

# Christian Worker.

"WORK WHILE IT IS CALLED TODAY."

VOLUME IV, No. 10.  
WEEKLY No. 46.

MEAFORD, ONTARIO, AUGUST, 1886.

LAW & WHITELAW,  
Publishers and Proprietors.

## CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

BY ELDER E. EDWIN PHILLIPS.

While our people, as a rule, excel all others in strict conformity to church doctrine we have in some measure overlooked the importance of being equally intelligent with respect to the administration of church law, and indeed are not very clear where Divine law ends and the law of expediency begins. It is for the purpose of inviting the attention of your readers into this most interesting field, that I at present write. It is of the utmost importance to the present and future of the church that every individual disciple should fully understand its doctrine and discipline. In the giving of the New Testament Revelation as well as the Old, the Divine Author seems to have kept fully in view the capabilities and possibilities of intellectual grasp of the creature man. Having created him in his own image (Gen. 1:27). He assigned to him a sphere of intellectual work. Man was to have dominion over the fish, the fowls and every living thing that moveth upon the earth and he was to subdue it. The innate powers of the creature is here acknowledged by the Creator and in all His dealings with us. He keeps close to this line and never invades or disrespects these given rights, these inherent elements that constitute our personal being. Had man been created in a state of total inability or depravity God would not have looked upon him and upon everything He had made and pronounced them all very good. If he had not kept before him the law of adaptability; the earth with all its fullness might have been out of tune with man, and man could not have so aptly conformed himself to the environment and the Creator would have been compelled to acknowledge himself utterly defeated in what he started out to do. You will notice here that after man's creation, the Divine Father was solicitous for his welfare and hence created for man what, in no wise, could procure for himself. "He gave every herb yielding seed, etc." He gave the sunshine and the shower and filled the earth with all the chemistry of vegetation. At a glance we see man on the one hand with all the rich supplies of nature spread before him, and we wait for the wisdom of the Creator to bridge the void between; but He simply says subdue it!

Here enters the law of Expediency, and the wisdom of this law is fully vindicated in the absolute necessity of a field for the development of those Heaven born faculties, with which we are endowed. From the beginning of time down to the evening of the nineteenth century, these superlatively grand faculties, inherent in our nature, have been exercised, first in one expedient and then in another, in carrying out this injunction:—Subdue the earth; By the exercise of those mighty faculties of the soul. Science after science has been discovered and we are enabled to trace the Almighty hand that created us, till we exultantly break forth in the language of the Psalmist (xix 1). "The

heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." Sufficient having been said to set forth a birds eye view of what are the possibilities of the mind of man, and what God expects of us, we wish to note a few things that he does not expect of us. He did not expect us to till the soil without furnishing the soil to till. He did not expect us to sow the seed when we had none. He did not expect us to exercise a creative power as we were not endowed with such a faculty. He did not expect us to know his will, so He revealed it to us, and as his will was that experience and investigation should exhaust the entire round of finite truth, and subdue it, the Bible is as silent on all subjects that come under this head as it is possible to be. When we speak of the law of grace it is our equal duty to be silent where the bible is silent and speak only where the bible speaks, on all matters of eternal truth. This involves two ethical principles; first that all truth temporal and eternal is of God and second that all truth spoken or revealed by the Father of our spirits does not comprise the whole realm of truth. I once heard an elder lay down the unique hypothesis that "what ever is taught in the Bible is truth, and whatever is taught out of it is of the devil." I am glad however, that the devil's domain is not quite so extensive; if it were, there would be little left for man to subdue. I think that every clear thinker will admit that the foregoing statements are almost axiomatic. I have one more axiom I wish to lay down before entering more particularly into my subject. Whatever God has said to the human family in any or all ages of the world remains for some purpose unless, by him, revoked.

