

unto salvation. This brings us into the body of Christ, where we partake of God through Jesus Christ. The life is eternal because it is the life of God. Now, in order that we may continue in the enjoyment of this life we must remain where it is, that is, in Christ. In the illustration which Jesus used to teach his disciples, in the fifteenth chapter of John, he says Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, nor more can ye except ye abide in me.

If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. . . . If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. . . . If ye keep my commandments you shall abide in my love even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. We are in Christ as branches in a vine. It is our work to abide there. We are there for a purpose; not as an ornament, but to bear fruit. That means work for God. Every disciple of Christ must work to advance the cause of his Master, as best he can, according to the ability God has given him. I say, must work; yes, for his life depends on his holding his position as a branch. If he is cut off he is lost. Dear readers, how is it with us? Where do we stand?

J. A. GATES.

Letote, Dec. 23rd, 1890.

#### A DIALOGUE.

As Mrs. L. and Mrs. M. sat together talking over the contents of the December CHRISTIAN, Mrs. M. remarked: Do you not think Bro. Capp has put the question of majority rule in a clear and convincing way?

Mrs. L.—Yes, I think he has; and, no doubt, many will be confirmed in their opinion that majorities should rule.

Mrs. M.—What do you think about it?

Mrs. L.—I can't say that I ever was really satisfied on the subject. Such arguments as Bro. Capp's are very plausible, and one hardly sees one's way over them; but there has always been deep down in my heart a feeling that it was not the Master's way. I have two objections; one is, questions are never settled in this way without much estrangement and heart-burning. I have seen members of the same denomination estranged for months, even years, so that they could not meet around the Lord's table by being outvoted when they thought they were right.

Mrs. M.—Yes; it is often attended with great scandal, too. You remember that case of Mr. W.'s in Jollicure, Ill? What dreadful reports were in the papers; and it does seem whether the rule be majority or minority it is not a peaceable rule.

Mrs. L.—That is just it. It cannot be from God. There must be some other way.

Mrs. M.—Suppose we study the subject.

Mrs. L.—With all my heart. The study will do us good, whether we can satisfy ourselves or not.

#### SECOND MEETING.

Mrs. M.—In our last conversation you said you had two objections to the voting rule; please state the other.

Mrs. L.—You know the scriptures state that they are fitted to thoroughly furnish the man of God unto all good works, and this always seems to rise up and make me feel that there must be some way in which the business of Christ's Church can be done peaceably.

Mrs. M.—Yes; I have felt the same. The royal rule, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you" is a grand way to settle difficulties. We find it so in our families.

Mrs. L.—Yes, indeed. Just suppose Bro. Capp's 140 saying to the ten: Brethren, we very much prefer our way to yours; but our Blessed Master has taught us that we should do to you as we would have you do to us, we will yield the point and give you your way.

What would be the result? Most likely the "ten" would be so overwhelmed with the "kindly affection" of their brethren, and loving submission to the doctrine of Christ, that they would see their duty and yield their preference. Thus, the majority would have "gained their brethren," and perhaps their point, too; and Christ's law would be "magnified and made honorable." The law of love works wonders, and I have always thought if we could be kept in a proper state of mind these things would not trouble us; but since we are not, I supposed we must be governed by some other rule. I now see this is a giving up of the question of right-doing. How dare we ignore the commands of scripture; i. e., let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also upon the things of others. Phill. viii:3-4, and the whole chapter. Indeed, since I have been looking for a rule by which the Church can work successfully, I find the New Testament abounds with them; and who will say that a church that is held to these same scriptures that we have quoted, would not be both active and in peace.

#### CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

It is not to be supposed for a moment that our King Jesus, the Christ, would establish a kingdom among men in the world, composed of his creatures, clothed with mortality, and not lay down a code of laws for the government of his subjects. The King being perfect, all he says and does must be like the giver. Hence the laws he has laid down for the guidance of his subjects cannot be improved, and any and every local subject of our King will not attempt to add to or diminish any one of those divine laws. Any one seeking to abrogate any one or more of those laws or add to them is guilty of treason, and liable to be dealt with as such. Not desiring to write a treatise on law I hasten to the theme I have in view.

