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Another New Year

"...incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding." - Proverbs 2:2

Another new year dawns upon the world. Some, bored with the repetition of this ritual might say "so what." But, regardless of the origins of this celebration of the solar progression there are apt spiritual lessons to be learned in remembering the cycles of creation and the effect that they have upon us.

There are few truly "solitary" incidents in this universe. From subatomic particles, which revolve at maddening speed around the nucleus of the atom, to the cycles of human society, to explosions of stars, there are grand, repetitive cycles to be found in the animate and inanimate creations. And having returned to any beginning, whether physically, emotionally, or metaphysically, is to learn something of the vanity addressed by Solomon and to attempt to place one's life in eternal perspective. In light of the scope of these events it can scarcely be surprising that men make "resolutions," and start afresh at the new year. Paul said that the creative power and the deity of God were self-evident, that those who were without the oracles of God ought to be enabled by the witnesses of creation to admit to the sovereignty of God

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19,20).

Control

The ultimate control over all of God's creation is perhaps the most sublime and inescapable of all lessons in connection with the new year.

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men (Dan. 4:17).

There is and can never be anything beyond the reach of Almighty power. The extent of that control reaches both outwards, like astronomy, and within, like microscopy:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

What can happen to the child of such an all-powerful father which he has not purposefully allowed?

Forethought

The control of God over his creation is not the same as his foresight. The fact that God is able to return the earth to its same relative position to the sun is marvelous: but that he placed the earth in an orbit so that it returns to that place naturally, repeatedly, by plan, is beyond human comprehension, even though men imitate such planning in their lives. The life touched by cancer, or other similarly prematurely fatal disease, may seem fruitless to some. So also the child who has been congenitally touched by blindness or crippled limbs may question the wisdom and foresight of Jehovah, as though the Almighty had nothing better to do than to pause in his eternal supervision of the universe to stoop down into their life and cause trouble for this most pitiful of his children.

One may ask, in contrast, whether conditions of physical helplessness are worse than those of mental or emotional helplessness, which instead of preventing action may weaken one's ability to control the actions that they are empowered to take. It may well be that just as many hearts are burdened by their shame over their own actions as are burdened by their inability to act, to see, or to hear. But that all such human burdens are allowed for purposes which extend far beyond the years of this human life is a thought that presses against the limits of a man's perception. What pause it should give us to wonder just how -- and to what greater glory -- Jehovah has allowed these things.

If the troubles that a man feels could be so intense just imagine how grand must be their end result in the Divine plan of the ages. Such thoughts may, to many, seem to be a waste of time. But how else can we hope to share anything in common with our Creator if we can spare no time to consider the lengths, the breadths, the heights, and the depths of his character and intervention in the affairs of man?

Timeliness

A child may be five years of age when he is sent off for his first day at kindergarten. To that young tot the four hours spent away from his parent may be to him an eternity. Having lived such a short time those four hours are a much larger percentage of his life than four hours in the life of its twenty or thirty-year old parent. All men and women react to life within the context of their own experience. What joy it can bring to the child of God, therefore, to recognize that all experiences have their limited duration.

Had Israel, while wandering in the wilderness, understood that lesson, might their sojourning have been shorter? If they could have been one hundred percent faithful, would they not have entered the promised land, trying just a little harder to lay hold upon the promised land in spite of the contrary report of the "spies." Might not the tired evangelist try just one more time to counter

the unbeliever's hesitance? Might not the faithful elder listen with greater kindness to the burdened sufferer? Might not the harried scholar, his mind filled with Scripture and argument, simplify yet a little further the lesson for the novice?

All things take time. All things last but for a time—at least until we pass beyond this human, sin-laden tabernacle. If we were convinced that death would usher us into the reality of our hopes, could not even the news of our own mortality be grasped with the faith of Job: *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him"* (Job 13:15). Who can read those words without being amazed, not only at Job's faith, but more so at his determination to maintain his own ways before God -- to continue in his faithfulness, his zeal, his devotion and worship to Jehovah. What a testament to the power of God to inspire obedience in man. Such determination does not come from fear of punishment and it lives in spite of the sorest tests imaginable.

Communion

Repetition has benefits in and of itself. Solomon's suggestion that there was nothing new under heaven re-proves itself in all human experience. No matter what happens to us, if we look to history we find that there has been a precedent long before we were born. The circumstances may have been different: after all, the soldier of David's day did not go out to battle in tanks, nor did he fear the power of tactical nuclear weapons. But his need of courage and the ability to steel him

self against fear were no different then than that needed in this day. And it is the recognition of such universal principles and of our commonality with those who went before (and who follow after) that makes pains bearable and instructions easier to be received. Not until a man stops feeling sorry for himself—realizes that others have suffered like he—can he incline his ear unto wisdom and apply his heart to understanding.

We have considered a sampling of lessons from the cycles of life. Other applications may be as varied as the faces upon this globe, reflecting the vantage point of each individual observer, but they give reason to marvel at the deity of God and by doing so to place ourselves in a better and more worshipful position to be his child. We end our New Year meditation where we began, with the reflections of Solomon and the prayer that we individually use this repetitious renewal to ponder and apply the grace and powers of God. May we apply their lessons as a healing balm, the balm of Gilead, to the battlescars that we have earned during the previous year's Christian conflict. As they have their healing power within us, may we face the conflicts of the new year with energy, optimism, and confidence in the God of our salvation.

AMEN!

- P.J. Pazucha

The law of God, by the hammer of affliction, or by the smiting of judgment, may break the heart; but our hearts may be bruised and shattered by calamity and yet remain as frigid as an iceberg.

It is the work of grace that is just as powerful to break the heart as to heal it.

The Twelve Apostles: Their Calling, Office, And Authority - Part 1

"Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve?" - John 6:70

The Lord Jesus is the head of the church by the appointment of God. It is so dear to him that it is variously referred to as his "body," "bride," etc. Let us examine the concern that he displayed for it and the forethought displayed by his care for that church throughout the Gospel Age -- the probationary period of the church.

Immediately after his forty day meditation our Lord engaged in preaching the gospel of the coming kingdom. Many heard him, but from among those who heard with faith he selected twelve men as the apostles of a new dispensation. They were chosen from the humbler walks of life: four were fishermen; one was a publican, among the despised of the people; the vocations of the others are not mentioned.

Selecting Twelve Apostles

The men were called individually. Their callings all involved sacrifice because they had to leave their former lives and occupations. But there was a special occasion on which he dedicated them as a group to their office as apostles (cf. Matt. 4:17-22; Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Luke 5:9-11). Luke records this event, saying that the Lord had withdrawn to a mountain to pray. In this state of devotion he continued all night. *"And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples [Greek, mathetas, learners or pupils]: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles [apostolos - ones sent forth]"* (Luke 6:13). The Twelve were marked as distinct among the Lord's disciples.

The other disciples were also loved of the Lord. We expect that they fully agreed with the Lord's appointment of these twelve to a special office, recognizing that some degree of order was in the best interests of the work. We must also expect that the Lord considered their willingness to be used and their skills and circumstances: choosing those best fitted for the pioneer work that lay ahead. Thus, he called two sons of Zebedee, but he did not call their father. And he did not call these men to a mental following of some special teaching, but rather to leave their businesses, their homes, friends, plans, and prospects in order to follow him and under his direction to engage in the "work" of the Lord.

It is unlikely that the Lord revealed much to these twelve men about the exact nature of the work which lay ahead. It would have been impossible for them to understand what they would soon be about. But these dear brethren appreciated the privilege accorded them, even though sacrifice and persecution would certainly result and they could be assured of no certain future reward.

Our Lord started these men on a course of instruction which would fit them for a future work. They did not even fully engage in this work until after the Day of Pentecost. After their selection they were under his care and spent much time in his company. As students they were carefully observing his character, his gospel, and his methods.

The Commission

By comparing the New and Old Testament accounts we find that the commission to the apostles was similar to that of the Lord and the entire church (cf. Isa. 61:1,2; Luke 4:17-21; Matt 10:5-8; Mark 3:14,15; Luke 10:1-17). They devoted themselves to the Lord during his presence with them. But we are not told that their progress was any faster or that it was markedly different from others of the disciples, for example the seventy whom the Lord also appointed (Luke 10:17).

Gradually the Lord showed these men that they were being prepared for a special service. They were to be witnesses. They were to testify of him, of his words and works following his death. They were to be more than mere witnesses. The people who would follow him must be able to rely upon these twelve; in part because they had been with him from the first and had been thoroughly acquainted with his teaching and purpose (cf. John 15:27; Luke 24:48). One more detail lay ahead. These twelve had been selected under the supervision of God himself to become the founders and special teachers of the Gospel Age church. In due time they were to be specially empowered from God in testimony to this unique commission.

These men were placed in a special position in the church. Through them all that had hearing ears, all who hungered and thirsted after righteousness were to be convinced of the truth of God in Christ Jesus. From among those a "*people for his name*" (a bride for Christ -- a church) would be selected and trained for exaltation as "joint heirs with Christ" in his future kingdom. Note how our Lord implies these thoughts in his high priestly prayer:

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: chine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine (John 17:6-9). Neither pray I for these [apostles] alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20,21).

Special Call: Solemn Ordination

There were as many apostles as Jacob had sons. In the sons of Jacob were pictured the twelve tribes of Israel. In one sense they were typical of the Gospel Age church; in another they stood for the entire world of men. The Revelation pictures these apostles as the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, the glorious church (Rev. 21:14; Eph. 2:20,21). Indeed, the same foundation that sustains the church will ultimately sustain the world. But a foundation must be placed upon something solid, not sand (Matt. 7:25-27) but upon rock. Just such a rock were the apostles founded upon: Christ Jesus (Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Pet. 2:4-8).

