

upper chamber where the disciples were gathered together? Did he not sit upon each of them? Did he not enter into them and cause them to speak with tongues the wonderful works of God, and these works were the works in detail accomplished through the Father and the Son in completing the work of atonement. This story in detail was that which had effect upon the hearts of the vast multitude to whom Peter spoke and which is called the gospel. It was spoken according to the Spirit's dictation; it convicted them of righteousness and of judgment, they believed and were led to cry out, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter, with the divine message upon his tongue, and by whose authority, answered, Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, and you shall receive the gift, or the benefits of the Holy Spirit. So we see in this transaction of divine operation the Holy Spirit did not make a personal interview, or work in a clandestine manner. The Holy Spirit did not operate independent of testimony or gospel, for he was under authority of Jesus, the King, at that time enthroned at the right hand of the Father with all power. And his office was to work through those chosen ambassadors of the King in order to finish the work he was sent to do. Now, these men being authorized and qualified, what did they do? Did they begin to teach the theological dogma of abstract spirit operation? Did they say, You can do nothing until you are visited by convicted power from on high? Did they say, You must wait for the spirit to move independent of any other medium? If so, how many souls would have been born into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Who can show us that there would have been one from Pentecostal outpouring to the Gentile household at Caesarea in this way? But not so. They preached Christ and him crucified, or the gospel of his power, and the Holy Spirit owning the means used, men were converted and made Christians by obeying the advocate from the King, coronated in power on high. The advocate or Holy Spirit bore witness to the preached word by signs and wonders. And this continued until the Church or kingdom of Christ was thoroughly established. As all authority was given unto him in heaven and earth, he was to reign coronated King of Heaven while his kingdom, or Church, was to be on the earth. After this was accomplished and his ambassadors called home to be crowned with him, the Holy Spirit having attested to the word spoken by his authority through them, seals the gospel as the power of God unto salvation to every one that will believe and obey it. To-day the spirit speaks on this wise: Say not in thine heart who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down (he has come), or who shall descend into the deep to bring Christ up again from the grave (he has been there.) But what does it say? Why the word is nigh thee even in thy mouth, and this is the gospel which we preach (Rom. x. 6, 7, 8)

The gospel is the power to-day to bring men to Christ. The Holy Spirit owns the gospel, and bears testimony to it wherever it is told in purity and with faith. And this in the lives and hearts of those who faithfully receive and obey it and live it. Hearing the gospel we hear in revelation the design of God the Father. Hearing the gospel we hear in revelation what the Son did in executing the design of the Father. Hearing the gospel we hear in revelation what the advocate or Holy Spirit was sent to make known to the chosen apostles. Believing the gospel we believe the Father's design and acknowledge his authority. Believing the gospel we acknowledge the atonement made by the Son in obedience to the Father. Believing the gospel we believe in the Spirit as the advocate for the Son, and author of the gospel. In obeying the gospel we obey the will of the Father. In obeying the gospel we obey the divine commands of

the Son. In obeying the gospel we become the recipients of the Spirit, and our hearts becomes temples for his indwellings.

By hearing the gospel we believe that Jesus is the Christ, for faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. x. 17.) Faith leads to repentance, repentance to obedience, and obedience makes us one with Christ. All this is done through the Spirit operating and attesting to the declaration of the gospel, which truly is the power of God unto salvation to every one that will believe it.

H. E. COOKE.

COMMENTARY AND COMMENDATORY TO W. S. FREEMAN.

Dear Brother,—I read with pleasure your letter, in the July CHRISTIAN, calling attention to the unscriptural nature of the late innovation of "majority rule" in the congregations of Christ. We find there is still need—urgent need—that we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." "The faith" here means the gospel—in all its parts. It includes the provision which the Lord has made, the directions he has given for ruling in the churches. "The Faith" is the most precious treasure ever committed to the care and guardianship of God's creature—man. To defend it may—and surely will—cost us great self-denial and personal sacrifice. To rise up in defence of the "The Faith" means open conflict with *professed friends* as well as with avowed enemies. But, as good soldiers of the cross, we are bound to hold up the banner of the faith and defend it with our lives, if need be. If we shun to do this we are cowards and traitors. Ah! how many of this class do we find, skulking in the rear, avoiding the conflict, and when "The Faith" is assailed *keeping quiet as they can!* Oh, how pleasant it would be if the Lord had not ordered it, so that "all who will live godly shall suffer persecution;" that "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom!" How much more agreeable it would be if the Lord did not oblige us to engage in earnest contention for "The Faith!" If we could only "be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fight to win the prize."