Now, I am about to say something that may startle some of our brethren, but the truth must come if the heavens fall. I do not understand my bible to be chopped off between Malachi and Matthew, and that the church of God has nothing to do with what is generally termed the Old Testament. I have a use for all that God has said until he revokes it, and I purpose in the course of this article to show the full scope of the truth of God. Truth in the Bible never contradicts truth out of it. The Almighty is always in harmony with himself. God in nature is always in harmony with God in grace, and vice versa, hence God, in law in or out of the Bible, always agrees with himself; and the great mission of Christ in revelation is to reconcile the discordant notes, so that all creation may eventually sing together and "swell the sound in thrilling chords of ecstasy the universe around." Until we take the higher ground and realize that universal law reigned before the morning stars sang together, and that the Bible is simply a development to bring back under universal law, what has got out of fix, we shall ever be found treating it as in opposition to science and natural law, and looking upon it as though it comprised all

the wisdom of its Divine Author. The man who is found constantly arraying the Bible against natural law and scientific fact, is arraying it against divine law, for all law is divine and has its foundation in the divine mind. Another fact worthy of our notice here is that law in its true sense and in its universal sense is not and cannot be the production of man. He may discover law but not claim to be its author. He may make laws of his own but such laws are always out of harmony with the great universal law. They must of necessity be, in order to be original if not, when they are the original inasmuch as the original existed first. This brings us out into the broad ocean of God's law both in and out of the Bible, and gives ample scope for the mightiest mind that have ever existed or ever will exist. Anything smaller or more contracted would not answer God's purpose in the development of human beings in view of their possibilities in the great future.

We now propose to come to the mount that must not be touched, where it becometh a man to put off the shoes from off his feet for the ground is holy, and we must speak "as the oracles of God speak." We have in this development several covenants that God made with man. The first of these may be found in (Gen. ix 12), made with Noah of which the beautiful rainbow is a token. It is a perpetual covenant throughout all generations and does not depend in any sense whatever on man. The waters of a flood will never again visit the shores of time. I hold this promise which is full of complacency as being a promise to me as much as if said in the days of Peter or Paul.

In (Gen. xii 3), the days of Abraham God said, "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This covenant came to me as I belong to one of the families of the earth. At the 7th verse of the same chapter he made another covenant with Abraham "unto thy seed will I give this land." In Gen. xvii 10 he says, this is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee, every man child among you shall be circumcised." This covenant did not include me in any sense whatever, unless I am among the lost tribes of Israel, and the seed of Abraham by natural descent. To this covenant "the law was added (Gal. iii 19) on account of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. It will be remembered here, that two promises were made to Abraham. In the first all families were to be blessed. In the second, the descendants of Abraham were only to receive an earthly possession. The first promise was unconditional so far as the descendants of Abraham were concerned. The second imposed upon them the law of circumcision and later the law of Moses, hence "the covenant that was confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none

effect (Gal. iii 17). What then was taken away? Simply that, that was added, and being gentiles, in the flesh, we were never included in the second promise neither would it have been just to include us under the conditions enjoined upon the Jews. We never were under the law and never will be. Paul recognizes this fact, Rom. ii 14, "for when gentiles which have no law do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts, one with another accusing or else excusing them." We must still recognize the fact that these gentiles were not without law for the natural senses and faculties of mind raised many of these nations who worshipped idols, to a tolerable degree of moral excellence. About the advent of the Saviour of mankind these nations after adding many fine orators and philosophers had reached the summit of their moral worth having learned much of God's law, by the application of mind to the eternal fitness of things. This was human expediency—the best possible in the absence of better, and as Paul sheweth us they were doing by nature the same things to some extent that the law discovered to the Jews. The facts were the same, although reached by different means. Paul says, (Rom ii 12), as many as sin without law shall also perish without law. (1 John iii 4). Sin is the transgression of law. How could a gentile then sin being without law. If he had no law as Paul would seem to say, how could he sin according to John, could he transgress that which he was without; my vanity, Paul sheweth by this very statement that the gentiles could sin although without the law of the Jews and recognizes the transgression of law according to John. This is clear evidence that these gentiles discovered the law of moral right by and through their natural powers of discrimination and having so discovered; this law were made sinners for transgressing it. This conclusively proves that the law of right is co-eternal with God whether discovered by us or revealed to us. Having now shewn the respective positions of Jews and Gentiles up to the advent of Christ, when the law was set aside, and the middle wall of partition broken down, and the fulfillment of God's first promise to Abraham, is ushered in, we come then to the time when there is to be but one fold and one shepherd. When "the other sheep that are not of this fold" are to be brought into the blessings promised to all families of the earth, four hundred and thirty years before the law was given. All are now to come into the fold under one law. All are concluded under sin and necessarily must come under law; the law of redemption, or (Rom. vi 17) we must all obey that form of doctrine which was delivered, being then made free from sin we became the servants of righteousness. At this point we have another axiom we wish to lay down, that we deem necessary in the