The Twelve were chosen early in the Lord's ministry, but from among their number one (Judas) dropped out, proving himself a traitor to the Lord's trust. He was replaced by Paul, who had been made a witness of his glory after the Lord's resurrection and ascension (Acts 26:13; 1 Cor. 15:8). This interesting quirk in the divine testimony provides eleven eye and ear witnesses of the Lord's ministry and a twelfth witness to the glorious exaltation that was his after his resurrection. This provides a sure testimony for all of the church to the end of that age.

Further, from our place in history we can look with kindness upon the selection of Matthias by the eleven as a human error -- a little over-officiousness on their part -- attending to the Lord's business without his direction. In defense of this gentle attitude towards them we note that their action was taken before the Day of Pentecost and before their begetting by the spirit of God.

Remember that the Twelve had chosen two and asked that the Lord choose between them by means of lots. Obviously, by this action the lot would have fallen upon one of the two. This was no indication of the Lord's will. The Lord ignored their well meaning choice, just as he has ignored other choices of men, and instead he indicated his own choice of Paul in his own due time. That this selection was in place of that made by the other apostles is clarified through the subsequent revelation. There he describes twelve foundation stones in the New Jerusalem, not thirteen. Matthias was probably a sound brother in the faith, but he was not an apostle.

What Special Office?

We note that following the crucifixion and resurrection it was the Twelve who were the strength and consolation of the infant church. The saints of those days found in them the support of their delicate faith. They had been the companions of the Lord. They witnessed his miraculous power. They demonstrated their loyalty by bearing his reproach. The infant church relied upon the apostles' teaching, took courage from their example, and heeded their counsel. Were they ever intended to be authoritative teachers whose words, more than the words of others, would express the Divine mind? Let us look at seven indicators that the Lord intended for this special office:

Ordination: Our previous mention of the Lord's special recognition of the Twelve stands first in our minds. They were given a separate and significant name-apostles-to distinguish them from the others.

Trainees: Even though there is no indication that their work was more bountifully blessed than that, for example, of the seventy, yet they were his special companions, continually under his training. They were witnesses of his life and teachings as none others. They watched the details of his personal character and his manner of life. They were the only ones "invited" to the last Passover Supper. They received the special instructions of that hour concerning the typical significance of that celebration and of the changed features which he instituted that evening. They were made privy to the special significance that would attend to commemorating the real Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. They witnessed the agony of Gethsemane, his betrayal and arrest. They witnessed his calm submission to his prophetically detailed fate. They witnessed the crucifixion, death, burial, and the fact of his resurrection.

Special Resurrection Witnesses: Promptly after his resurrection our Lord continued the training of these men. He did, in fact, appear to others than the apostles to upwards of five hundred at one time (1 Cor. 15:5-8). The apostles, however, were his special charge, and he took pains to clearly establish his resurrection to them. Carefully, he looks up each of the "eleven" - sending the women who first arrived at the tomb to tell the others of his resurrection and especially mentioning Peter. It was Peter, we are reminded, that had experienced unfaithfulness (Mark 16:7). So also the Lord opened the understanding of the two (Luke 24:27) on the road to Emmaus; he satisfied the doubting mind of Thomas with tangible evidence; reaffirmed Peter's commission; convincing them all and sending them to the work refreshed in their minds (cf. John 20:16-28; 21:15-17; Acts 1:1,2; Luke 24:52).

Witnesses Of the Ascension: The "eleven" were the special witnesses of his ascension. There is no evidence that any others were present on that occasion. The expression "ye men of Galilee," signified the eleven, all of whom were Galileans (cf. Acts 1:1-13, Luke 24:48-51; Matt 28:16-19).

They were special witnesses even though he was seen by others. The Lord assured that they would be complete witnesses so that our faith might be established upon their consistent testimony (cf. Acts 13:31; 1 Cor. 15:3-8).

And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead. To him give all the prophets' witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:39-43).

Commission Extended: *"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things"* (Luke 24:47,48). It was to the apostles first that this message of extended blessing was given. Prior to that time it had been to the Jew only. *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). But in their day the "uttermost parts of the earth" could not be reached or ministered to during their lifetime: the Western Hemisphere for example. It is evident that a major part of this witness would be done, then, through their writings and after their death. In this way they testify to you and me. And considering their careful training by our Lord they were the best possible endorsement of the gospel's accuracy.

Spiritual Anointing: The apostles waited obediently for the promised power from on high. They and other disciples (about 120) were waiting in an upper room in Jerusalem in daily, prayerful expectation (Acts 1:14). Finally, the Day of Pentecost brought the baptism of the holy Spirit, promised by the Lord. All of the faithful there present shared in this blessing. *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:4). We note, however, that verse seven adds special mention of the apostles: *"And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?"* It would appear that the eleven were the public speakers. The power of God doubtless brought to their minds clearer visions of Divine truth, filling their hearts with joy and praise so that they spoke from the abundance of their hearts the wonderful words of life as the spirit of God gave them words in the languages of the people there represented. What happened was so stunning, so powerful, that three thousand were converted that day. All of the faithful ones who awaited the coming of the Spirit that day were blessed. The same spirit was poured out on the gentiles later (Acts 10:44-47) and has continued with the consecrated unto this day. We are assured that none of the eleven failed to receive their gift of the Spirit without which their apostleship would stand in question (cf. Acts 1:13,14; 2:1).

A Chosen Vessel: At first glance it seems strange that Judas should have a part among the apostles while Saul of Tarsus was out persecuting the church. From our stand point in history the events of those days now appear as masterstrokes of planning. The baptism of the holy Spirit was long past before the Lord's appearance to Saul of Tarsus. And Paul was made the witness of the Lord's glory -- *"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time"*, (1 Cor. 15:8) -- yes, as one born from the dead before the time, before the time for the church's exaltation

and glory. Then, being made like their Lord they will see him as he is (1 John 3:2). The visions and revelations of the Lord to Paul more than compensated for the day by day experiences with the Lord of which he had not been part. By them he was made a competent and reliable witness to us (2 Cor. 12:1-4, 7; Gal. 1:11, 12; 2:2).

Consider further the direct statement of the Lord on this account: *"Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel"* (Acts 9:15). That was all the endorsement that Paul needed to put him on a par with the other eleven as the apostles of the Lord. We have the testimony of the Lord, and the testimony of Paul's zeal in bearing witness to the truth, and of the manifestation of the Spirit in him, and Paul's own testimony. He says,

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11,12).

And again he says, *"he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles"* (Gal. 2:8).

Paul's preeminent commission was to the gentiles, the others ministered more particularly to the Jews. Hence Paul has far more to say to us through his numerous epistles. But in their day the eleven were more preeminent in the church than he: Peter, James, and John, Paul says, were regarded as pillars, among them (Gal. 2:9).

Paul was the pushing pioneer. The men of his day did not regard his work among the gentiles as either light nor honorable. He was exposed to danger, persecution, and humiliation. Even in the church he was not fully understood or appreciated as evidenced by the frequency with which he produced the evidences of his apostleship.

The Twelve Apostles: Their Calling, Office, And Authority - Part 2

"Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve?" - John 6:70

Our previous treatment of this subject considered the commission of the apostles. We now turn attention to the office of apostle in the church. Do we depend merely upon their historic testimony as to the Lord and his teachings? Or were they witnesses to more than this?

In keeping with other scriptural precepts we suggest that the apostles were charged with bearing witness to all that they knew or had been enlightened about under the guidance of the spirit of God. Such completeness would be necessary if they were to be faithful stewards, as Paul comments: *"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God"* (1 Cor. 4:1). How similar is the expression of our Lord (Matt. 4:19) when he made them "fishers of men" or commanded them to feed his sheep and lambs (John 21:15-17). Again, Paul says that the mystery [or the "deep truths" of the gospel concerning the high calling of the church-the Christ] was hidden in other ages but now has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. An object in this revelation was to show the fellowship of that mystery, that is, upon what terms they might enjoy the fellowship of that mystery (joint heirship) with Christ, which God had prearranged before the world.

"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord..." (Eph. 3:3-11).

And once more, after detailing how the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the "chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20-22), he says *"For this cause [the building up of the church, or the "temple of God"] I Paul, [am] the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles"* (Eph. 3:1).

Apostles Not Lords

We can see in the above how the apostles were prepared for a ministry of teaching those things that they had learned through the holy Spirit. They had freely received grace and knowledge from the Lord and freely they administered that same grace and knowledge to the faithful (Matt 10:18). Their instructions and witness were so careful that they have been preserved even to us at the uttermost ends of the earth.

But with how much regard should we hold these men? Are they in any sense lords among the church? Did they replace Jesus as the Head of the church? Or did they together constitute some

composite head, empowered to replace him? Or were they successors to Jesus, as the popes of Rome claim-vicars or substitutes for Christ to the church?

Against such teachings we have the plain words of Paul: *"There is one body ... one Lord"* (Eph. 4:4,5). No matter how important any of the members of the body may be, we are to recognize only one Lord. Paul's teaching clearly agrees with our Master when he said that the Scribes and Pharisees loved to be called *"Rabbi, but be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren"* (Matt 23:8, cf. Matt. 23:1, 2, 6, 7-12). And again, addressing the apostles, Jesus said:

But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

No evidence supports any special regard for the apostles as lords by the early church. Nor can we find evidence that they assumed such authority. They lived far differently than the papal idea of lordship. Peter never styled himself "the prince of the apostles," as papists describe him. They never titled one another, or received homage from the church. They addressed each other simply as Peter, John, and Paul, or else by the sole and simple appellation "brother," as did all the other brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. Acts 9:17; 21:20; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 7:15; 8:11; 2 Cor. 8:18; 2 Thess. 3:6,15; Philemon 7,16). Most humbling of all we read that our Lord was not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb. 2:11). That is just how far he was from any domineering attitude in the exercise of his lordship!

