

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

MAY 15th to 18th, 1937

SATURDAY EVENING. *Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.*

Hymns sung : 259, 260, 431, 346, 388, 294.

Scripture read : John xvii. i—xviii. i.

LORD'S DAY MORNING. *Prayer Meeting, 7.45 a.m.*

Hymns sung : 166, 200, 62, 179.

Scripture read : Psalm xcii. 1-5, 12, 13.

Breaking of Bread, 10.30 a.m.

Hymns sung : 136, 227, 194, 43 (vv. 3, 4), 99 (vv. 2, 5), 321, 139 (vv. 1, 7), 219, 222 (v. 2), 145 (vv. 4, 5).

Scriptures read : John xiii. 1-5, 18-32, xix. 35-37 ; Heb. ii. 6-18 ; 1 Cor. xi. 22-26.

W. J. H. John xiii. 14-17. “ *Ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*”

The speaker said that it was very striking to find this exhortation amidst the heavenly atmosphere of the last hours of the Son of God here below. But while the hatred of men was gathering against our Lord, and the coming darkness filled His disciples with gloomy forebodings, He Himself was serene, His spirit dwelling in the holy calm of the sanctuary. In quiet meekness, He, the Lord and Master, washed His disciples' feet, setting them the example of the lowly service He enjoined.

Our blessed Lord in the fullness of His wisdom and knowledge was aware that Satan was perfecting his

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

scheme of betrayal in the heart of Judas (*vers.* 1, 2). Nevertheless, He undertook this most menial service to His little band of apostles, not omitting the traitor. Oh, the inexpressible grace and love of the Lord Jesus !

But why wash their feet ? Because He was about to speak to them of the Father, and the Holy Spirit, and of many holy things. The flesh was working in them, and in their pride they had just been clamouring who should be the greatest (Luke xxii. 24). None can receive the word of the lowly Jesus with unholy, unjudged thoughts within them. Even so, the Lord did not fail to serve them, and as with them, so with us, He will cleanse our feet. We may, like Peter, foolishly refuse. But until the filth of this world is removed from us, we cannot enjoy the aroma of His presence and the sweetness of communion with Him.

The Lord was their Master, or Teacher (*ver.* 13). He brought out of the treasure-house of truth things new and old, revealing the secrets of heaven, and the love of God Himself. He was their Lord, and they even cast out demons in the authority of His name. In *ver.* 14 He emphasized His Lordship. He is our Lord and Teacher. We are so liable to forget His immeasurable dignity, which is inseparable from His grace—He is the Son of God.

To be disciples of Christ we must wash one another's feet, as the Lord did, with self-abnegation.² Our pride loves the chief seats, but the Lord was in the dust, and to serve as He did, we must come down there too. We must humble ourselves before our brethren, with the love that covers a multitude of sins. The Lord did this so graciously and kindly ; and we must have His spirit. May He bring down our exalted thoughts and teach us to be meek and lowly in heart. We have His word and example : and it is our responsibility to wash one another's feet.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

3

T.D. John xiii. 1, 3. "*He loved them unto the end . . . knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands.*"

The speaker pointed out that not even the beloved disciple could have guessed what was then in the mind of the Lord. The Spirit revealed it. Precious instruction! For Him to live was the Father, and though the forsaking of the Cross would come first, the consciousness that He was going to the Father filled His heart. Later, He rebuked His disciples for forgetting it (John xiv. 28). Coupled with this knowledge was His love to His own. It neither ceased nor diminished as the hour of His own unutterable suffering approached, and they, more than ever, failed to enter into His thoughts and were full of their own. Their low estate and their defilement did not check the flow of His love towards them even to the end.

Now that the end was come, He showed them that self-abasing act of His love, which, apart from the cross, seems greatest of all—He washed their feet, typical of His living, heavenly intercession for us to the end of our own pilgrimage. What should we do without this service?

Isa. lii. 13, liii. 10, 12 foreshadow somewhat of the meaning of *ver.* 3. The Lord knew the glory that was before Him, that all was committed into His hand, that many crowns should be His, that He had come from above and was above all. With all this filling His soul, He stooped to wash His disciples' feet. What was it but unbounded love? Let us adore Him!

LORD'S DAY AFTERNOON. *Bible Reading*, 3 p.m.

Hymn 274. Eph. iii. 13-21.

It was pointed out that the mystery referred to in this chapter concerns Christ and the church. A divine

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

work in the heart is necessary before knowledge of this is attained (*ver.* 16), as Daniel needed a divine touch to set him on his feet. If we are fully assured of Christ's love to us, its unseen roots in our hearts (*ver.* 17) will be manifested by a pious walk, and we shall not be carried about with every wind of doctrine. We are exhorted to keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21) : the Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures to this end.

It was remarked that the apostle gives the four boundaries of God's wonderful counsels (*ver.* 18), but there are no boundaries to the love of Christ.

Hymn 296.

LORD'S DAY EVENING. *Preaching of the Gospel*, 7 p.m.

Mr. W. J. Hocking.

Hymns : " He left the brightness of His home,"
" Jesus, Lover of my soul," " I heard the voice of
Jesus say."

John i. 1-18, Titus ii. 9-15 : " *The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

The speaker pointed out that in this scripture the character of the day in which we live is defined as the day in which God's salvation has been brought to our very door. This great work of grace gives a unique dignity to our little planet. God's power and creative wisdom can be seen by day or night in the beauteous works of His hands, but what are these physical wonders compared with the spiritual wonders of the grace of His salvation ?

How has the great God made this marvellous truth

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

5

of His grace to appear in this world? We read in John i. 17, that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." After four thousand years of man's sorrowful and sinful history, Jesus Christ came and displayed God's grace against the dark background of man's sin, which culminated in condemning Him, God's Son, to the death of the cross.

Even here, grace appeared. Where sin reigned unto such a death, the good news flashed out that God so loved the world, and the Lord drew with the mighty arms of His love all men to Himself. But, stressed the speaker, this grace of God, so perfectly displayed, must be known by each one personally, or, dying without that grace, the wrath of God must abide upon him for ever. It is the grace of God that brings salvation.

The speaker went on to show that salvation is embodied in a Person, referring to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Moses exhorted them, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," and they then witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts by the waters of the Red Sea. Hence, they sang, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my Salvation." They knew a living Person had driven back the water for their safe passage. Salvation cannot be separated from God our Saviour.

The speaker then referred to Matt. i. 21, Luke ii. 11, 30, and xix. 9, in which passages the Lord Jesus is called both Saviour and Salvation. The grace of God brought Him here as Saviour, and He brought salvation with Him. The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. His mighty name of Jesus is Salvation, meaning Jehovah the Saviour, and in Him the grace of God has appeared in this world to all men, bringing salvation to all who believe.