But, no, we cannot get there that way. We must fight if we would reign. We must defend our banner. Let us pray—"Increase our courage, Lord!"

Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss! The banner of the faith has always suffered most from its professed friends. Hence, we need not be surprised, but we must be prepared for constantly recurring demonstrations of this fact. And so we find among other latter-day departures from "The Faith," being taught and introduced in some places, the practice of "majority rule," ruling the churches by majority vote of the members! And this idea, though utterly unhinted at in the New Testament, though unconceived in the apostolic age, and though still unheard of for many ages after, has now some advocates that say, It is impossible to run a church or any organization without the ruling of the majority! This is equivalent to saying that what was done in apostolic times, and in all ages since, and what is now being the more universally done, is impossible! Churches are not now, and never have been, generally ruled by majority vote of their members. Our schools and our country ARE NOT thus governed by majorities. Go into any school room and see if the school is ruled, discipline administered, etc., by majority vote of the scholars. In this case, those ruled have absolutely no voice in the ruling. In like manner our citizens have no direct voice or vote in the government, the ruling of the country. Two parts of the government are appointed without reference to the voice of the people. One part, men supposedly wisest and best fitted to rule,

is chosen by *duly qualified electors* among the people, to act with the other two parts in ruling the country. So in the churches of Christ, a plurality of elders, men wisest and best fitted, were appointed in every church "to rule." Their qualifications and functions are so specifically proscribed that no excuse remains for those who seek to subvert the apostolic order. The elders or overseers are to rule "not as lords over God's heritage." Christians are to have only "one Lord." When elders begin to assume the functions of "lords," to make laws, pass edicts, etc., they transcend their prerogative. The limit of their prerogative is to execute the law of their Lord; or to rule in the churches according to his law. It is their prerogative and their duty to rule out every improper thing. To decide what is improper and rule it out, (no matter if a majority of the boys and girls desire it), is their right and duty. Let it be distinctly understood that whenever in the churches there is any ruling necessary the elders are the only ones authorized to do it. The venerable and saintly Joseph Ash well asks, "Of what use are elders if boys and girls can vote them down?"

Now, let us examine the principle, or rather want of principle, which underlies "the one-man pastorate." Let us see. The majority should rule! The majority of what should rule? Should it be a majority of frivolity, of youthful vanity, of waywardness, of ignorance of the scriptures, of immature judgment, of unborn graces and of ungrown piety? Should a majority composed of these rule? They generally do where a majority of numbers rules; for that class of persons who in the largest proportion possess these qualities are unquestionably and universally in the majority.

What elements then *should* rule? Should it not be rather a majority of piety, of mature judgment, of knowledge of God's word, of wisdom, of the fear of God, of long tried and proved faithfulness, of every grace and virtue matured—ripened and bearing fruit in Christian life? This latter class of qualities, as everybody knows, is in a very small minority in the churches, AND SHOULD THEY EX VOTED DOWN BY THE FORMER CLASS? Certainly these latter are the qualities which should rule; and a majority of these is not ascertained by taking the majority of numbers. In a church of a hundred members the majority of these is with a dozen or half dozen individuals. Thus we can see the wisdom of the divine arrangement in committing the rule to none but properly qualified elders.

As already intimated, this pet, "majority rule," is the offspring of the one-man-pastorate. The "pastor"—with a crowd of raw recruits from the Babylonish camp, and numbers of young disciples, who have scarcely learned a single lesson in the school of Christ, with the light-top, fickle and worldly minded, so common in every church. With these united he overwhelms the wisdom and piety of the church and gains his end. Let no one suppose that this description of the "majority vote" business is fancied or overdrawn. It is true to life in scores of cases. If any one doubts, an array of cases can be given, with results so sad that even the fallen angels must weep—and devils pity.

The "majority rule" is a very useful invention to the modern, popular, "progressive pastor." With a little tact he can get a majority vote for anything which the caprice of his ambition or folly may dictate. He may be a mere stripling, a beardless dude, and yet, with this invention he can ride over the wisdom and authority of the eldership, and gain whatever foolish object he may desire.

Now, dear brother, let us speak the things which become sound doctrine, and while we live hold fast the form of sound words, that we may be able to convince the gainsayers. Let us always be ready to speak a word of kind approval to the deserving, to "weep over the erring one," to "lift up the fallen," and to defend The Faith, with stern rebuke to them who dare assail it.

D. McDougall.