Examples to the Flock

There were bishops to whom had been given a general supervision of the work at home and abroad. There were also elders, older and advanced in the knowledge of the truth, who took a more general supervision of local congregations (Acts. 14:23). Finally there were deacons, who were charged with the physical arrangements of the various congregations (Acts 6:1-3), and evangelists who traveled preaching the word of God wherever they went. None of the above ever, as recorded in the New Testament, used these descriptive terms as honorary titles. The conditions of fitness for these services in the church were clearly described by Paul in his epistles (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Nor did any of the prominent servants in the early church adopt priestly garments or symbolic crosses or prayer beads in order to court the reverence and homage of men. The Lord had taught them that the chiefest among them should be the servant of all. Thus, for instance, when persecution scattered the church and drove them from Jerusalem, the eleven stood their ground. They were willing to do this, at whatever cost, because they knew that in this trying time the church abroad would look to them at Jerusalem for encouragement and help. Had they fled, the whole church would have been panic stricken. As a result we have the stories of James perishing by the sword of Herod; Peter with a similar fate in view was thrust into prison and chained to two soldiers (Acts 12:1-6); Paul and Silas were whipped, thrown into prison, and their feet locked in the stocks; and Paul endured a great fight of afflictions (Acts 16:23-24; 2 Cor. 11:23-33). Did they look or act like lords? We think not.

Stewards of Godly Mysteries

Peter took special care in explaining this matter of stewardship when he counseled the elders. "Feed the flock of God," he said (1 Peter 5:13). Note that he did not describe them as the property of the elders: Your flock, your people, your church "...not as lords of the heritage, but being patterns to the flock"-patterns of humility, faithfulness, zeal, and godliness. Paul carries this thought forward in his first letter to Corinth:

For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day (1 Cor. 4:9-13).

These descriptions do not sound very much like lords, do they? Carrying his thoughts to an even more explicit point, Paul writes, opposing those who aspired to some position of leadership over God's people in harsh tones, "*Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you*" (1 Cor. 4:8). Later, however, he counsels them along the correct course, saying:

"I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me (1 Cor. 4:14-16). Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1).

The apostles claimed no monopoly on the teaching or pastoral work in the church. Nor did the Lord ever intimate that they should. Paul says:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ..." (Eph. 4:11-15).

God Set Them

During the Gospel Age, God has raised up numerous human helps for the church. But the prominence of the apostles as being especially empowered by the Lord is clearly indicated. The Lord's personal supervision of various grades of teachers and helpers is indicated by the words of Paul when he said that God set some in the church, first apostles; then he lists prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, directors, and diverse tongues. He continues by inquiring "*Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles*" (1 Cor. 12:28; cf. vs. 1 Cor. 12:27)? The answer is self-evident: no. And if we would follow our Lord we will recognize these differences: his appointments, those whom he has "set" in the church for the offices of instruction and upbuilding. Of these the apostles are always preeminent (cf. Heb. 5:12).

There must be a sense of balance among us. Recognizing the priority of the apostles does not mean disregarding the office of anyone else. The testimonies of the "evangelists" Mark, Luke, and Stephen are just as trustworthy as those of the apostles. They all had the same mind and spoke the same things (1 Cor. 1:10). The faithful apostles, before their death, also committed the church to the witness of those whom God would raise up during the Gospel Age (2 Tim. 4:1-6).

Warned Against Ambition Nearing the end of his earthly life, Paul especially prepared the elders of the church for the task ahead (Acts 20:17). His directions apply from that day forward, including today.

After declaring his faithfulness as a servant of the Lord and the church he warns them, saying,

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:28-35).

In similar manner Peter exhorts the elders

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

As we consider these warnings, it is important in judging those who seem to be teachers in the church today to examine whether their teachings are the same as those of the Lord and the apostles (cf. Matt. 16:12; Eph. 3:5). The divinely inspired truth can not be changed. Even the apostles, had they fallen away, could not change what God had established (cf. Rev. 21:14; Gal. 1:8-12).

It is easy to be inspired by the spirit of the Lord as demonstrated in the regard of the early church for these apostles. They did reverence the superior knowledge and wisdom of the apostles. They did sit at their feet as students but not with blank unquestioning minds. No, with a determination to try the spirits and to prove the testimony, they listened and compared (cf. 1 John 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:21; Isa. 8:20). The apostles encouraged this attitude, requiring a reason for their hope, and they were prepared to meet it-not with smooth words of reason (philosophy or theory) but in demonstration of the spirit and of power (1 Cor. 2:4,5). They did not cultivate the attitude of blind, superstitious reverence for themselves.

Directed By the Spirit of God

We are told that the Bereans *"were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11). The history of the apostles shows that they were continually working to show that the gospel which they proclaimed was the same as that expressed by the ancient prophets:

"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:12).

Yes, and their gospel must also be the same as that brought to light by our Lord himself, merely with greater clarification.

Such clarification was not to be surprising. Our Lord had prophesied that such would come:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself [*independently of me*]; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak [*as Jesus' messages to the church*]: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine [*there is no conflict between Jesus and God, their plans, purposes, and goals are one*]: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:12-15).

The Bereans were behaving correctly, then, in examining what the apostles taught. They had learned well from the instructions of the Lord, *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"* (John 5:39). The entire testimony of God must be in harmony: whether communicated by the Law, the Prophets, the Lord, or the Apostles. Their harmony is proof of Divine inspiration. And thank God we can trace that harmony clearly in both New and Old Testaments.

Upon This Rock

Harmonious testimony does not mean an end to revelation. We should expect that the apostles would not only harmonize their teachings with the Law and Prophets, but also that they would testify things both new and old. The prophets themselves taught such expectations (Matt. 13:35; Psa. 78:2; Deut. 18:15, 18; Dan. 12:9). We find that our expectations are warranted and fulfilled.

Before closing this section of our topic we look to the claim of that church of Rome, that Peter is the rock upon which the gospel church is built, and that to him and his successors, the popes, were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven with the power to open and shut, to admit and exclude whomsoever they will, and to bind or loose whatsoever they please.

This teaching is founded on Matthew's record of the answer to our Lord's question *"Whom say ye that I am?"* Peter answered, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* The Lord replied *"That thou art Peter [petros - a stone], and upon this rock [petra - a rock, large stone] I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:15-19). These words are harmonious with several Old Testament references such as verse fourteen of the eighth chapter of Isaiah where the Messiah is described as a great rock upon which the church is to be built. Peter is one of the living stones in the glorious temple of God built upon that rock, which he had just confessed as the Rock of our Salvation-the Christ.

Peter freely admits the relationship of living stones, himself included, to the great foundation stone -- the Rock Christ Jesus -- saying

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4,5).

The binding and loosing power was not granted only to Peter, but to all the apostles. We believe that this description indicates that God would guide the words and actions of the apostles in their presentation of the gospel to the church so that all would confidently accept their teachings. Whatever they bound upon the church as duties we may know is accepted in heaven. And whatever they loosed as respecting the Mosaic law, etc., we may know they were supervised in doing so. These same are also loosed or set aside in heaven.

Inspiration

We turn our attention in this last section of our topic to the matter of inspiration. Are we to consider the teachings of the apostles, verbally or otherwise, as divinely inspired?

Let's take a look at this question. For a framework we intend to look at four cardinal promises to the Apostles:

- 1.) the promise of the comforter,
- 2.) the refreshment of the memory,
- 3.) guidance into all truth,
- 4.) reveal things to come.

1.) The promise of the comforter, the holy Spirit, was given, particularly, to the apostles. Yes, it was to extend to all of the church, but the promise was given to the apostles (John 16:7, 13-15; 14:26). When Paul was appointed to fill the twelfth position the promise applied equally to him and thus was fulfilled.

We note in these three citations that the inspiration of the apostles was to be found in three very specific areas. It was peculiarly these which our Lord had to tell them, but which they were not prepared to receive while he was yet with them in the flesh (John 16:12).

2.) The first of these three specific avenues of inspiration was the refreshing of their memories concerning the things said and done during the Lord's ministry. Several things we would point out as worthy of note. The Lord did not promise to dictate the exact order and phraseology in which they would express their memory of events. Their writings, in fact, evidence no such dictation, and the promise of their accuracy is found in the 'guarantee' of the work of God's spirit in the apostles.

Each of the Gospels offer historic information about the earthly life and work of the man Jesus. The individuality of each writer is apparent throughout his work: their style, choice of words, even the choice of events they record or ignore demonstrate that the Lord allowed them to write those things which seemed to them most important. Under God's supervision the four taken together provide us as complete a record of this period as is necessary for the establishment of faith in the church in three specific points:

- a.) the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah of the Prophets,
- b.) the fulfillment of prophecies concerning him,
- c.) the facts of his life and the inspiration of his teachings.

If the apostolic inspiration had been verbal, that is word by word, there would have been no need of four separate accounts of the same events. It is noteworthy that using the means he did, between the four individually phrased records, nothing of importance was omitted. This is evidence of their personal integrity and the promised refreshing of their memory.

3.) The apostles were to be guided "into all truth." Although these were plain and uneducated men their scriptural explanations are remarkable. They confounded the wisest theologians of their day and ever since. No matter how eloquent the opposer, no error can stand before the logic of their deductions from the Law, the Prophets, and the teachings of our Lord. The Jewish rulers marked this, and "*took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus*"-they had learned his doctrine and caught his spirit (Acts 4:5,6,13).