The scope of this grace is universal. It is "to all men" for "all have sinned, and come short of the

glory of God." So the arms of God's Salvation are extended to embrace the ends of the earth. Nevertheless, salvation is still individual. Not one can escape in the crowd at the great judgment day. The deeds of each one will be exposed and judged by Him upon the throne. And salvation, like judgment, is individual. Now the eyes of faith behold it in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, upon the cross, gave Himself a ransom for all, and on that broad foundation God's invitation is given to all men to be saved.

The speaker pointed out the distinction between the historical event recorded in *ver. 11* with its wide aspect, and the conditions in the present day of salvation, which in *ver. 12* are applied to the more restricted circle of believers. The grace of God teaches them how to live the life of faith. To them, the gospel of the grace of God is no longer a dry story; the new heart and spirit within them respond to God's voice. Being made alive in Christ Jesus, they desire to be taught more of Him.

The grace of God teaches us what salvation does for our habits and ways. We are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly. There are difficulties, but we have the Scriptures to give us power over the things that hinder in the way of life everlasting.

The speaker referred to the paralytic man in Mark ii. as an instance of the weak being made strong. The Lord's word, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," came to him with power, destroying every suspicion in his heart and filling him with confidence. And the same word confirmed the fullness of its power before the eyes of unbelief by saying, "Take up thy bed, and walk." So the Lord gives men power to get rid of worldly desires and live soberly, justly and piously in this world. The power of evil habits is too great for us, if Christ

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

7

is not present to break the fetters, but with His word comes the strength to overcome. Some persons fear to accept the truth of the gospel, being afraid they will be unable to live according to it. But Jesus, the Omnipotent Lifegiver, gives both life and the power to live as His disciple.

As *ver.* 12 deals with the present, so, the speaker said, *ver.* 13 applies to the future. God's Salvation takes in past, present, and future for us ; and here we have the joy of what is coming, a " hope " founded on God's word, which never fails. We should eagerly look for the fulfilment of the hope of salvation, because the best of God's salvation is beyond. We look for the Saviour, Who shall change these bodies of humiliation, and fashion them like His own body of glory, and subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. iii. 21). In a very little while, the Lord will return and complete His work of salvation, fitting our poor bodies for the display of glory. This is a hope because it is future, and is called a blessed hope because it introduces us to blessing unalloyed by worldly limitations.

But the speaker pointed out that besides the blessed hope there is something else, the appearing of the glory of the great God, our Saviour. As God's grace appeared (*ver.* 11), so His glory is to appear. The Lord Himself referred to it in connection with the sheep and the goats (Matt. xxv. 31). When grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, the world gloated over His sufferings and shame, and despised Him as a great deceiver, but God will bring back the Crucified One. He means that the world shall see its Creator in all His glory, coming with a retinue of angels, taking vengeance on those that obey not the gospel of His grace. And, coming with the Lord in His glory, to the world's wonder, will be those whom His great salvation has placed there.

The speaker then addressed those who thought it

would be presumptuous to be sure of their salvation. He said they were really making salvation a human, not a divine work. They overlooked that the Saviour is Jehovah and forgot all that He has done and that He does. Resting on their own comprehension of the gospel instead of trusting in the Lord alone, they were filled with doubt and fear. Salvation is secure by the work of the Lord Jesus, and does not need the help of our puny arms to make it sure.

How great is God's salvation ! It is offered to all men, and those who receive it possess its benefits at once for their souls and spirits, and soon for their bodies also. They are waiting for the blessed hope and for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ with His own.

The speaker's closing word to his audience was, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Hymn : "Come, thou weary, Jesus calls thee."

MONDAY MORNING. *Prayer Meeting*, 7.45 a.m.

Hymns sung : 39, 35 (v.1), 427, 200, 23.

Scripture read : Ps. xxxi. 1-8, 19-24.

Open Meeting, 11 a.m.

Hymn 300. John xvii. Hymn 156.

T.D. Acts x. 44-48, xi. 12-18 ; Rev. iii. 19-22.

(i) "What was I, that I could withstand God ?"

(ii) "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

The speaker said we can only find the practical guidance needed in to-day's circumstances in the word of God. From the first of the two quotations above, we gather that we should acknowledge God's working, wherever it may be. The long-suffering of our God is salvation, and we believe that God's grace not only

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

9

saves, but gathers God's children together in one : this He does by His testimony through the members of Christ's body. May our faith, using the resources of God's word and His Spirit, assail the strongholds of spiritual wickedness in the name of the Lord. Let us be of good courage, for He that is for us is greater than he that is against us.

From the second quotation, we learn that His chastening has a voice to us. Ours is a day of small things, and also one of chastening, both individually and collectively, though the Hand that administers it is moved by deepest love. Young Christians who leave worldly "churches" are stumbled by the numerous divisions between companies apparently professing the same thing, who once confessed the Lord's name together. Was there no power to heal the breaches, with a living High Priest on the throne, caring for His people? Yes, truly, but if we do not accept His chastening, and unfeelingly exhibit the pride of being ourselves right, have we not drifted from our true place of privilege and grace? Little wonder, then, if our strength is gone.

A storm of persecution has arisen which is gradually travelling westward ; the tide of disbelief in a personal God which was its precursor is rife among professing Christians in this country. We should be on our knees because of this dishonour to God, in brokenness of heart praying and witnessing for Him. We need not be daunted by the apparent triumph of Satan, for Christ is on the throne and His members are still here in order that God's power may be displayed in earthen vessels. In them Christ's strength may be made perfect in weakness. But if our hearts are not in a state of repentance and we do not awake from our carelessness, our opportunity will be gone, and we shall be swept aside as a testimony.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

We should love all those acknowledged by the Lord as His brethren, telling the lambs of the flock of the dangers and sorrows we see, in love and grace showing them an example. Integrity of heart in us would prevent the truth they do not like from repelling them, for "faithful are the wounds of a friend."

God is sovereign and blesses in every place, but if Peter had not taken notice of God's bestowal of blessing in Acts x. he would have missed his way. Peter and those with him went to the help of His own and were astonished at what happened.

In spite of all modern distractions and allurements, the power of God's Spirit, the resources of almightiness, and the grace and love of Christ are still active. Wherever God in sovereign grace bestows blessing in this day of salvation, we should seek to *learn the lesson* He would teach us. Again, it is a poor thing to say that the testimony has left us: true humility is *exercised* by the Lord's chastening.

The chastening mentioned in Heb. xii. 4-6 refers to persecution and not merely illness and so forth. Faith can transmute the things against us, which are actuated by the devil, into strength and encouragement for our hearts as the chastening of the Father. God's purposes are the same as at Pentecost, that men should be saved and gathered to His name. Numbers do not count with God, Who wants reality. However few, let us follow His plans and purposes with living, loving faith. May He teach us to make right use of the signs of the times, humbling ourselves under His chastening, and taking advantage, with the confidence of faith, of every favourable wind of His Spirit.

