and doubt not, . . . all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matt. 21:22) As he was addressing his consecrated disciples, it must of course be understood that all their petitions would be subjected to divine wisdom, and therefore the answers to their prayers, though always sure, might not always be in the way expected, but they would always be considered and answered in some way for their highest good.

What a blessed privilege, dear fellow-disciples of the Lord, is ours, to be instant in prayer, to pray always—to lift up our hearts and minds to God at any time and in any place and to realize thus daily and hourly that the Father and our dear Lord Jesus continually abide with us. And then, when the active duties of the day have been performed under his eye and supervision, or at any time when the soul realizes its necessity, how precious is the privilege of entering into our closets and there alone with God unburdening our hearts at the throne of grace.

While secret prayer is the blessed privilege of every child of God, and one without which his spiritual life cannot be sustained, it is also the privilege of Christians to unite their petitions at the throne of grace. This united prayer is specially commended by the Lord. (Matt. 18:19) "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father; for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

With such promises as these, together with an experience of their fulfilment, who can doubt the love and favor of our

God and of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ? Therefore let us be encouraged to pray always and not to faint when the answers seem to tarry long, for time is often required to work out the deep designs of an allwise and loving Providence. Remember the words of the angel to Daniel. Daniel said, "While I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God, for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer," the answer came by the hand of an angel who said, "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved."—Dan. 9: 20-23.

On another occasion, when Daniel had mourned three weeks, fasting and praying, because of his inability to understand, the angel of the Lord came and said, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words."—Dan. 10:2, 3, 10-12.

Even so shall it ever be with all the beloved of the Lord: at the beginning of our supplications God begins to set in operation the influences and to shape the circumstances which are designed to work out the intended blessing for us—if we faint not, but continue instant in prayer, thereby evincing our continued earnestness of desire, and if we confess our sins, and set our hearts to understand, and chasten ourselves before him. How many prayers are not heard or are hindered because the one who asks does not first purify himself of evil in his own heart? "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts;" i. e., you ask selfishly and without regard to the will of God. (Jas. 4:3) But to the chastened and sanctified comes the promise—"Before they call [reading the desire of the heart even before it finds expression in words] I will answer [will begin so to shape events as to bring the answer soon or later]; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." (Isa. 65:23, 24) While this is in connection with a prophecy relating to the Lord's people in the Millennial age, it nevertheless is true of all his faithful ones of this age. Praise the Lord for all his loving kindness to even the least of his lowly children!

CONCERNING PROFITABLE MEETINGS

We have received a number of requests from friends of the truth for advice as to the most profitable methods of conducting meetings. One brother writes:

"A few brethren who have been reading DAWN express their willingness to meet somewhere to study in consecutive order, and I ask suggestions for a plan suited to beginners. Pray for us, that we may commence this study in the right way, and be the recipients of many blessings.

Yours in the faith, J. W. McLANE."

Another brother recently removed to a new neighborhood says:

"I find in this locality a fine field for labor. Several here to whom I have given tracts already manifest interest. I have conversed freely with them on Bible subjects, and have their promise to attend meetings at my house. So if you can aid me by suggestions I will be thankful.

"I am, dear brother, yours in the service of the Master,
"JOSHUA L. GREEN."

Another Brother writes:—

"We have a number of persons here who wish to assemble themselves together for worship. We would be pleased to have some instructions from you as to how to go about it.

"I hope you can give us some way which will be satisfactory. Some of us have left the churches and are now free from all precepts of men. To speak for myself, I left the Presbyterian church.

Yours in Christ, C. C. FLEMING."

We are glad to note the increasing desire for the study of God's plan of the ages; and also to see that the importance of method and order are recognized in this. We give our advice as follows:—

(1) You would best first re-read some things already written which bear upon this subject—in our issues of May 1, '93, page 131; Sept. '93, page 259; Oct. 15, '93, page 307; Mar. 1, '94, page 73; April 1, '95, page 78; May 1, '95, page 109.