It is easy to note how large a portion of the apostolic epistles (particularly Paul's) consist of logical arguments based upon the writings of the Old Testament and our Lord's teachings. Those who are lead by the same spirit as guided the apostles are lead to the same conclusions also. Our faith does' not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1,3,4). We see no evidence of word for word dictation, as though the apostles were mere stenographers. Instead, they display the knowledge of the truth that these men possessed and the spirit in which they used it with a holy enthusiasm to declare the good tidings glowing upon every page and which kindles in the hearts of God's people that same sacred flame.

4.) The final aspect of the promise suggested a continuing revelation of God's plans. The apostles were to be prophets, seers. Some coming events were, evidently, shown to the apostles by this superior illumination of their mind or the quickening of their mental powers -- the guidance of judgment in interpreting the Law, prophecy, and Jesus' teachings.

More than this was necessary, however. Special visions and revelations by the holy Spirit were granted them, and among them we list five specifically:

- a.) The vision of the coming glory of the kingdom as seen on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2-9),
- b.) Paul's vision of the third heavens (Eph. 3:3-6; 2 Cor. 12:1-4) which greatly influences his life and writings even though he could not explain them in detail at that time,
- c.) Paul's vision of the Macedonian and the call for his services (Acts 16:9,10),
- d.) Peter's vision of clean and unclean beasts and the opening of the door of opportunity to the Gentiles (Acts 10),
- e.) The revelation to John on the isle of Patmos.

This last consisted of a series of visions portrayed in symbolic language. Together they comprise an outline of the future history of the Gospel Age and of the course of Christianity. It is more in the nature of the ancient prophecies, because even though John saw and recorded these visions he

himself could not have fully understood them. The "seals" were not opened in his day and the truths symbolized were not yet appropriate meat for the Lord's household. However, as these visions become meat in due season the honor of the apostles and the importance of their service to the church becomes clearer.

We note with amazement how this promise in inspiration was administered to the apostles. When supernatural means were needed such were used. But when natural means were sufficient they were directed in the use of those. The Lord always stood at hand to guide them into correct presentations of the truths which he had designed to feed his church. Indeed, however given and at whatever time, we can be assured that these instructions will constitute the textbook from which the world will be instructed during the messianic kingdom.

Apostolic Infallibility

Five circumstances in the New Testament are usually considered in argument against apostolic infallibility. They are:

- 1.) Peter's denial of the Lord,
- 2.) Peter's dissembling,
- 3.) The uncertainty about the time of the Lord's second advent,
- 4.) Paul instructed Timothy to be circumcised in contradiction to his own teaching,
- 5.) Paul's actions in Acts 21.

Let's consider each point in particular.

1.) It cannot be disputed that the denial by Peter of our Lord at the time of crucifixion was a serious wrong, and it was a wrong for which Peter was seriously penitent. It should be noted that it was committed before the Pentecostal blessing. Further, the infallibility claimed for the apostles applies to their public teachings-their writings-and not to every act of their lives-which were affected by the "blemishes" of their "earthen vessels." They too were marred by Adam's fall. And their blemishes, as ours, are forgiven through the merit of Christ's righteousness. The apostolic office was apart from the weaknesses of the flesh. It did not come upon perfect but imperfect men. It did not make their thoughts and actions perfect, but overruled those thoughts and actions so that the teachings of the Twelve are infallible. Interestingly, this is the kind of infallibility which the Pope claims for himself; that when he speaks "ex-cathedra," or officially, he is overruled by God and not permitted to err. This is claimed by papacy on the basis that they possess the apostolic office and authority. But this is contradicted by various Scriptures. The Twelve alone were chosen, and not in succession, but at once (Luke 6:13-16). When one failed and another took his office (Acts. 1:26) there were still but twelve. And finally, on the last pages of the revealed word, the Revelation, we are shown only twelve foundations for the faith of the church. It is they who will be recognized as such in the New Jerusalem.

2.) Peter's hypocrisy at one point in dealing with men of like passion is also pointed out as reason to disavow the infallibility of the apostles. Again, we concede the charge, as did the apostles (Acts 14:15). We repeat that these human weaknesses were not permitted to mar their work as apostles (cf. 1 Peter 1:12; Gal. 1:11,12; 1 Cor. 2:5-16). We find that Peter's error was immediately corrected by God-through the apostle Paul who kindly but firmly "*withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed*" (Gal. 2:11). Note that subsequently, in his epistles, there is no evidence of wavering on the subject of the equality of the Jews and gentiles in Christ, nor any fearfulness in acknowledging the Lord.

3.) The Lord left the apostles in uncertainty concerning the time of his Second Advent, telling them to watch, so that when he returned they might know it. It is evident that these men expected the advent to occur rather more quickly, in the first or second centuries. But this in no way mars their writings. They wisely made no statements as to the exactness of the time, but rather taught that that day could not come before there had been a great apostasy, the revealing of the man of sin and the son of perdition-Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3).

A Contradiction?

4.) Paul, who taught that circumcision profited little (Gal. 5:2), instructed Timothy to be circumcised (Acts 16:3). Is this not evidence of teaching falsely? Did he not contradict his own teachings? We answer, no: Timothy was a Jew, because his mother was a Jewess (Acts 16:1). Circumcision was a national custom among the Jews, beginning long before the Mosaic law and continuing after Christ had *"made an end of the Law, nailing it to his cross."* Abraham and his seed received direction to be circumcised four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given to Israel as a nation at Mount Sinai. Peter was designated the apostle to the circumcision (that is, to the Jews) and Paul the apostle to the uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7,8).

Paul's argument against circumcision was not addressed to Jews (Gal. 5:2) He addressed gentiles, whose only reason for considering circumcision was that false teachers were confusing them by insisting that they keep the Law covenant and that they accept Christ thus leading them to ignore their justification by faith. Paul is merely explaining that for them to be circumcised for any such reason is to repudiate their justification through Christ, and hence, the entire work of Christ.

That Paul found no objection to Jews continuing their national custom is evident (1 Cor. 7:18,19), and so his instruction to Timothy is neither surprising nor inconsistent. It was not necessary for Timothy to be circumcised. But neither was it improper that he do so, going among the Jews as he did. The ritual observance would raise the confidence of the Jews in Timothy's message, thus it was to Timothy's advantage to do so. Note that in agreement with this, when some sought to circumcise Titus (a full blooded Greek), Paul stands steadfast in resisting (Gal. 2:3).

Evidence of Divine Approval

5.) The events of the latter part of the twenty-first chapter of Acts are the final incident to which we will point in our discussion about the infallibility of the apostles. Some claim that it was because of errors in this incident that Paul was allowed to suffer so much as a prisoner and was finally sent to Rome. Such a view does not seem supported by Scripture, however.

First, we note the continuing sympathy of the other apostles towards Paul through all of his trials. Even more crucial, we think, are the evidences of the Lord's continuing favor. His course was at the instruction of the other apostles. It was testified to him by prophecy that he would suffer bonds and imprisonment. This happened before he went down to Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-14). He endured such adverse experiences because he was obedient to his conviction of the duty he bore in Christ Jesus.

In the midst of all these troubles we read two specific instances of encouragement delivered directly to Paul. *"And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome"* (Acts 23:11). *"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee"* (Acts 27:23,24).

In view of this evidence let us seek an understanding of Paul's correspondence in agreement with his uniformly bold and noble course.

Harmonizing Gospel With the Law

Paul had been pointing out the greater realities which Moses' law typified. He had not been repudiating the Mosaic Law, nor had he taught Jewish converts not to circumcise their children. The Law was holy and just. As a matter of fact, it was by the knowledge of the Law that the heinousness of sin had been understood. He had demonstrated that the Law was incapable of fulfillment by imperfect men. But Christ, keeping the Law because of his perfection, had won its rewards and now under a covenant of sacrifice offered those rewards to those unable to keep the Law. How? By faith in his perfect obedience and sacrifice-the propitiatory covering of their imperfections acceptable to God.

Certain Jewish rituals illustrated spiritual truths of the Gospel Age. Among them were fasts, celebrations of the new moon, and Sabbath days and feasts (Col. 2:16-21). The apostle shows that the Gospel of Christ neither compels nor forbids any of these. Two additional observances were added: the Lord's Supper and Baptism, but they were additions to the others (Luke 22:19; Matt. 28:19).

One of the rites which Paul observed, and the four Jews with him, was termed "purifying." As Jews they not only had the right to consecrate themselves to God in Christ, they could also, if they chose, perform the symbol of this purification. This is what they did. The men who were with Paul went one step further. They took a vow of humiliation, of having their heads shaven, which was to be witnessed before God and the people. As was the custom of the Jews, these symbolic ceremonies cost something; the charges presumably made up the "offering" of money--so much for each, to defray the expenses of the Temple.

Paul never taught the Jews that they were free from the Law, on the contrary, the Law had dominion over each of them so long as he lived. He showed, however, that if a Jew accepted Christ and became "*dead with him*," it settled the claims of the Law Covenant upon such, and made them God's freemen in Christ (Rom. 7:1-4).

Paul did teach gentile converts that they had never been under the Jewish Law Covenant. If they tried to fulfill the requirements of that Law, it would imply that they were trusting in those symbols for their salvation instead of relying upon the merit of Christ's sacrifice. To this all of the apostles agreed (cf. Acts. 21:24; 15:20, 23-29).

God made wonderful use of the twelve apostles. They were able ministers of his truth. Being guided by his spirit, supernaturally at times, naturally at times, they completed the record of history with regard to Christ Jesus so that no man of God has lacked sufficient evidence to establish his faith in the Master. The very words they chose display the care and wisdom of the Almighty -- far beyond that of any man, and beyond even what the apostles themselves comprehended.

Praise God for such a sure foundation as this!