H.L.B. Psalm xciv. "*Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph?*"

The speaker pointed out that this psalm is an en-

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

II

couragement to God's people in times of persecution like the present, when Satan is oppressing those who profess Christ's name. But "the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity," for God's purpose is to glorify Christ, and all the workers of iniquity shall be cut off in their own wickedness. Man's boasted ascendancy is but a bubble, destroyed by a touch. God will exalt Christ, and in Him will bless those that are His. He has "given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Scripture read : Rom. xii. 9-21.

G.S.P. Phil. i. 27- ii. 16. *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."*

The speaker suggested that the remedy for much of the trouble experienced by God's people is the becoming manner of life and standing fast in one spirit urged upon the Philippians (i. 27). Are we in the right state for the power of the Holy Spirit's presence here? We need not be terrified at what is going on (*ver.* 28), since the Holy Spirit will hinder the full power of the adversary until He is taken out of the world (2 Thess. ii. 7). And His departure will not occur so long as the church is here. His power will enable us to be of one accord and one mind (ii. 2).

The speaker referred to John xvii. 14-16, and urged that we should not mix the world with the Lord's things. The Holy Spirit is here to glorify Christ, Who was despised and rejected of men, though He was the One Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbling Himself to the death of the cross (*vers.* 6-8), the most shameful

death a man could suffer. Peter said he was ready to die fighting valiantly for his Master (John xiii. 37, xviii. 10), but when he found it was not a death the flesh could glory in, while he did not equal the treachery of Judas, he denied his Lord with oaths and curses. The world last saw the Lord at Calvary : the next time it sees Him, He will be seated on the throne. It does not recognise the presence of God's Holy Spirit now, because it cannot see Him. We are privileged to know and experience His presence without seeing Him.

The speaker pointed out that it was at the very name by which He was known here in humiliation that every knee will bow to Him (*ver.* 10). He will be on the throne as Son of man as well as Son of God.

He mentioned that the word to the nations concerning the exalted Christ is found in Ps. ii. 10-12, and that they will have to answer to Him for the way they acted against Him. We are not to interfere, but to pray for the "higher powers," as ordained of God, and seek that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (Rom. xiii. 1, 1 Tim. ii. 2).

The speaker reminded us that in the judgment of the nations their treatment of the Jews will be considered (Matt. xxv. 40, 45). Though they crucified the Lord, His heart is still with them. The favourable political condition of our own land, compared with others, may well be due to the toleration extended to God's earthly people. The Lord said "Salvation is of the Jews" (John iv. 22).

We need the exhortation to humility, and to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus, for our responsibility is to manifest Him in this world. If we do, our lives will be a powerful testimony, even without any preaching on our part. God exalts the humble, and when we are emptied of all fleshly desires, His power will be manifested in us. Let us be occupied with the honour and

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

13

glory of Him Who humbled Himself, and then we shall be vessels meet for the Master's use.

Hymn 256 (vv. 1, 4).

MONDAY AFTERNOON. *Brothers' Meeting*, 2.15 p.m.

Young People's Meeting, 2.15 p.m. *Address* by Mr. W. G. Turner.

Hymn 128. Acts ii. 41, 42.

Three specifically Christian things we need to be fully acquainted with are the Christian church, scriptures and hope.

I. About the *first* we note (1) its birthday, (2) its character, (3) its constitution and customs.

(1) *The birthday of the Christian church* was the day of Pentecost. From that day, until the last one is gathered in, the Lord is engaged in adding together such as are being saved. The church is not the continuation of the Jewish congregation, but is an entirely distinct company. When Paul was instructing the Corinthian believers as to their behaviour, he clearly defined this position (1 Cor. x. 32). *Typically*, the church was foreshadowed in Lev. xxiii. 5, 11, 16; *prophetically*, it was referred to by our Lord in Matt. xvi. 18; *historically*, it began at Pentecost, when from the glorified Head in heaven the Spirit came down to form the one body of Christ, to be a habitation of God.

(2) Its *character* is therefore that of a divine society, the assembly of God on earth; founded by Christ as the glorified Son of man in virtue of death and resurrection; and formed by the Holy Spirit out of "all that believed." (*ver.* 44).

(3) Its *constitution and customs* are clearly given in

Acts ii. 41, 42, 44. By receiving the gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent from heaven, they were born again of incorruptible seed ; by being baptized they confessed themselves committed to Him the good news about Whom they believed ; by continuing, or persevering, in the apostles' teaching they showed it to be no emotional movement, but a change of heart ; by keeping together they enjoyed the fellowship into which they were introduced. By receiving the apostles' teaching they were brought together ; by continuing in it they were kept together. The "breaking of the bread" expressed the unity that existed, and the "prayers" their dependence upon God. These things apply to-day as much as then : no failure, weakness, or ignorance can dispense with the present need for "persevering" in them.

II. *The Christian Scriptures* are those specially addressed to believers, whether locally as "to the church of God at Corinth," or to the children of God, as in John's Epistles. While "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and therefore to be reverently received and diligently pondered, yet certain portions give "the apostles' doctrine" for the church.

Romans deals with the gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ.

Corinthians gives apostolic doctrine as to conduct, character and order in the church.

Galatians gives warning against mingling ritualistic elements with the gospel, and teaches the exclusive value of the work of Christ for the believer.

Ephesians presents Christ as Head over all, and us in Him, and develops our relationship with God, the intimacy of this, and its effect upon ourselves. It is the Epistle of grace and godliness.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

15

Philippians teaches joy, peace, hope, fellowship, service and Christian love.

Colossians portrays the personal greatness and glory of Christ. The Head in all His fullness is the antidote to philosophies and vain deceits with which intellectual theorists assail His pre-eminence in all things.

Thessalonians set forth the simplicity of the Christian faith and the coming wrath "upon them that obey not the gospel."

Timothy and *Titus*, though written to individuals, are full of apostolic doctrine for every "man of God," that is, one who stands for God in godless days.

Philemon is an exquisite example of how to deal with domestic difficulties among believers, which are often so hard to settle satisfactorily.

Hebrews and *James* had primary application to Hebrew believers in times of transition; but their value is increasingly disclosed to the careful reader. One godly saint remarked, "Hebrews is the ladder whereby my soul climbs up into Ephesians."

Peter's Epistles, written to scattered strangers and suffering saints, are a perennial spring of exhortation and encouragement to any Christian believer sharing like precious faith with the writer.

John's Epistles, of all the Epistles most definitely addressed to the children of God, are of utmost importance. In the *first*, the fellowship of the family, and the joys and responsibilities flowing therefrom, are so closely interwoven with the knowledge of the Father and of the Son that light, life and love fill the record. In the *second*, the same light, life and love warn against carelessness in associations; while the *third* warns against an exclusiveness which the Father and Son will never countenance.

Jude, as the final Epistle, while full of warnings for

days like these, closes with words of strong encouragement.