(2) Beware of "organization." It is wholly unnecessary. The Bible rules will be the only rules you will need. Do not seek to bind others' consciences, and do not permit others to bind yours. Believe and obey so far as you can understand God's Word today, and so continue growing in grace and knowledge and love day by day.

(3) The Bible instructs you whom to fellowship as "brethren;"—only believers who are seeking to walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Not believers of any and every thing, but believers of the Gospel record—that mankind is fallen into sin and its penalty, death, and that only in Christ is there salvation, "through faith in his blood" "shed for the remission of sins," as "a ransom [a corresponding price] for all." Any who merely believe in Christ as a noble and good person, a grand example of righteous living, etc., may be agreeable as neighbors or business acquaintances, but they are not "believers," and hence are not "brethren," any more than are Jews, Mohammedans, Infidels, publicans and sinners—for practically these also so acknowledge him.

(4) You come together, then, as God's children, bought back from sin and death with the great price, and resolved henceforth to live not unto yourselves, but unto him who died for you. (2 Cor. 5:15) Your meetings should have certain objects in view, viz:—

(a) Worship, praise and prayer.

(b) Mutual helpfulness in waging victorious warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil within and without.

(c) And to these ends you meet also for the study of God's Word, which he provided for our instruction and help in the narrow way which leads to those blessings prepared by him for those who love him and who demonstrate their love by their efforts to serve, honor and obey him.

(5) Thus seen, a knowledge of doctrines is not our ultimate object in meeting, but the building up of characters, which, as attempted copies of the character of God's dear Son, will be "accepted in the Beloved." But God declares that knowledge of the doctrines which he has revealed in his Word will be of great value to us in our endeavors to grow in his grace.

Hence, after worship, praise and prayer, Bible study should be recognized in its two parts,—(a) The study of God's plan,—what he tells us he is doing for us and for the world; what he has done; and what he will yet do; that we may be enabled as sons to enter into the very spirit of the great work of God and be intelligent co-workers with him. (b) The study of our duties and privileges in God's service, toward each other and toward those that are without, to the end that

picture of the old world's children in Christendom.—2 Cor. 3:15; 4:4, 6.

¹ What a contrast when we look at the children of the New World society of Jehovah's witnesses! They carry a lamp too, the same lamp in fact, God's written Word. But as it is written in Psalm 119:105 (AS): "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path." Why is it they have light whereas the children of Christendom do not? Both have the same lamp, God's Word, the Bible. Where is the difference? The answer is that they looked with unveiled faces at the gleaming Word of the heavenly Father and they also accepted enlightening instruction through his motherly organization. As it is written at Proverbs 6:20, 23 (RS): "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life."

² Consider that for a moment. Two things are mentioned: the commandment of the father and the teaching or law of the mother. Then the proverb explains that the commandment of the father is a burning lamp but that there is light also from the teaching or law of the mother. The world is full of Bibles, which Book contains the commandments of God. Why, then, do the people not know which way to go? Because they do not also have the teaching or law of the mother, which is light. Jehovah God has provided his holy written Word for all mankind and it contains all the information that is needed for men in taking a course leading to life. But God has not arranged for that Word to speak independently or to shine forth life-giving truths by itself. His Word says: "Light is sown for the righteous." (Ps. 97:1) It is

2. In what significant way do the New World society's children differ from Christendom's?
3. What is required of those who would have light from the Bible?

through his organization that God provides this light that the proverb says is the teaching or law of the mother. If we are to walk in the light of truth we must recognize not only Jehovah God as our Father but his organization as our mother.