The Question Box

What is the purpose of being "baptized for the dead?" Who is referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:29?

Paul is here speaking to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. 1:2) and to brethren (1 Cor. 15:1). The purpose? Refer to Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott where reference is made to Clarke. After saying that 1 Cor. 15:28 is the most difficult passage in the N. T., and quoting Matt. 20:22,23; Mark 10:38; and Luke 12:50, where suffering and martyrdom are represented by immersion, he sums up the Apostle's meaning as follows:

"If there be no resurrection of the dead, those who, in becoming Christians, expose themselves to all manner of privations, crosses, severe sufferings, and violent death can have no reward nor any motive sufficient to induce them to expose themselves to such miseries. But as they receive baptism as a symbol or emblem of death, in voluntarily going under water, so they receive it as an emblem of the resurrection into eternal life, in coming up out of the water, thus they are baptized for the dead, in perfect faith of the resurrection."

If you read the following verses (1 Cor. 15:30-32), they seem to confirm this sense. In speaking to the sons of Zebedee and their mother, Christ seemed to confirm this in saying, "*you shall indeed drink of my cup*" (Matt. 20:22-23).

- Loyal Petran

The world today is subject to sin and death. The consecrated and faithful will join with Christ to bring back the dead and retrain them in pure righteousness during the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ. I will keep thee, "*and give thee for a covenant of the people*" is applied to Christ and then to his church (Simeon in Luke 2:32 applies Isa. 42:6 to Christ, while Paul in 2 Cor. 5:21-6:3 applies Isa. 49:8 to the Christian faithful). God once calls the church "saviors" (Obad. 21; cf. Rev. 14:1). Our baptism will ultimately benefit the dying world of humankind after we prove faithful and are then resurrected to join our Lord Jesus Christ, thence to bless "*all the nations of the earth*" (Gal. 3:8, 16, 9).

- J. B. Parkinson

There were more arguments to be made than those in 1 Cor. 15:12-19 against the idea put forth that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul wrote to encourage and sustain the brethren in their anticipation of future life and reward.

The baptism Paul had in mind was not a momentary dip into water but the living participation by disciples in drinking the cup of experiential suffering in active obedience to God's will (Matt. 20:22, 23). The Apostle would have had no thought here (1 Cor. 15:29) that a believer may be baptized as a proxy for one who had died to effect the salvation of the unbaptized dead.

Not only the deceased but also the unjustified under the condemnation of death are referred to as "dead" -- "let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22; see also Luke 15:32; Rev. 20:12). Paul was baptized in behalf of those in the latter group of "dead." He devoted the energies of his life as a minister of the gospel to the gentiles (Acts 9:15:13:46,47; Rom. 11:13), as well as to the Jews (Acts 9:19-22; 13:14-45), that he "might save some of them" (Rom. 11:14). Every individual who has become of the church was "dead" and at enmity with God before being reconciled (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Col. 1:24).

The divinely foreseen present blessings of some of the "dead" through the "death-baptism" activities of faithful believers is the point of I Peter 4:6, a view confirmed by its preceding five verses:

"For this indeed good news was preached to dead men in order that on one hand they might be judged according to men in the flesh, on the other might live according to God in the spirit" (Marshall Interlinear).

This reading is supported by Young, Rotherham, Weymouth, RSV, and others. Manuscripts contain no Greek word for "are" dead (KJV) or for "now" dead (NIV).

1 Corinthians 15:29-32 requires careful sorting of the pronouns to accurately perceive the three entities: (a) "the dead" on whose behalf efforts to save are made by (b) the baptized believers, and (c) Paul himself. The Apostle's main point is "If there is to be no life tomorrow, why die today," why be involved in being "baptized for the dead"?

"Else what will they do, who are being immersed in behalf of the dead? If not at all are the dead to be raised, why are they even being immersed in their behalf? Why also are we running into peril every hour? Day by day am I dying! Yea! by your own boasting, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. If after the manner of men I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus what to me the profit? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Rotherham).

- Gilbert Rice

The custom seems to indicate that there existed a belief that the dead were not really dead. Paul's point seems to be that if there were to be no resurrection why were they concerned for the dead.

- J. B. Webster

There are many interpretations of this text. Since the words "which are baptized" are in the present tense, indicating that the people at Corinth were currently being baptized for the dead. This text, being in the context of "Now if there is no resurrection," would seem to indicate that this was the practice of some who desired the resurrection. See NIV translation of this verse. For the standard Bible student view (the church is dying on behalf of the world), see 'ZWT pg. R1545.

- Andrew Jarmola

The true church, as a class in full consecration as a sacrifice unto death with their Head, have as their purpose that when the dead are raised all shall have an opportunity to receive full life. This will be as they complete the final test, under the new covenant with God.

-Bill Harp

That Blessed Day

Let earth rejoice
Let heaven bestow
What bountiful riches
The barren earth will know.

The fields will be much greener
Without a speck of blight.
The songs of birds much sweeter
Without a thought of fright.

The rivers will be cleansed;
The springs flow sweet and clear;
The earth will yield its increase;
Every coming year.

The mountains and hills will be leveled,
The valleys will be raised
They no more be honored
Jehovah will be praised.

The righteous then will prosper,
They will walk the holy way,
They will put their trust in Zion,
And never go astray.

Oh earth rejoice!
Lift high your voice and sing,
The cold of winter soon is over,
Come enjoy the new, new, spring!

-W. Bredlau

The Divine Law of Recompense

"The righteous shall be recompensed with good." - Proverbs 13:31

In the law of spiritual harvesting they who sow sparingly shall reap sparingly. A divine rule which governs this operation is found in the Book of Proverbs:

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself (Prov. 11:24,25).

Those prone to give their love and sympathy generously in the service of others will be figuratively lending to the Lord and learning that he repays most generously. Has he not promised that a cup of cold water given in the name of even a humble disciple shall not go unrewarded? When heaven's final rewards are received, there will surely be some happy surprises for generous souls whose kindly acts were marked for remembrance.

Jesus must have been thinking of this generosity when he said, *"it is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35). Why so? Because the spirit in man is the same benevolent spirit as that in which God acts when he gives out his blessings, even down to the sending of rain and sunshine over all men, both just and unjust. Bread cast upon the water returns sooner or later if we are willing to sow upon all waters. Likewise are the results to those who scatter acts of kindness and pour, out words of cheer and comfort. The rule of divine compensations cannot fail. A sure recompense comes when

We give a scanty draught to one
Who faints beside the way;
There flows a fountain for our thirst
Some weary, woesome day.
We give a little flower of love
To light a darkened room:
And lo, our gardens overflow
With beauty and with bloom.

Jesus' ministry offers some beautiful illustrations of how the law of recompense operates. Jesus borrows two small loaves and five little fish from a lad and spreads a feast for thousands, so that a weary and hungry multitude might not suffer on their return from the retreat into which they had followed him. Need we ask how much of the twelve baskets left over were given back to this boy who so willingly placed his scanty fare in the hands of Jesus? We may well believe that he was recompensed according to the rule always present in the Savior's measure, "pressed down and running over" (Luke 6:38). Peter's boat is borrowed for a pulpit on the seashore and returned to him laden with fish. Simon, the Cyrenian, is compelled by Roman soldiers to assist Jesus in carrying his cross, a task which must have seemed at the time very undesirable to Simon, but a sure reward was to come in due time. The Lord can never be a debtor to any one. In days to come the household of Simon has a place of honor in the apostle Paul's list of intimate friends. By comparing the records of Mark (Mark 15:21) and the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. 16:13), we have a substantial basis for the thought that the cross Simon shared with Jesus that day shortly thereafter became the emblem of the great salvation for himself and his house. What sweet memories must have been his in recalling that moment of extraordinary privilege. Mary breaks her alabaster box of fragrant ointment, thinking only of a service to be grasped in a passing

moment. Jesus multiplied that moment into nineteen hundred years of compensating honor by inscribing her act of love on the pages of his imperishable Gospel story. All the recorded and unrecorded acts of loving service to Jesus in days when he had no place to lay his head we may be sure have been, or will yet be rewarded, a hundred fold. Such things are treasures laid up in heaven where they never decay and where they will be a joy forevermore.

The same thought may be traced through the experiences of Paul. Who can measure the recompense in store for Paul through God's rule of compensation. How his years in prison have been glorified for him. Where can we find in all his ministry a greater verification of these words than from the letter to the Romans: "And we know that all things work *together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Rom. 8:28). When Paul penned those words he could not know how wonderfully true they would be in his own ministry. He yearned to carry the message of Christ crucified to the ends of the earth; but his heart's desire was repeatedly hindered by his frequent imprisonments. He could accept that he was in God's hand and that all that transpired must be for the greater good. He accomplished more for Christ and the church while in chains than he could have done without them. To apprehend Christ exceeded all that Paul asked, or thought (Eph. 3:20). His epistles and personal letters were written in prison, but they have been circulated into every quarter of the globe and through these he has spoken to tribes and nations in their own tongue. Today through New Testament translations he has "a thousand tongues to sing his great Redeemer's praise." From Greenland's mountains to far-flung isles of the seven seas he is proclaiming the Gospel of Christ as "The power of God unto *Salvation to every one that believeth.*" Instead of a ministry limited to his day, God overruled so that Paul's ministry continues to this day. What a recompense for bearing those cruel chains for a few short years!

God's dealings are such with all his people. Debtors to his marvelous grace they are, and ever shall be. And it matters not that our sphere of suffering or service be very much shorter than those of the Apostle Paul. The same overruling and the same law of compensation operates in the smallest fields of spiritual life as well as in the greatest. All are God's workmanship in Christ Jesus. In every individual experience the present life has its relationship to the same two worlds -- the present world with all of its sorrows and joys, its lessons and meanings in preparation for the one to come. We live for, and in, eternity from the moment we begin our walk in newness of life through Christ Jesus. Therefore, the compensating joys meant to be a part of present experience are just so many links connecting us with the complete joy awaiting us at the end of our pathway.