These Christian Scriptures must receive first consideration from the children of God ; not, of course, to the neglect of the Old Testament, or of the Gospels, Acts and Revelation ; but that we may know how to behave ourselves in our privileged place in the Divine Society.

III. The Christian hope is entirely different from the Jewish expectation, or the vague hope of the world. Men of the world hope for the ever-receding mirage of the golden age ; and this hope, being built upon a theory of gradual world improvement, is doomed to disappointment. The Jewish hope of Messiah's reign, now discarded by the Liberal Synagogue, is still cherished by the orthodox section of Judaism, but is rather a vague longing than an intelligent expectation. The Christian hope is the blessed hope of Christ's return for His own, according to His promise in John xiv. 3. For this, no date nor sign has been given or is looked for, since it is "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." So we wait and watch and work, for "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Meanwhile, the Christian church is here to witness to her absent Lord ; the Christian Scriptures are here that by comfort of the holy word we may hold fast the faith ; and the Christian hope is still bright. So we go on our way, looking for "the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us" ; living this day in the light of that day.

Hymn 312.

Meeting concerning the Lord's work abroad, 3.30 p.m.

Hymn 363.

Mr. W. Koll read Matt. xiv. 15-20, and spoke of the work in China.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

17

Letters were read from *Messrs. P. Schwefel* (Germany), *J. N. Voorhoeve* (Holland), *M. Behnam* (Egypt), *S. Muller* (Paris), *A. Carpos* (Athens), quoting 1 Thess. iv. 18, *Prof. Recordon* (Switzerland), and brethren at *Cape Town, Melbourne*, quoting Eph. vi. 23, and *Sydney*.

Mr. Dix spoke on the work in *Egypt* and *Mr. Monkcom* on his visit to *Spain*.

Sisters' Meeting, 6 p.m.

MONDAY EVENING. *Address* by *Mr. W. J. Hocking*, 7 p.m.

Hymns 78, 165.

Luke xix. 16, 17 ; Zech. iv. 8-10 ; Ezra iii. 1-6, 8, 10-13.

"The people gathered themselves together as one man . . . and builded the altar of the God of Israel . . . and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord. . . . They kept also the feast of tabernacles . . . and afterward offered the continual burnt offering. . . . But the foundation of the temple . . . was not yet laid. . . . In the second year of their coming . . . began Zerubbabel . . . and Jeshua . . . and the remnant . . . to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. . . . And when the builders laid the foundation . . . the priests . . . and the Levites . . . sang together . . . unto the Lord. . . . And all the people shouted . . . when they praised the Lord. . . . But many . . . wept."

The speaker explained that the scriptures read, since they referred to the "day of small things" in Zechariah's time, were appropriate for encouragement by example and precept in the present time. Those who act with and for God in such a day, however feebly,

18. MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

are not forsaken by Him, but find great joy and help in what they do in His name.

The speaker recalled that at the time spoken of by Zechariah and Ezra a small number of Israelites had returned from the second bondage of the nation in a foreign land. Their forebears had been of old delivered from the power of Pharaoh with such signal proofs of God's presence that the nations around wondered, and they had been brought through the wilderness to the promised land, to be God's people there. A thousand years later the Israelites were again bondmen to Gentile powers. Jehovah had not in any degree changed from His purpose to fulfil the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that all the earth should be blessed in Abraham's seed, that He would dwell among them in that land and be their God. Why then were they carried captive out of the land?

The fault lay entirely with themselves, the speaker asserted. The people forsook Him Who redeemed them by choosing a king after their own heart to go before them, like the nations about them, as Jehovah said to Samuel (1 Sam. viii. 7). In their hearts they turned in discontent from Him Who spoke to them through Moses on Sinai and wrought countless wonders in their midst. Under Saul the apostasy of Israel began, with a little recovery under David and Solomon, but gradually they fell into idolatry, practising the abominations of the surrounding nations, until Samaria was worse than the Canaanites, and God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone:" and the king of Assyria took captive the ten tribes. Nor did Judah stand firm; under Manasseh the abominations of the Amorites were committed in Jerusalem, Jehovah's sanctuary was defiled, and God took away the sceptre from the house of David.

The nation thus lay under Jehovah's displeasure,

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

19

but they did not perish, for God never denies His word. In His own time He would fulfil His promises, bound up as they were not only with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but with His own Beloved Son, His Anointed King. So Judah had to spend seventy years in Babylon, and now the time of deliverance and restoration of which Jeremiah had foretold was come. Through Isaiah God had spoken of the virgin birth of Emmanuel, to be born, not in a foreign land, but in Bethlehem (Isa. vii. 14, Mic. v. 2). They must return, not because of what was in them, but so that God might drive the nail in a sure place, and Jehovah's Shepherd be in the midst of His people at the appointed time. ✕

The captives were brought back by a miracle, not like the Red Sea cleaving, but wrought in that Medo-Persian conqueror's heart. The destroyer of Babylon became the deliverer deputed by the God of Israel for His people. Though the repatriation of God's people by Cyrus was probably only a political move to establish his own sovereignty more securely, we see an illustration of how the powers that be, in their haughtiness, only fulfil the will of the Most High, Who ordained them to the office of government.

The speaker pointed out that though Cyrus declared that any of the people of God might return, only forty or fifty thousand went back. The others had settled down in fruitful Babylon and, regardless of Jehovah's promise, preferred to remain captives rather than return to desolate Judah. But those who returned came willingly. The speaker emphasized that the foremost qualification for blessing is always the readiness of our hearts to do God's will.

How many must have wept at the desolation of the smoke-blackened ruins of the towers and buildings on Mount Zion as they beheld them from the Mount of Olives! Jerusalem was under the oppressor's heel,

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

the temple lay waste, on the altars the sparrows built their nests! But they did not turn back, for they believed God was there.

The speaker remarked on the unanimity shown at the beginning of the work of restoration. In the seventh month, the returned exiles gathered to Jerusalem with one heart and mind to remove the dishonour on God's name. The Gentiles were sneering in derision at Jehovah because His house was destroyed, His priesthood taken captive and His sacrifices stopped. But this little assembly of Jews believed Jehovah was almighty and would fulfil His word, though they had no clear idea how the temple could be rebuilt.

Turning to the analogy in church conditions, the speaker pointed out that God's house, made of living stones through faith in the Lord Jesus, began to be built by the Holy Spirit for a habitation of God at Pentecost, and what God has done cannot be undone by man. But man's failure in his responsibility has brought desolation upon the outward structure. True worship of God has been spoiled by the introduction of idolatrous worship of images and relics, a Judaized ritual, and a clerical system of ministry. Man's will and prejudices have so wrought that the one house, compact and builded together, is destroyed to men's eyes, and the enemy tramples upon the most sacred truths of scripture, poisoning men's minds with evil thoughts about God and His Son and His holy word. Surely those who compare the present condition of Christendom with what is written in the Epistles must weep that what was so fair at the beginning should have become so degraded. The world despises that which is called by Christ's name, and its ruined temple and broken walls should bring us on our faces before God, asking who has done it.