In Matt. xvi:18,19: On this rock I will build my church (congregation) and the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it. Having then built or established a congregation of his subjects it is not to be supposed that he would not enact a code of laws, and properly qualify persons to administer them. Otherwise it would be confusion. "To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them." Is. viii:20.

What does the great lawgiver, Jesus the Christ, say about the government of his Church (congregation)? Where he speaks through any of his qualified subjects it is tantamount to speaking himself. Thanks to him for not leaving us in the dark on this important theme. If he had we would be following in the wake of many who make laws after their own wisdom; have courts, alter, amend, abrogate and punish those who break them. They have ignored the divine law and testimony of revelation; and, of consequence, there is no divine light in them. The law of pardon for a sinner as in Matt. xxviii:19, Mark xvi:16, Acts ii:28 are laid down very brief and clear; it needs no enlargement. The law for a disciple, or Christian, is contained in the testimony of the apostles, etc. "Law is a course of action," and for a disciple is summed up in a few words. In 13 ch. I. Cor. the apostle Paul speaks mainly on love, but mentions several things, and winds up the chapter by emphasizing on three words which, he says, abide. They cannot pass away. Faith, hope, love; the greatest of these is love. Faith goes wherever testimony is. Where there is no testimony there is no faith. When testimony begins faith begins. When testimony ends faith ends. Hope is a desire for something with a reasonable expectation of obtaining it. I need not dilate on the reasonable hope of a

Christian obtaining a home in heaven, nor on the fruits of love. Almost every pious, godly act of the Christian grow out of faith, hope, love. Following these is the law, the "course of action" for the Christian through life. If the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law, the Christian is not barren nor unfruitful in good works.

Seeing we are clothed in mortality, the Lord know some would need correction. Hence he gave law and government, which was absolutely necessary. As "he does all things well" he brought church government down to the simplest form. The first example is in Acts viii., in appointing seven men to see after the support of the Hellenists (Jews who spoke Greek) in temporal affairs. The apostles told the congregation to choose from among themselves seven men possessing certain qualifications. They did so.

We come now to the instructions found in Timothy about the choice of overseers and their qualifications. These are to be the keepers of the church, the overseers. "If a man desires the office of a bishop he desires good work." "A bishop then must be blameless," the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, (modest) of good behavior, given to hospitality." "Take heed to yourselves and to the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers," etc. Acts xx:28. See Titus i:7, 9. "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the words of God," etc. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," etc. Heb. xiii:7. See Rom. xii:8 "He that ruleth with diligence." I. Tim. iii:4 "For if a man (bishop) know not how to rule his own house how shall he take care of the Church of God?" I. Peter 5. "Rebuke not an elder, but instruct him as a father and the younger men as brothers." "Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and doctrine," I. Tim. 5. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you." I. Thes. 5, 12.

The above scriptures, with their connections, show:

1st. That the elders, or overseers, are constituted by the Holy Spirit by virtue of their qualifications. They are not man-made.

2nd. The elders, bishops or overseers have committed to their hands the rule or government of the churches. They have a divine right to watch over the church for the purpose of maintaining peace and unity of the body, scrutinizing whatever doctrine may be delivered in the church, reject all customs and innovations not recognized by the apostles or the precedent of primitive times.

3rd. These things being established by the plain apostolic directions, we are prepared to say that the practice of voting in the congregation, or doing the business of the church by vote, is absurd and heretical in the highest degree (it always creates parties) and must tend to confusion and parties in any church. We have no account of voting in the congregations since the promulgation of the apostolic laws. The government was then vested in the overseers or eldership; and who dare think of taking it out.

4th. In any Church of Christ where there is no properly qualified overseers or elders, there is no government, no rule, no substantial order; and many bad things constantly looming up—no discipline. Think of these things.

Respectfully submitted by your friend,

JOSEPH ASH.

"Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."