This makes it important that we recognize as a personal joy that "*godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*" (1 Tim. 4:8). If there is any disposition to weigh our trials as they occur and to measure sacrifices as burdensome and something undesirable, then little will be known of the sweet profitableness God wants us to experience now. In such an attitude of mind it will not be long before the complaint will be ready for expression, "it is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?" Our spiritual growth in grace and understanding is therefore determined by the measure of joy we show in letting God have his way with us. Those Hebrew brethren had the proper attitude toward God's permissive will, and consequently they were happy in considering the recompense sure to be theirs in due time. To them the word was,

"... ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb. 10:34).

This spirit is always necessary if we are to know the "hundredfold" blessing which Jesus promised for the present life.

Thinking, then, of the little acts of kindness we may perform, of the trials we must have for our testing, of the providences shrouded in a measure of mystery, what recompense is to be found by thinking on the fact that all things are under God's control and that each one of them are meant to enrich our experience beyond our thought, as in the case of Paul. This frame of mind and this harmony with God's will is essential before we can give thanks in everything (Eph. 5:20) with sincerity. We must not only properly regard the joys set before us in the future, but we must also treasure our present joys of salvation and realize that God has made us a witness to the power of resting in his will. And this is significant! The rule of compensating blessings will sometimes mean that God's denials are the deepest manifestations of his love. His seeming delays are often the clearest expressions of his priceless favor. We often do not know what is best for us. If not now, some day we will confess that God's way is best -- as many others have done in the past. How many have eventually discovered that the "afterward" of blessing was much greater than if God had allowed them to have matters more in their own way -- according to their imperfect understanding. Which of us has not needed the lesson set forth in these lines:

I asked of God that he should give success
To the high task I sought for him to do;
I asked that every hindrance might grow less,
And that my hours of weakness might be few;
I asked that far and lofty heights be scaled -
And now I meekly thank him that I failed.

For, with the pain and sorrow, came to me
A dower of tenderness in act and thought;
And with the failure came a sympathy,
An insight which success had never brought.
Father, I had foolish been, and unblest,
If thou hadst granted me my blind request.

Then, as God keeps our two worlds united in his providences, let us work to keep them united in our thoughts. We will be eternally thankful for all of God's overruling when we know as we are known. In the assurance that it will be thus, how easy it should be to "let the little while between, in all its golden light be seen." The word written cannot fail, "The righteous shall be recompensed with good" -- compensated now according to the measure of faith, and recompensed hereafter "*according to the riches of his glory*" (Phil. 4:9).

- J. J. Blackburn

Make Straight Paths for Your Feet

"..make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but rather let it be healed." - Hebrews 12:13

What importance do the Apostle's words, quoted above, have in our lives? He is not referring to our literal feet or to any literal shoveling of a smooth pathway. Rather we find that each of the Lord's "sheep" or followers have some forms of weaknesses. As a result of these weaknesses, or figurative "lameesses," it is impossible for them to make steady progress in the footsteps of our Lord.

Recognizing that we all have some weaknesses we are encouraged to determine just which are our own weaknesses -- be they physical, mental, emotional--so that we may address them specifically and shape our course of life accordingly,-for the pleasure of our Lord. We make straight paths by choosing courses of action that will not unnecessarily aggravate or excite our weaknesses -- figuratively making us more "lame" than when we began. We should try to overcome our "lameess." That means not only that we are to pray *"...abandon us not in temptation,"* but that we take action to avoid temptations.

How does one do this? By the exercise of our wills [our determination -- mental resolutions]. In short, this amounts to our solemn promise to the Lord that we will take his course (of righteousness) in all life's decisions. We find, therefore, that anyone who is following the Apostle's injunction in our theme text has made such resolutions to the Lord which he should faithfully perform. This is the only course by which we can become victors in our spiritual warfare and hear the ultimate divine approval pronounced upon our life.

The Lord does not lay these vows upon us. There are no commandments about what we are to do and what not to do. That was the way of the Law Covenant but it would place the children of the spirit under law and would hinder them from offering sacrifices as antitypical priests. We find, therefore, that the Lord speaks to his people of this age in general terms, indicating the right path and allowing them to make decisions based upon their necessities. Thus they grow in grace and character individually as they recognize their responsibility, accept it, and pay their vows to the Lord.

Those who discover where they are the weakest, as a result of the attacks of the great adversary, and who by the Lord's help repairs those weaknesses in their spiritual walls of defense does so by the power of their resolve to please God. He who goes through life without discovering any weaknesses in character is blind and *"cannot see afar off."* He who attempts no corrections of the flaws in their character by setting their mind-before the Lord -- to do so has not yet begun the character development without which no person can be judged an "overcomer."

Making Friends

"Making to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." - Luke 16:9, American Standard Version

These words of the Master conclude the parable of the Unjust Steward. The story is of a rich man who upon learning that his goods were being wasted, called his steward to him. The steward was told that his stewardship was at an end and he was instructed to give account of the master's property. The steward, thinking about his own future, made a plan. He called the master's debtors to him. To one he gave a fifty percent discount and to another twenty percent. He settled all his master's accounts and in so doing also made friends of the debtors.

This parable used as an illustration a common Middle Eastern arrangement. A large property owner or merchant would have a general manager to whom was given full authority to buy, sell, exchange, or barter. As long as the manager made a profit, worked faithfully, and pleased his master, he was free to do anything. The discounts given to debtors were not excessive nor beyond his power. His closing out of his accounts with discounts was not termed "unjust." He was probably liquidating doubtful accounts, just as is done in business today. He had wasted his master's goods before his master had talked with him and it was that former wastefulness which was dishonest.

The parable was addressed to the disciples. But it was spoken in the presence of Pharisees and applies to both (cf. Luke 16:1,14).

Jewish Stewards

The Pharisees were a prominent sect, strict in their adherence to the rituals of the law. They were the majority party of the Sanhedrin, the chief council of Israel, which traced its beginning to the elders whom Moses appointed to the government of the nation. The Pharisees dictated the ways in which the people were to live up to the law and they were stewards over Israel (Matt. 23:2,3). The Pharisees increased the debts of Jews. The people were already in God's debt for failing to keep the law (Gal. 2:16), and the sacrifices of the tabernacle were to typically atone for what they could not perform (Heb. 5:1-4).

The Pharisees believed themselves just and considered the people to be sinners (Luke 18:10-12). However, the Jewish stewards were not pleasing God (represented by the rich man of the parable). Nor were they the friends of the people (represented in the debtors of the parable). Their stubborn and quarrelsome attitude made it impossible for the rulers to be received into the Christian church when their stewardship ended.

Would it not have been better for the rulers to have told the Jewish people, "You cannot keep the Law, and neither can we, however hard we may try. God has arranged atonement sacrifices to cover our imperfections. Do the best you can to keep the Law. Maybe it is only fifty percent. God will forgive the balance of your debt through the atonement sacrifices." This would have encouraged the people to keep the Law and would have aided them in recognizing Jesus as the antitypical atonement sacrifice.

Modern Stewards

The parable has greater application to the stewards of the churches today: be they pastors, ministers, bishops, or archbishops. Among these there is seen to be a conspiracy of silence. They know the creeds of the Dark Ages to be false, but they allow them to remain as fundamental beliefs in their churches. Modern day Pharisees oppose the truths being revealed by our Lord with the same blind opposition shown by the Jewish stewards. Jesus spoke this parable because of the unwillingness of people to accept the changes in religious thinking which he taught (Ps. 2:2, 3; Isa. 8:14).

If today's stewards were as wise as those in the parable, they would admit that the hell of the Dark Ages is not taught in the Scriptures. Instead they choose to leave the hell of torment in their creeds and cause the people, the debtors of the parable, to lose faith in the churches. If these stewards were clever they would admit that the churches have failed to convert the world and that one does not have to belong to their particular church in order to be saved.

The priests of Rome also have somewhat to learn. If they were wise they would discount their claim to apostolic succession. They would admit that in performing the ceremony of the mass they cannot recreate the body and blood of Jesus nor can they sacrifice him anew on thousands of altars daily. But these, doubtless because of their positions of honor and livelihood, refuse to discount these demands upon the credulous members of their churches who look for leaders to tell them what they owe to God and how their payments must be made (Isa. 56:10,11).

Those who are stewards in name only are not discounting their demands upon their members and they resist the tide of present truth even as the Jewish stewards resisted the truths that Jesus taught. In A.D. 70 the Jewish stewards lost their positions. Today, Jewish rabbis strive to fill such an office, but cannot, for the temple, its altars, vessels, and consecrated priesthood are gone. The Jewish religion is a pitiful mockery of the glory that was. A still greater degree of destruction awaits the false Christian stewards (Zech. 13:3-6).

The Russian Revolution well illustrated the type of thing that is likely to occur in the Western world. The Greek Catholic Church Patriarchs were more powerful in Russia than the Bishops of Rome. So openly did they cheat the illiterate peasants that the revolutionaries convinced the people that the church and priesthood were frauds. The new leaders opened sacred cases in the cathedrals which were supposed to hold the bones and relics of the supposed saints to show the people that what lay within was mere papier-mâché. The people were so enraged that priests were murdered and churches were pillaged.

Each Christian A Steward

The application of this parable to Jesus' followers is specific. Its opening words (Luke 16:1) read: "*He said unto his disciples...*" Luke (Luke 16:9) makes direct application of the lesson. Jesus says for his followers to *make friends*.