These people in Jerusalem did not blame Nebuchad-

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

21

nezzar or Sennacherib—they blamed themselves (*see* Ezra ix. 7). They began right, by confessing their sin, and then they did what they could amid the desolation of the city and the temple to honour the dishonoured name of God: they first built the altar of burnt offering, indicating their wish to offer to God that sacrificial worship which involved the consuming of the whole animal as a sweet-smelling savour to Jehovah. The burnt offering spoke of Christ in the fullest way. It was all consumed for Jehovah, with no part for the worshipper or the priest. So, like Noah after the flood, and David at the threshing-floor of Ornan, they began the restoration of the worship of God with a burnt offering first of all.

Next, the speaker said, the hearts of those who had humbled themselves before Jehovah and had confessed their sins rose up in thanksgiving to Him, acknowledging His love and His might. So to-day the Father seeks worshippers in spirit and in truth, who see the abominations abounding in Christendom, but feel that the Lord Jesus, the Head of the church, is the same, and the Holy Spirit, the power for worship, still within the church as a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

When the altar was set up, they offered sacrifice morning and evening constantly: so it is our first duty and pleasure to offer to God continually the sacrifice of praise.

“The foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid” (*ver.* 6). Instead of Solomon’s magnificent temple that Jehovah’s glory had filled, so that the priests could not minister, there was but one little altar. Their faith carried them to individual worship and praise of Him Who dwelt in the heavens, but not at once to rebuild the temple, the house where Jehovah had set His name and presence. At first they did not

get farther than the law of Moses (*ver.* 2), which said nothing about Jehovah's house. Progress was slow, and it was not until the second year that Zerubbabel began to build the temple.

The speaker remarked that in the spiritual life there is always progress: we do not receive all God's truth at once. Jeshua the high priest is named first (*ver.* 2). He was concerned about worship, and this rightly received attention. But then Zerubbabel, the heir to the crown of David, felt his responsibility about the restoration of God's house. He followed the "last words" of David, who amassed the wealth which Solomon used to build the temple. It was David who made all the arrangements for the temple service also. Zerubbabel set all the Levites aged twenty and upwards to work, so following David's order instead of that of Moses, who fixed thirty as the age for service. This instance illustrates the importance of dividing the word of truth rightly; one great cause of the present advance of apostasy is that the church has amalgamated Old Testament teaching with the New and has embodied Levitical worship with the spiritual worship of God the Father.

The feeble company of Jews were united in heart, and began to build (*ver.* 9). However small things may be, the "two or three" should act as one. The Jews searched the scriptures and acted upon what was written first in the books of Moses and then in the history of David. God guides those who respect His word and seek to know His way. It is better to wait for guidance than go forward blindly to an irretrievable error.

When they had laid the foundations, there was an outburst of song from the priests and of shouting from the people. There was nothing like it when the altar was set up. The purest worship is never expressed in

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

23

words, for the profoundest adoration is beyond words. In the presence of the Lord Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, we are as it were in the paradise of bliss and hear spiritual words we cannot utter in this world of tears. Our mouths sometimes cause us to give utterance to things we ought not, but God looks at the spirit, and seeks worship in spirit and in truth.

But the speaker pointed out that the song here was in connection with the house, speaking of the collective, as distinct from individual worship. Their song was short, but sweet, that God is good and His mercy endures for ever. It is essential in worship as a company to realise Who is in our midst, and with His person before us, with one heart and mouth we glorify the Father and adore the Son. God alone is truly good, as our Lord told the rich young ruler : it is an essential part of His being : and His tender care endures for ever.

The speaker said that no doubt in the ruins of Solomon's temple the original outline could be traced and was their guide in building the foundations and the superstructure. So to-day, the building in connection with the spiritual house follows what is laid down in Eph. iv. The work began with apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors, continues still according to the original plan, and will go on unto perfection.

In the New Testament, service is often spoken of as worship. We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, to perform holy Levitical service, undefiled by the world. All service should have the object of adding living stones to the spiritual house of God.

The speaker remarked that in *ver.* 11 two classes are mentioned : the priests who praised the Lord, and the people who shouted. In the church all are praising priests, but some may not always enter into all the

deep meaning of the hymns that are sung. Yet we should not abstain from singing : as the people of old shouted to express the praise in their hearts, so we may express our souls unintelligently to others but in a way that Jehovah knows.

The faithful remnant in Jerusalem realised that it was a day of small things (*vers.* 12, 13). They were bondmen under the dominion of Daniel's "beasts." Only four of the twenty-four courses of the priesthood had returned, but they did what they could. Some wept and some shouted ; and both were right. Those who shouted celebrated the wonderful deliverance Jehovah had wrought, their return to the land, and the laying of the foundation of the temple. But the old men, with memories of the beauties of Solomon's temple which could never be restored, wept because they felt the failure was due to their sins.

Both weeping and singing are appropriate in their times. Christ in His perfection and value, ever the same, will be our theme throughout eternity. God's Spirit and His holy word are ever true. And for these we should thank God. But when we think of the desolation sin has wrought in the church, the breaches therein caused by Satan through man's failure, we should be filled with pain and sorrow. After writing glorious truths about the church to the Ephesians, the apostle warns them not to tell lies, nor to be filled with wine. To-day we should mourn over the desolate condition of the church, and own that we have to some extent contributed to it. May God give us right thoughts, filled with grief when we look at the small things around, but when we look at the abiding things, filled with praise that He has given us a stronghold in the day of trouble.

Hymn 424.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

25

TUESDAY MORNING. *Prayer Meeting*, 7.45 a.m.

Hymns sung : 9, 270, 174.

Open Meeting, 11 a.m.

Hymn 210.

T.H. Eph. i. 3-4 ; ii. 4-6 ; iii. 10 ; iv. 7-15 ;
v. 25-27 ; vi. 10-18.

"Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

The speaker said that these verses, dealing with our blessings in the heavenlies, give a key to the Epistle ; similarly in Romans we have solemn truths concerning sin and sins, and in Philippians truths concerning the mind (i. 27 ; ii. 2, 5 ; iii. 14, 15 ; iv. 2, 7).

In Eph. i. 3, 4, we have the sphere of our blessings : God has expressed His heart of love and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ ; while His Spirit links us with Him. We are the children of God (1 John iii. 1, John i. 12), and in this Epistle are viewed as seated "in Christ," the Head over all things (Eph. i. 22). In Heb. ii. 8 we "see not yet all things put under Him," because God's people are there viewed as going through the wilderness. In Colossians, because the saints were dabbling in philosophy, all the heavenly blessings of Eph. i. 3 are omitted, and they are exhorted to set their affection on things above (Col. iii. 2).