³ Some who call themselves Christians and who claim God as their Father boast that they walk with God alone, that he directs their steps personally. Such persons not only forsake the teaching or law of the mother, but they literally throw God's woman out into the streets. The light of God's truth is not for them. In the nation of Israel Jehovah made obedience to parents mandatory. "Honor your father and your mother" was the fifth commandment of the Ten. (Ex. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:16, NW) The reward for obedience was long life; for disobedience, death. "In case a man should happen to have a son who is stubborn and rebellious, he not listening to the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and they have corrected him but he will not listen to them, then . . . all the men of his city must stone him with stones and he must die." (Deut. 21:18-21, NW) Such honor and obedience was required not only as due the immediate parents in the flesh but also as rightfully belonging to the older men of influence in Israel. Failure to render such proper respect to Elisha, the prophet of Jehovah, brought upon a gang of juvenile delinquents the just sentence of speedy execution. (2 Ki. 2:24) Today, also, God requires and exacts from his children obedience, honor and respect. These must be rendered not only to the living God himself, but to his wifely organization as well.

IDENTIFYING THE MOTHER ORGANIZATION

⁴ The real mother of Christians is not

4. To what extent were the Israelites required to honor father and mother? and to what extent are Christians today?
5. How does Paul identify the true mother of Christians?

children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt. Moses had already freed himself from Egypt's yoke by fleeing to Midian, where he had lived for forty years. But Jehovah directed him to return to Egypt to represent the Israelites as one united body of people. Jehovah then made a common provision for them all, and any who expected to benefit from it had to act upon it in the same identical manner. All must conform in the selection of an animal, a male sheep or goat one year old, and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts of their houses. Then, by families, they must roast and eat its flesh and leave Egypt en masse about midnight as an orderly body, obeying common instructions and receiving a common deliverance. (Ex. 12:1-13, 21-39) When Jehovah brought them all to Mount Sinai in the wilderness, he gave them his Law organizing them as a theocratic nation.

⁸ All the Law or *Torah* that Jehovah inspired Moses to write was for this theocratic organization of Israel. So were all the other books that now comprise the Hebrew Scriptures, or the "Old Testament" as some persons refer to them. But over fifteen centuries later, Paul, himself an Israelite and an apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote concerning these books that make up three-quarters of our Bible: "For all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15:4) By this, Paul meant that the Bible, as an instruction book for the theocratic organization of Israel, had now become a book of instructions for the organization of the Christian congregation.

⁹ As the canon of books of God's Word

8. How did the Hebrew Scriptures become a book of instructions for Christians?
9. How can it be said that the Bible is an organizational book for the Christian congregation?

was expanded and the Christian Greek Scriptures were added to complete the Bible, each book was written directly to the Christian congregation or to a member of the Christian congregation in its behalf. Thus the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind.

THE CHRISTIAN

CONGREGATION AS AN ORGANIZATION

¹⁰ Jesus did not begin the Christian congregation while he was still on earth. He did, however, select twelve apostles at that time, although Judas, who betrayed him, was replaced by another follower after Jesus' ascension to his Father in heaven. These "apostles of the Lamb" began to serve as foundation stones and pillars of the congregation after it was organized. (Rev. 21:14) This came on the day of Pentecost, 33 C.E., when the first Christian congregation was organized at Jerusalem. One hundred and twenty of Jesus' disciples were assembled together with one mind and purpose when Jehovah's spirit was poured out upon them, and the Christian congregation never lost this unity of thought as long as the apostles remained alive.—Acts 1:12-15; 2:1-4.

¹¹ Though separated in person and groups assembling as Christian congregations, those composing the Christian congregation are still one united body, just as Israel was one typical theocratic nation. Paul said: "One body there is, and

10. When and how did the Christian congregation have a beginning?
11, 12. (a) What wrong view do some persons take of the Christian congregation? (b) How do Paul and Peter show that the congregation must be one body?

You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth —But How?

LIVING forever on earth is just an impossible dream. There is no way anybody can do it.

You may have heard people say that. Yet you may know that in the beginning it was God's purpose for obedient humans to live forever in an earthly Paradise. And God never fails to accomplish what he purposes! (Genesis 1:28; Isaiah 55:11) His Word plainly promises: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:29.