How many people pass through life without the joys good friends can give. No doubt many have met such persons. They are forlorn. They seem to crave friendship and are envious of those who have friends. But observation would suggest that the friendless are such because they themselves are insufficiently friendly. One makes friends by being a friend. Love begets love. Christians should set themselves to *make friends* and avoid making enemies (Prov. 18:24).

What a close and precious relationship is expressed in our theme text. The Greek word is *philos*, meaning "dear," "fond," "friendly." David and Jonathan illustrate true friendship . "*The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul*" (1 Sam. 18:1).

Friendship is not all pleasure, neither does it happen by chance. After one has made a friend his work is only beginning. A Chinese proverb says, "It takes a year to make a friend, but you can lose one in an hour." To keep friends one must be constant and true. One cannot keep friends and let imaginary wrongs or bad temper toward them cause harsh or discourteous words. A loyal friend does not gossip about confidences given them.

"The friendly eye overlooks the broken gate, but sees the rose in his friend's garden." This is a pictorial way of saying that a friend must not be critical or demanding. He should NOT be like the man who had been forgiven nine million dollars by his master but who put his fellow servant in prison because that man had not paid him back the paltry sum of sixteen dollars (Matt. 18:24-35). Friendship is nourished by generosity, tenderness, and the repayment by the recipient of more than he ever received.

One of the greatest tests of friendship occurs when friends take opposite paths. Then, if ever, one needs the advice of Chaucer, who said, "Keep well thy tongue, and keep thy friends." It is a test even if one is frank, kindly, and fully explains why he disagrees with another. But if in disagreeing one speaks sarcastically and stubbornly or if he is unsympathetic toward his friend's views, soon friendship turns to suspicion, then to coldness, and finally to hatred as intense as the friendship formerly had been tender. If one could but realize how lonely he would be after losing his friends, he would guard against the small beginnings of separation from those who love him.

Earthly possessions wear out in time, but friendship grows stronger with the years. Old friends are the best friends because each knows the other. Like old trees whose roots have become intermingled, so human hearts grow inseparable from their friends. Even the jealous, who might desire to drive a wedge between them, cannot separate such (Prov. 15:1,2; 16:27,28; 17:9).

Believers in the plan of the ages and the manifold friendliness of God in arranging for the salvation of all through the gift of his own dear son should be the most friendly people on earth. This is particularly true when they are among themselves. They have much in common. They all seek the same characteristic likeness to God: adding to faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (2 Pet. 1:5-8). If these qualities were liberally exercised between brethren in Christ, they would be the finest of examples of friendship to be found in all the world. The Prophet Malachi says that these speak often one to another and that the Lord will remember, writing a book of remembrance of what they said. Think of it! A book of remembrance of the things they say! Written by the Almighty Jehovah (cf. Matt. 10:29,30; 12:36,39; Mark 9:1; Acts 10:4,31).

All are striving to make their calling and election sure. As *friends* let each be sympathetic towards the other. Let each try to share a little of his brother's burden. His own in turn will become that much lighter.

Like travelers toward a distant land,
We each some heavy burden bear,

And ev'ry heart doth feel its weight
E'en tho' the face a smile may wear.

And wonderful tho' it may seem,
Each time you help a brother bear

His burden, you *will* surely find
Your own has lost its weight of care.

Then let us speak the kindly word,
that makes the burden light,

And helps the weary, fainting heart
To fight the goodly fight.

- Zion's Glad Songs

Would that the spirit of David's great grandmother were spread generously throughout each Bible study group:

"Intreat me not to leave thee, to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16,17).

It is impossible for Christians to be friendly with everyone without sacrificing their principles. *"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God"* (James 4:4)? However, a Christian should not fail to be friends because of his own unfriendliness: *"Then said these men, we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God"* (Dan. 6:5). The greatest friendliness the disciple can show to the worldly is to help them see some of the blessed *truth*.

Best Friends

According to the parable the Christian must make friends with those who can receive him into everlasting habitations when his present house fails. God and Jesus are the only ones who can receive Christians into their *"...home not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1-4; John 14:2). The Christian in turn is to make the friendship of God and Jesus by being kind to and making friends with his rich master's debtors. *"For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen"* (1 John 4:20). *"Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* (1 John 3:16).

Each child of God is entrusted with some stewardship. Presently all worldly possessions are part of the Present Evil World-the mammon of unrighteousness. The word "mammon" (Greek, *mammonas*) means "wealth personified," "avarice." All that we now possess is tainted with this world's avarice. It is only because of Jesus' ransom and our adoption into God's family that our little money, food, raiment, time, and strength are acceptable to God. Actually it is part of this world -the mammon of unrighteousness.

The Christian's stewardship will fail: it may fail sooner than he knows. Certainly it will not be long delayed, for this span of life is the period of his stewardship. Jesus tells Christians to use the mammon of unrighteousness as a means of making friends for themselves.

All mankind owes a debt to God. We owe our love, devotion, everything we are, have, and shall be. Firstly, God created us and by this act we owe him all. Secondly, God gave Jesus to die for us, and we thus owe him our all. Thirdly, we consecrated our all to him, freely and of our own will.

None of us, however, pays our debt in full. It is because we fail to carry out our obligations, our debts to God, that our love for one another is tested. The steward of the parable helped the rich man's debtors pay their debts. We must help each other pay the debt owed to God. *"Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:2; cf. Heb. 10:24; 1 John 3:18). We can do nothing directly for God. He is divine, spiritual. He does not need and cannot use our strength, our money, or our earthly goods. But he counts as done for him anything we do for his little ones (Matt. 25:40). Therefore, if we would make God our friend, we can do so only by being kind, loving, and friendly to God's children -- his debtors -- and thus help each the other pay his debt of consecration -- his all to God.

Parental, filial, conjugal, and brotherly loves are limited in their scope, even when mixed with the mortar of friendship. The making of friends is without restraint, however. We may have as many as we like, of number, of age, of sex, of relationship. Let us especially include as our friends the followers of Christ who acknowledge their debts to God and who are paying what they can to him in glory, honor, and service.

While we must make and keep friends, we cannot demand that others be equally solicitous toward us. "Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."

"Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not" (Prov. 27:10).

- B.F. Hollister

A Man of Power

Daniel was a man of power, and because he was prayerful he was powerful. His radiant witness made its impression on all around. The threats of men terrified him not, for God was his all in all. His humble heart soared above these things and he could speak with calm and fearlessness to the kings of Babylon, because of the exceeding *glory* of Jehovah.

Alone

It is human to stand with the crowd. It is divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide.

"...no man stood with me, , but all men forsook me..." (2 Tim. 4:16) wrote the battle scarred Apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer for his life, for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

Noah built and voyaged alone.
Abraham wandered and worshiped alone.
Daniel dined and prayed alone.
Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone.
Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone.
Jesus loved and died alone.

Of the lonely way his disciples would live he said: "...strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14).

Of their treatment by the many who walk in the broad way he said: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

The church in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The church of the kings praised Moses and persecuted the prophets.

The church of Caiaphas praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus. The church of the Popes praised the Savior and persecuted the saints. And multitudes now, both in the church and in the world, applaud the courage and fortitude of the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness similar faithfulness to truth today.

Wanted:

Men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortunes and friends and life itself.

"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:36).

"He that loveth Father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37).

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38).

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39).

- Herald Press, Pennsylvania

The Reality of God

The greatest mystery known to man is God! Is he there, or is he not? Does he exist, or does he not? Is there really a transcendent superhuman personal being up there in the sky controlling all things, or is what we call God just an impersonal force pervading all creation? Is the observable universe itself God, slowly becoming conscious of itself? Is the idea of God nothing more than a projection of the human mind, so that in a sense man creates God in his own image and likeness? Each of these hypotheses has its advocates and satisfies some inquirers, but none of them satisfies all; probably most thinking people feel that none of them adequately defines the truth.

Nevertheless the universe is a fact; its existence cannot be denied. We live, are conscious of our surroundings, and are affected by them. That cannot be denied either. We are biological creatures inhabiting an environment from which we draw the energy needed to maintain our lives and power our actions. So accurately is the environment fitted to man that only a small variation of any of its factors would render earthly human life earth impossible.

This planet is ninety-three million miles from the sun; if it were less than seventy-five million or more than a hundred, men could not live on its surface. Neither could they if its diameter of eight thousand miles was reduced to six thousand or increased to ten thousand, nor yet if its twenty-four hour day was increased to eighty hours, or the average heat of summer was twenty degrees higher than it is, or cold of winter twenty degrees lower. So with many others of the characteristic features of our habitat.

In our saner moments we are driven to ask ourselves how this came to be. How was the earth made like this, so admirably fitted to our needs? How did the universe come into existence? How did we receive the *life* we have. From that, if *we* are serious in our thinking, we go on to ask how long all this is going to last and what *is* the purpose of it all. And so we come inevitably to the question of God.

The fact that the universe does exist implies that it had a beginning, a source. Whether it came into existence by the working of some blind impersonal force or the will of a supreme intelligent mind, the fact remains that the material of which the universe is made must have been created and therefore must have had a creative source. All matter, whether solid, liquid or gaseous, is made up of atoms, nearly a hundred varieties of them. An iron bar is made of iron atoms; a gold coin of gold atoms. The air we breath is composed of a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen atoms, and water, a chemical combination of oxygen and hydrogen atoms. All these varieties of atoms are derived from the simplest and most common of all -- hydrogen. More than ninety-nine percent of the material in the universe is hydrogen, and nuclear processes going on in the stars are continuously manufacturing atoms of all other known materials from hydrogen and distributing them through space, so making possible the formation of worlds such as the one we inhabit. We have therefore to look down the vista of the ages to a fantastically remote time when an unimaginably vast quantity of hydrogen came into existence, and the creation of the universe began.