The title "Father of glory" (i. 17) may be compared with "God of glory" (Acts vii. 2) : the Father sees Jesus in glory the Centre of all blessings, the church with Him and the Old Testament saints called to the marriage supper, and He is satisfied. It is God's desire that, as the assembly of God here, we should have a full knowledge of Christ and of the "hope of His calling" to have blessings now in the heavenly places,

and to be ministers of blessing to the earth along with Christ in the millenium (Heb. ii. 5).

In Eph. ii. men are presented in four states, (1) dead in trespasses and sins (*ver.* 1), (2) seated in heavenly places (*ver.* 6), (3) Gentiles in the flesh without Christ, without promise, without hope, without God (*ver.* 12), (4) glorified in the ages to come (*ver.* 7). We also find unity between Jew and Gentile (*vers.* 6, 14, 22), and the Trinity (*ver.* 18).

Chapter iii. 10 shows that the church is under the observation of heaven. So the Lord in Matt. v. 14-16 showed we are under the eyes of men. It behoves us therefore to walk in the light of scripture.

In *Chapter* iv. heaven is viewed as the source of gifts consequent on the Lord having ascended there. Every one of us has a measure of the gift of Christ (*ver.* 7), and this should make us humble and fearful in the exercise of it. Are we using it? The order in *ver.* 11 shows that the prophets referred to are those of the New Testament.

In *Chapter* v. we see the Lord Jesus, His work completed, presenting the church to Himself without spot or wrinkle. The cleansing in *ver.* 26 is not with blood, for that is efficacious once for all: but the washing is by the word, which cleanses us from all defilement.

But even in the heavenlies there is conflict (vi. 12): but everything is available for this warfare. We have the sword of the Spirit; only we must let the Spirit Himself use it, and not handle it ourselves in the power of the flesh. We do not need the armour in God's presence, but against the devil's wiles. May God enable us to realise our sphere of blessing in the heavenlies, and give us, by His grace, to be victorious over our enemies there.

W.H.N. Rev. ii. 1-5. "*Thou hast left thy first love.*"
The speaker remarked that, as Paul's Epistle gives

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

27

Ephesian truth (doctrinally), so these verses give the truth about the Ephesians (practically). These saints had been wonderfully privileged: the apostle had laboured three years amongst them, testifying the gospel of the grace of God, preaching the kingdom of God and declaring all the counsel of God (Acts. xx. 24-27), so taking in all God's dealings with man. He said that we, like they, may become acquainted with the truths of scripture and appreciate intellectually the high spiritual position in which we are placed, and yet we may lose our first love.

The speaker referred to the great amount of "works" being done in Ephesus, all known to the Lord, though He does not call it a "labour of love." But when He looked for the response of their love for all that He had done for them, their love had gone. The Ephesians had been by the gospel brought out of the horrible pit of idolatry, where they worshipped the lifeless, loveless image of Diana, said to have fallen from Jupiter. At the first, as the love of God was made known to them, they had responded in love to the Lord. The apostle taught them wonderful truths, about which, if they were as clear as crystal at first, they became as cold also as crystal. There is always a danger of being occupied with our heavenly blessings and yet losing sight of the Blessor.

The speaker, turning to 2 Sam. xxiii. 14-17, said that the Lord, like David, longs for refreshment from the very seat of the enemy's camp. Who, he asked, will, with hearts linked with His, fetch it for Him?

He then pointed out that to continue in first love we must keep the Lord's commandments, as He said (John xv. 10). We must be deeply rooted and grounded in His infinite love if our love is to flow out to Him. Knowing His love, we have confidence in prayer.

The speaker likened love to a golden chain, the first

link being the love expressed at Calvary, which is joined to the next, which is our love to Him (1 John iv. 19), the third being love to the brethren, and the fourth love to those unsaved. These links are forged together inseparably and you cannot have one without the others. Further, there are no secrets where love is truly exercised, for love gives confidence.

Trying to love God or to work for Him should not be necessary: the Ephesians acted in this way, and doubtless did much good. But the spring of our actions should be love for Him Who loves us. If we are drawing streams from the ocean of His love, our love will wash away any defilement that arises among our brethren.

A.W.R. Eph. v. 18-21. "*Filled with the Spirit.*"

The speaker remarked that the figure in *ver.* 18 was that of a vessel, referring to John iv. 13, 14 and vii. 37 to show that to be filled with the Spirit is the normal Christian state, but pointed out that if our own things are allowed to come in, they will prevent the vessel from being filled. He said that in this passage there are three characteristics of one filled with the Spirit.

(1) Happiness in ourselves (*ver.* 19), producing songs to one another and praise to the Lord. This is surely the antidote to losing our first love (note that service is not mentioned here).

(2) Thanksgiving for everything (*ver.* 20), which is only possible in time of trouble by the power of the Spirit of God.

(3) Submission to one another in the fear of God (*ver.* 21), which is most difficult of all, apart from the Spirit of Christ.

If God gave us to know more of the possibility and wonder of being filled with the Spirit, real worship in the Lord's presence would be the result.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

29

TUESDAY AFTERNOON. *Young People's Meeting*, 2 p.m. Address by Mr. W. H. Nutter.

Hymn 226. 1 Cor. xiii. 13. "*And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*"

The speaker pointed out that "love" is the meaning of the word here translated "charity." He thought love is called the greatest because it will last for ever and heaven would be no home without it, whereas faith and hope will not be needed in heaven.

He first discussed faith, quoting Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." 1 Cor. xiii, shows the emptiness of great gifts without love, but faith in a person and in a work must precede love. He said that faith may perhaps be defined as taking God at His word, without question. Faith in the Lord Jesus brings us a happiness which does not fade. But we only learn a little, and in this life we cannot know more than the ripples on the shore of the vast ocean of Christ's love.

The speaker pressed that faith is not mere belief in the historical fact of the death of the Lord Jesus. By faith we rejoice in Him and in His atoning death and resurrection for us each one, believing that all the work on our account He has done. The only way of release from our sins is by the blood of Christ, which washes whiter than snow.

The speaker emphasized that the next word, "hope," did not in scripture imply any uncertainty, but the expectation of something not yet reached. "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. viii. 25). The blessed hope of the Christian is the coming of the Lord, when He will see his Saviour as He is in glory, but with the marks of

His suffering. This hope is certain, and therefore will not make us ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. v. 5, Is. xlix. 23).

The speaker said that "love" needed no definition. The special characteristic of the love of Christ is that it ever remains the same, both on earth and in heaven, which is full of love.

He pointed out that each of these three virtues had an attendant virtue. With faith is linked obedience. This is illustrated by Abraham, who left Ur for an unknown land in simple obedience to the guiding voice of God (Heb. xi. 8), and by Moses, who renounced all the wealth and honours he might have inherited as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and in obedience to God's call chose rather to suffer affliction with his poor brethren, the people of God (Heb. xi. 24-26).