development of this great legal question. As it is always wise in the pursuit of Divine truth to keep before our minds the speaker, and the person spoken to, in order to know what scripture applies to us, we are forced to admit that certain laws, laid down in the now covenant for sinners are, not for Christians. Paul says to the Hebrew brethren (chap. vi 1-2). Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms etc. The Christian having passed through this, is born into a kingdom of liberty. It is no longer necessary to preach to him the law that made him free from sin. He has gone beyond that law where he is no more a servant but a son, for where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. He enters the higher plane of God's wise council where God in revelation assists him to understand and learn his, everywhere, whether in revelation or in nature. Having now seen what scriptures no longer effect us in a legal sense, we come to fully enjoy the liberty of the Christian. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching; for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, (2 Tim. iii 16), and again the church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. As Christians we breathe the spirit of the apostles and prophets, all the spiritual teaching of the inspired writers, whether David, Solomon, Jeremiah, Isaiah, or the New Testament writers; all these are ours, to increase the wisdom and management of the church. We do not go back to Old Testament writers to teach sinners how to be saved under Christ; for the law of Salvation did not then obtain. But these inspired men of the Old Testament give us light on many things. The apostles quote much from them and Paul in speaking to the church tells us to speak to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and again admonishing each other in Psalms, etc. Now if he tells us to sing Psalms and we are to sing them with the spirit and with the understanding and be admonished by them, is it consistent for us to declare the teaching of the very Psalms we sing to be innovation and heresy. Some brethren would even refuse Paul's admonition, and I venture to say would not sing either the 149th or 150th Psalm on the ground of conscience. We shall now enter more particularly into the second part of our subject. How shall the saved live and act towards each other and what is the nature of the government or discipline of this royal priesthood. Are we under a pope who may displace the servants of the church independent of the voice of the church. If it takes the voice of the church to elect an officer, is it not in harmony with the law of reason that the officer who got his life from the body is not greater than the body. Let us have a scriptural

example. In the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas being accused by some of the Jewish brethren, perhaps for dereliction of duty, for not teaching circumcision to the Gentiles, go up to Jerusalem and appealed to the church for a decision on this question. The church with the apostles and elders received them. The whole multitude in this case with the Apostles and Elders sat in judgment. At the 22 verse we have the decision of the whole church, with the apostles and elders given. In the 6th chapter Cor. we have another example where Paul advises according to McKnight, the setting up of secular seats of judicature. This would seem to furnish an example for Christians in the settlement of their disputes. I do not hold that these examples may not be varied where expediency demands, but there is one leading principle worthy of our attention, and that is, that the voice of the church is superior to the voice of an elder or deacon. No elder or deacon has any right to shut the mouth of the church or to displace any member of the church without the sanction of the church. It is true that the elders are rulers and their ruling should be scriptural. If those elders and apostles at Jerusalem had held such an exalted opinion of their ruling power, as do some of our more modern elders, they would have ignored the church and arrogantly assumed the right to lay it over God's heritage. On the subject of exclusion, Alex. Campbell, page 93, "Christian System," gives the following as his view: "The manner of proceeding unto this great and awful instituted ordinance, is the church being gathered together, the offender also having notice to come to make his answer and defence, (if he comes not, he aggravates his offence by despising the authority of Christ in his church.)"

(To be Continued.)

## CANADA.

It was my pleasure to visit the congregation meeting in Occident Hall, Toronto, Ont., on Lord's days, June 14 and 21. Having taken a prominent part in the organization of this congregation, my heart, naturally, is cheered by the progress they have made during my two years of absence. The Lord's day services were so well attended that the seating capacity of the hall was taxed to the utmost, and I was informed that this was of frequent occurrence.

Bro. G. Barclay has been ministering to the church in spiritual things for nearly two years, and he is loved and respected by all. This congregation is greatly in need of a house of worship, and we hope to hear in the near future that the brethren of Canada have united together to establish one congregation in this beautiful and growing city, that will represent the cause we love and pray for. God, bless the church in the "West End," for they are self-denying, active, liberal, giving this year one dollar per member towards missionary work in Canada.—L. POWERS, In Standard.