That is the thrilling message that Jehovah's Witnesses bring to people when they call at their homes. The Kingdom, with Jesus Christ as Ruler, will see to it that God's original purpose is accomplished. Under the Kingdom's righteous administration this earth will be cultivated to become a beautiful Paradise. However, not everyone will be permitted to live in the Paradise earth. Requirements must be met. That is reasonable.—Matthew 6:10.

Consider: If you were the owner of a beautiful home surrounded by well-kept gardens, would you allow just anyone to live there? No, he would have to meet with your approval, meeting your requirements. What does God require of those who will reside forever upon his Paradise earth? Let us examine four basic requirements.

Four Requirements

Jesus Christ identified a first requirement when he said in prayer to his Father: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ includes knowledge of God's purposes regarding the earth and of Christ's role as earth's new King. Will you take in such knowledge by studying the Bible?

Many have found the second requirement more difficult. It is to *obey God's laws*, yes, to conform one's life to the moral requirements set out in the Bible. This includes refraining from a debauched, immoral way of life.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 4:3, 4.

A third requirement is that we be associated with God's channel, his organization. God has always used an organization. For example, only those in the ark in Noah's day survived the Flood, and only those associated with the Christian congregation in the first century had God's favor. (Acts 4:12) Similarly, Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will. To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.

The fourth requirement is connected with loyalty. God requires that prospective subjects of his Kingdom support his

although walking with confidence in Jehovah's leadership may not be easy at times.

To illustrate: Suppose a brother thinks that he has not been appointed as a ministerial servant or an overseer because the elders have something against him. Instead of reacting in a way that could disturb the congregation's peace, he should remember that Jehovah is directing the theocratic organization. Hence, the brother may seek some explanation in a humble, peaceful manner. (Hebrews 12:14) Then how wise it would be for him to acknowledge any weaknesses called to his attention and prayerfully strive to make improvement! Thereafter, he can leave matters in God's hands, in keeping with the words: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself." (Psalm 55:22) In time and as we qualify spiritually, Jehovah is sure to give us plenty to do in his service.—Compare 1 Corinthians 15:58.

¹⁶ Even if we have suffered some real wrong at the hands of a brother or a sister, would that give us just cause to stop associating with the congregation? Would we thus be justified in ceasing to render sacred service to Jehovah? No, for such a course would be one of unfaithfulness to God and ingratitude for his leadership. It would also indicate that we did not love our loyal fellow believers earth wide. (Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 4:7, 8) Moreover, if we were to break our integrity to Jehovah, that would give Satan a basis for taunting God—something we surely do not desire!—Proverbs 27:11.

¹⁷ So, then, let us 'bless Jehovah and

16. Even if we have suffered some real wrong inside the congregation, what course should we not take, and why?

17. (a) What should help us to maintain our confidence in Jehovah's leadership of his organization? (b) What will be the experience of those who continue to walk with confidence in Jehovah's leadership?

never forget all the doings of the One who crowns our life with loving-kindness and mercies.' (Psalm 103:2-4) If we always remember our loving God and act in harmony with his Word, we will maintain strong confidence in his unfailing leadership. (Proverbs 22:19) To turn away from Jehovah and his organization, to spurn the direction of "the faithful and discreet slave," and to rely simply on personal Bible reading and interpretation is to become like a solitary tree in a parched land. But in contrast, a person whose confidence is in our Great Leader, Jehovah, "will certainly become like a tree planted by the waters, that sends out its roots right by the watercourse; and he will not see when heat comes, but his foliage will actually prove to be luxuriant." Moreover, "in the year of drought he will not become anxious, nor will he leave off from producing fruit" to God's glory. (Matthew 24:45-47; Jeremiah 17:8) That can be your blessed experience if you resolutely continue to walk with confidence in Jehovah's leadership.

Can You Answer?

- In what ways did Jehovah prove to be a matchless leader of the Israelites?
- As to God's leadership, ancient Israel provides what warnings?
- Over whom is Jehovah exercising leadership today?
- What can help us to guard against loss of confidence in Jehovah's leadership?
- Even if we suffer some wrong inside the congregation, what attitude should we have toward Jehovah's leadership?