With the hope of glory, said the speaker, goes patience, because we are waiting. While we wait, others are saved. Every day, souls are being brought into God's blessing by the touch of faith amid the jostling of life (cf. Luke viii. 45). The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (2 Pet. iii. 15). We long to be with Christ in heaven, but because others are being drawn to Him, we should wait patiently, and also pray to be directed into the patience of Christ (2 Thess. iii. 5).

The speaker said that Christian knowledge is connected with love. Scripture is not learned intellectually, but real knowledge of God's will comes to us by love, just as lovers confide to each other the most secret matters. Peter asked John who would betray the Lord because he thought that, leaning on Jesus' bosom and being the "disciple whom Jesus loved," he would be the first to learn the secret (John xiii. 21-26). So in Eph. iii. 17-19 Paul writes that the Spirit works so that we may be "rooted and grounded in love," and

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

31

"able to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ." The limitless love of Christ cannot be comprehended, but the immensity of God's counsels concerning the Lord Jesus may be understood, not naturally, but by those living in God's love.

The speaker concluded by stressing the necessity of obedience to the Lord, which always ends in happiness. We read, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John ii. 15), and because our Saviour and Lord says this, we obey. In spite of our natural desires, we take up the cross and follow Him, and though not pleasant to the flesh, this is the happy path. While not easy, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). If we keep close to the Saviour, we shall not ask what is the harm in this or that. Such a temptation or trial will not even come, for we shall have the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. i. 9), and He will give us the willingness to obey as well.

Hymn 301.

Open Meeting, 3.15 p.m.

Hymns 200, 212 (vv. 3-6).

T.D. 1 John ii. 3-11.

"Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

The speaker said that *vers.* 3 to 6 speak of obedience and *vers.* 7 to 11 of love to the brethren, corresponding to the two parts of the Epistle's message, "God is light" and "God is love."

He asked why the Spirit finds it necessary to teach us that it is not enough simply to declare that we know Christ (*vers.* 3, 4), and said that it is to give us a word

whereby we may examine ourselves, resulting in confidence before God and enjoyment of the life He has given. He writes these things, not that our peace may be upset, but that our "joy may be full."

The speaker said that *ver.* 3 was written because those who say they know God may be completely mistaken. The Epistle is written, not to them, but to us, that we may realise that the Lord Jesus is the Eternal Life, Whose atonement on the cross secures the imparting of His life to us abundantly, and that life even in us can only feel and act as it does in Him. Unbelief says, "That is too much," but nothing less becomes a child of God. Only grace can make us replicas of Christ: in fact, we are far from that. The first chapter, which introduces the Eternal Life, guards us against thinking either that we have no sin within, or have not in fact sinned, or that we are not prone to sin, for "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Yet "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven." "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ:" we enjoy the grace, and therefore can bear the truth, even the solemn things in this passage. Yet sin is in us, and we are to distinguish between it and the life God has given us in Christ, so that we may detect sin's deceitfulness and express only Christ in our lives.

It was pointed out that, in setting forth the essential qualities of these two natures, so opposed to each other, the apostle challenges mere profession, three times in these verses saying, "He that saith." Knowledge brings the possessor credit and admiration: mere knowledge puffs up. To know God truly cannot be without keeping His commandments—these two things are wedded. Like Saul of Tarsus, our hearts say, at the moment of conversion, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

33

Amidst the trials of life, struggling that we may please Him, we prove His grace, and a gathering confidence is acquired in the knowledge of Him. The christian life demands constant prayer; the unexpected storms must be met with an ability and capacity, ours yet not ours, but belonging to the new life. The power indeed is the Spirit's, but this life makes all good possible in me as a reality. The fine linen in which His own will be revealed is the righteousnesses of the saints, genuine, actual fruit produced on the branches of the true Vine. Thus Satan is silenced in spite of the weakness of the human vessels, through the life of God in them, and the faith that overcomes the world. We shall possess no different life when He presents us (the church) to Himself without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Ver. 4 is a solemn warning as to what is spurious, and helps us in self-judgment of inconsistency. If anyone says, "I know Him," while disobeying Him, the claim is false. Such a professor does not live of Christ's life, nor submit to His lordship. Nor must we put down *our* failure to human imperfection; the means was at hand, through the grace of the Lord Jesus—the life within—whereby we need not have fallen. This should lead us to take all the blame to ourselves, and urgently seek grace not to fall again.

The speaker referred to John viii. 55, where the Lord Himself declares concerning the Father, "I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know Him, and keep His saying." Especially when we consider the tremendous force of the negative corroboration of the main statement, "I know Him," it is plain that as the true and faithful Witness He towers above us in absolute perfection. Yet it is the expression of the same life that grace has given to us, and so for our example.

"His word" (*ver.* 5) was interpreted as referring not merely to the commandments, but to the *whole* compass of His message; hence "perfected." Yet it says, not as might have been expected, "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is obedience perfected," but "in him verily is the love of God perfected." What the Lord taught in John xiv. 15, 21, 23 underlies this form of sound words. When our love is shown in obedience, God's love responds in further communion. God is looking for a full grown expression in us of the life that is in Christ, so that we may be His witnesses not only by preaching our good works, but by our very presence.

We know that we are in Him (*ver.* 5) from the moment we believe; but this Epistle develops the characteristics of the conscious life of the child of God, and here makes our knowing we are in Him dependent on keeping His word. The speaker drew attention to ch. v. 20, which joins the immense privileges of knowing Him (*ver.* 3) and being in Him (*ver.* 5), but warned against saying lightly that we know, unless our knowledge is reinforced by a good conscience before God regarding the keeping of His commandments.

The speaker defined the love to the brethren dealt with in the next verses as divine love (not "brotherly love" exactly) which we show to those begotten of Him without preference towards any, seeing that who my brother is depends solely on the choice of God, of Him Who calls His own sheep by name. On this ground, Paul exhorted Philemon to receive his runaway slave, "begotten" by Paul in his bonds, as a brother beloved. Christ's own life, breathed into His disciples on His resurrection day, enables us to acknowledge a new relationship with the people of God in which faith will show no reserve, but exercise itself therein to the full; always, of course, holily.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

35

"The beginning" (*ver.* 7) was explained as Christ's coming into the world to manifest this life eternal, and "the old commandment" as the Lord's own example and word regarding loving one another in John xiii. 34. This was before the disciples were as consciously "brethren" as they became after receiving His word by Mary in John xx. 17. The commandment spoken of as "new" in John xiii. 34 is referred to here as "old" because of the time when it was first given, namely, while they were yet unable to "follow Him now" (John xiii. 36). But the apostle is writing to them afterwards, when through Christ's death and resurrection they were in full possession of life in Him. Although the same commandment, and the same love, it is new because it is no longer true in Him only, but "in Him and in you." "The darkness is passing and the true light already shines" (N. Tr.) in every one that is Christ's.

The speaker pointed out that light and love are features of God's character inseparably blended all through the Epistle. We may seem to be righteous and keep His commandments, but if we are without this love, we are not in the light (*ver.* 9). Only want of faith and of acceptance of the simple meaning of John's Gospel and Epistle will prevent our understanding this, and manifesting both these features in our own lives.

"Until now" (*ver.* 9)—that is, *now* when the true light is shining. If with all the profession of having light, a man hates his brother, even the shining of the True Light is lost upon him, and his profession is of no avail. One feature of this life without the other (as it may seem) betrays a counterfeit, for *this* life shows both characters. Do we in self-judgment check our lives with Christ's and with the word of God?

If a man truly loves his brother, there will be "none

occasion of stumbling in him " (*ver.* 10), that is, within himself there is nothing to make him stumble ; though it may also mean that he will not upset others (cf. John xi., xii.). The terrible description of walking in darkness is given in *ver.* 11 so that we may know by contrast the life of God.

" He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked " (*ver.* 6). Jesus has loved us beyond all understanding ; He is our Lord having all authority ; He has breathed into us His life so that His words and ways may be reproduced in us. May the Lord give all of us grace for this.

Hymn 344.

G.S.P. Song of Solomon vii. 10 ; John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24.

" I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me."

The speaker remarked that the first passage is the expression of one who has realised the love of the Beloved. He then pointed out that in John xvii. believers are described by the Lord Jesus seven times as those whom the Father had given Him. The chapter carries us to the threshold of heaven, where, as the Son of Man, Jesus, the Son of God, is speaking to His Father about those who are dearest to His Father. The Son views His own as His Father's gift, and He links up His own glory with this gift.

The speaker commented briefly on the seven passages in John xvii. referred to previously, and concluded by saying that in the light of this chapter, the believer can truly say, " I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me."

Hymn 53.

Sisters' Meeting, 6 p.m.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

37

TUESDAY EVENING. *Address by Mr. E. B. Dolamore,*
7 p.m.

Hymn 132. John xvii. Hymn 299.

"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are."

The speaker remarked that it was difficult to give a summary of the variety of subjects considered at this Conference, but it was significant that John xvii. had been under consideration on three occasions. The Lord left His disciples this prayer as a sort of legacy, and it seems a sign of their progress in divine things that He uttered this prayer in their hearing.

The speaker emphasized that the Lord addressed His prayer to God as Father. In Genesis, we find God covenanting to be known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was also spoken of as the Most High God ; but His name of Father excels all others in its simplicity and beauty, and it is used by the One in Whom all His counsels are centred.

The prayer is for the family of God, those born anew by His word and possessing the selfsame life as was revealed in the Son of God. The Lord addresses His Father, Whom He has known from all eternity. The first five verses deal with His own Person and work, first contemplating Him as occupying an entirely new position. In the three preceding chapters the Lord had told His disciples of the Comforter Whose coming would compensate for His departure. Now He contemplates His whole life work down here (see *vers.* 4, 5), and above all the death that must terminate it. In the other Gospels, but not here, He was to beseech His Father thrice that the cup might pass from Him. The speaker contrasted *ver.* 5 with Phil. ii. 6, 7, and said

that the Divine Person Whom John sets forth is there shown as in dependence and obedience to God, the only true standard for a believer.

The speaker said that in the first five verses we were only contemplated indirectly, but it was a great stage in Christian experience to know ourselves secure, and feel we are concerned with all that concerns Him. Our portion is in *vers.* 6-13, and the Lord prays that we may be kept as one in His name. The force of the word "pray" in *ver.* 9 is "demand:" the Lord had ever glorified His Father in the world, and on that ground expresses His wishes.

The speaker drew attention to the Lord's manifestation of the Father's name (*ver.* 6), and said that young believers often addressed their prayers largely to the Lord Jesus. While they had perfect liberty to do so, the Lord has revealed His Father to us as our Father, in order that we may say, Abba, Father. The speaker thought it a mischievous thing to have pictures of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, since they presented Him materialistically. We do not see the Father in glory as we see the glorified Man, the Lord Jesus (*Heb.* ii. 9).

The speaker linked the unity for which the Lord prayed in *ver.* 11 with our being quickened, raised and seated *together* with Him in *Eph.* ii. A believer's sins are forgiven for His name's sake, but he is also born into the family of God. And not only so, but he is righteous and sanctified as the effect of the mighty work on Calvary's cross. This is chiefly the work which was given Him to do (*ver.* 4).

The speaker said he thought that in *ver.* 11, the Lord uses the title, "Holy Father," in order to emphasize that God could never be satisfied with unclean children. The Lord Himself undertook the cleansing in *xiii.* 5, but He also grants His servants grace to do the same service for others.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

39

The speaker mentioned that John's Gospel not only sets forth the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also presents the Holy Spirit. In some passages, the Holy Spirit is referred to under the image of water—the active agent, with the word, in the new birth (iii. 5), and as the power for worship and testimony (iv. 14, vii. 38). The state of a believer who does not know the delivering power of the indwelling Holy Spirit is vividly set forth in Rom. vii.: but in John, He is the One to lead us into all truth.

The speaker illustrated the words, "I am glorified in them" (*ver.* 10) by referring to xi. 4, where the Lord said that the sickness of Lazarus was for the glory of God. The whole incident of Lazarus is a true presentation of our state: his dead condition, then the bringing of the matter to the Lord in faith, though imperfect, by his sisters, His sympathy, His prayer to the Father, and the delivering power of His word. He is the Resurrection and the Life. In Him was life, but it could not be imparted apart from death. The life He gives is that of the risen Man, righteous before God. We are living stones on the other side of Jordan (1 Pet. ii. 5; Josh. iv. 20).

The speaker commented on the security which the seven-times-repeated phrase, "those whom Thou hast given Me," gives, when linked with the promise in x. 28, 29, that no man should be able to pluck them out of His hand, or the Father's.

The speaker pointed out that the question of unity was very prominent in this prayer. This unity must be perfect, since it is divine. In *ver.* 24, the Lord refers to the believer's happy departure from this world—to be with Christ, which is far better. We shall not only see Him in glory; but it is something for us to anticipate that all will be perfect unity *there*. But the Lord prayed that there might be perfect harmony

here, in order that the household of faith might be a happy one. To be happy, we must be obedient (1 Sam. xv. 22), both to the gospel and in our place in the family of God.

The speaker concluded by saying that we all desire that the little time of the Lord's absence should be spent well, and that we may be ready for His speedy return. The Lord lifted up His eyes to heaven (*ver.* 1) that He might wean us from this world, which started with a murderer settling down and making himself comfortable here apart from God. The prime object of our lives should be "to live—Christ," be like Him and for Him. He commands us to love one another, and He has given us the power to do so. Let us seek to bring fellow-believers out of worldly religion, under the power of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and into the liberty He has given us and the power to worship. "He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house" (Ps. lxxviii. 6, Prayer Book version).

Hymn 370.