Two main theories attempt to explain the origin of the universe and hold the field; one was first debated and made famous by the work of the noted cosmologist, Prof. Fred Hoyle of Cambridge University, and his associates. This theory claims that hydrogen atoms are being continuously created out of nothing, appearing from nowhere at a uniform rate and adding to the total content of the universe as time goes on.

According to Hoyle's calculations only one atom of hydrogen appears in the space the size of an ordinary living room in every three million years. This still makes enough new material to form many thousands of new stars the size of our sun in every second of time, which only goes to show how vast our universe really is.

If Hoyle's view is ultimately shown to be erroneous (many scientists favoring the "Big Bang" theory assert this to be the case) and all the atoms in the universe did appear at one moment in the inconceivably distant past, the questions still remain-how did they come into existence, where did they come from, and who made them? It must also be asked, Who devised the intricate chemical process by which hydrogen turns into helium, and helium into beryllium, and so on up the scale until all the basic elements to uranium are produced?

By what means did these elements learn to combine with each other to produce such widely dissimilar substances as coarse granite cliffs and the delicate water-lily? The one is easily answered, says the geologist. Granite is a mixture of compounds formed chiefly from oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, silicon, iron, aluminum, and potassium, compacted together by the action of heat and pressure. The other is easily answered, says the biologist. The water-lily is a mixture of compounds formed chiefly from oxygen, carbon, silicon, iron, aluminum, and potassium, given form by the action of sunlight. By what means or wonderful alchemy, then, are the same materials brought together to emerge on the one hand as a block of granite and on the other as a water-lily? And how was it decided, and by whom, how much granite the world should contain and how many water-lilies? Those water-lilies, too, possess a characteristic which the granite does not have; they grow from small beginnings, adding to themselves, and they reproduce their kind. They have life! How do they grow? Away in the sun, where hydrogen is being converted into helium, part of the hydrogen is transformed into energy -- solar radiation is the technical term -- which wings its way to the earth and is manifest as sunlight. Falling upon the leaves of the water lily that energy performs a series of chemical changes in which the water and air surrounding the plant are associated and reappear as solid plant substance. The plant has grown a little more, and part of its new material was substance in the sun only eight minutes previously, transferred into energy for its swift passage to earth and then back into substance again. Where does that energy originate and how did it start? No man has yet found the answer to that question in scientific research. It is known that matter and energy are interchangeable; the one can be converted into the other and vice versa, and today it is a commonplace to picture matter as "frozen energy." But where the energy comes from and how it is sustained, and where life comes from and how that is sustained, no man can say; these are the twin enigmas of the universe. Their existence cannot be denied but their origin cannot be fathomed.

So, once again, we inevitably come back to the question of God.

The search for God involves these two incontrovertible factors -- the presence of life and the phenomenon of energy. Life we do not understand, although we possess it and we perceive its effects in our fellows and in our environment. Energy we understand dimly; we know it as a power (or force) that does things and changes things and can be "locked-up," as it were, in the shape of atoms to form solid matter. Matter we know; we see it in the world around us and in our own bodies, and we touch it and feel it and call it "solid," but the physicist tells us that the atoms of which all things consist are basically centers of interacting electrical forces and that in actual fact there is nothing "solid" there at all -- and by the time we understand that we are more or less out of our depth and uninterested in pursuing this subject further.

Much more appealing to the average person's range of thinking could be the simple yet illuminating words of Scripture

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. 1:1-3).

The Spirit of God in active operation, the emergence of light; these are simple expressions used to convey the idea that energy, divine energy, was at work in creation. So with the coming of life. *"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" -- the atoms -- "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" -- life which is of God" -- and man became a living soul"* (Gen. 2:7). Man, then, is a combination of life and energy, the two basic factors of existence as we know it, originating from the Great First Cause which we call God.

Men of science have realized this although their language is not always easy to follow. Thus Sir James Jeans, a former Royal Astronomer, had this to say:

"The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter, we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter-not, of course, our individual minds, but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thoughts" (The Mysterious Universe-1930).

Atoms -- thoughts in the mind of God; the idea may sound more like the muse of a poet than the statement of a scientist but it may yet be found to enshrine a fundamental truth. A later writer, Kenneth Gatland, in "The Inhabited Universe" (1957) speaks for many scientists of the eighties when he says:

"Science has looked beyond the molecular structure of "solid" matter to its atomic existence, and has found nothing more "material" than empty space and fields of energy. The universe is much more a creation of thought than of structure, like thought waves rippling towards an idea. The question we must strive to answer is whether the universe is purposive. That is to say, has man emerged from the shapeless dust clouds of interstellar space merely as the result of blind throws of chance, or is there some special kind of direction behind it all? The inevitable question must be faced; is the purposefulness revealed in the universe an attribute of God? What is God? At best, we can only think of an Infinite Consciousness which is beyond our powers of understanding. And though we might apply great ingenuity to our guess, any theories we may have will be unavoidably conditioned by our dimensional limitations."

Acknowledged as the greatest scientist and mathematician of our times, Dr. Albert Einstein, whose discoveries and reasoning have revolutionized human knowledge regarding the physical universe, has given his personal testimony in these words:

"My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior Spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God" (Lincoln Barnett The Universe and Dr. Einstein, 1959).

Beyond the confines of this universe, outside the restrictions of space and time as we understand those terms, independent of all things and pre-existing all things, then, there exists that from which all life and continuing energy derive. There exists also that which has made it possible for sentient beings such as men to exist and to know they exist, to think and reason intelligently, to make use of their environment and take from it what they need to continue their conscious ex-

istence. That force or power, call it what we will, is God. Because that power is the primal source of all energy and life and intelligence wherever found, its energy must infinitely exceed the sum total of all energy residing in creation, its life infinitely more vital than all the life of which we know, its intelligence infinitely superior to the highest level of intelligence to which man will ever attain. Because that Power is supremely intelligent we cannot apply the impersonal pronoun "it," we must use the personal pronoun "he." And because the only intelligent personal beings we can picture in our minds eye are men like ourselves, when we use the pronoun "he" we immediately start thinking of God in man-like terms.

But God cannot really exist in the form conjured up in ancient times, a majestic king-like human figure seated upon a jeweled throne up in the sky. Neither, on the other hand, can he be imagined as a kind of abstract super-intelligence inherent in the material universe and inseparable from it. Because God, who created, must have existed before the creation of the universe, because the universe itself is altogether the fruit of divine power exerted in space and time, it must follow that God is independent of the universe as regards his person, although he pervades the universe as regards his power and presence. Since it is impossible -- despite the best endeavors of Dr. Einstein and his co-workers-for the human brain to visualize any boundary to space outside of which space does not exist, or any beginning of time prior to which time was not, it is inevitable that we picture God as inside our universe in some such fashion as a super-potentate in the starry heavens watching over and ruling this world of men which owes its creation to him.

When Jesus was asked by Philip to *"show us the Father..."* he could only tell them *"he who has seen me has seen the Father"*; Jesus himself in the glory of his sinless humanity conveyed the only possible concrete idea of God to their minds and one that was adequate to their needs. Despite the seeming scorn with which Dr. John Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, treated those who picture God as being "up there" or "above the bright blue sky," it appears from the storm his remarks aroused that his own definition of God as "the ground of our being" was understood in the main only by professional theologians and not by all of them. It is, of course, quite true that God is the "ground of our being" in the sense that we exist only in him; St. Paul said that long before the Bishop thought of it: *"In him we live, and move, and have our being"* (Acts 17:28). At any level of culture or intellect normal among men, it is probably the most rational thing to picture God in the traditional manner, heavenly throne with attendant angels and all, within the bounds of the universe but far away from man's interfering space probes and rocket ships. We know perfectly well that this is but a symbol of a spiritual reality which itself is utterly beyond our intellectual power.

After all, if there existed at the bottom of the sea a colony of intelligent oysters which had never moved from their native rocks and to whom the gospel of God was preached, their conception of God could hardly have been other than that of a super oyster of infinite power inhabiting a region above the surface of the sea. And since the Bible does offer casual evidences of the existence of higher levels of sentient intelligent life above that of the terrestrial human, we men might well stand in relation to those levels of life as oysters do to us. Much more important than our visual conception of the person of God is our realization and conviction that he does exist, that in him resides the highest expression of every moral attribute, so that beside infinite power we also credit him with infinite goodness. It is the latter factor which makes possible a personal relationship between man and God, a possibility which the existence of the Bible as God's revelation of himself to men exalts into reality.

Now if the Bible is in fact such a divine revelation it is logical to expect some direct declaration within its covers conveying to men as accurate a conception of the divine nature and handiwork as men could be expected to understand; this is even so. There are many such statements.

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit..." (Isa. 57:15).

In a couple of short sentences the omnipresence of God is declared; he dwells in eternity, outside of space and time, yet is also present with the man, a creature of space and time, whose heart reaches out to communion and union with him.

"...the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God ... dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see..." (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16).

Since light is energy, that declaration is scientifically as well as theologically true. What is perhaps the most tremendous of all such statements is that which, as rendered from the Hebrew by Fenton, says "*I only am God; I existed before time itself*" (Isa. 43:12-13). The idea of an existence outside time or before time began has only been discussed by men in this modern age. They have been anticipated by the holy Spirit of God, speaking through his prophet, two and a half millenniums ago. In like manner what has been discovered in recent times respecting the creation of the universe from an unknown source of pure energy and the associated formation of stars, suns, and planets is well supported by words written in days when the world was young and men generally were in closer touch with God than they are, in the main, today.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and the host of them by the breath of his mouth ... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:6,9).

"Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth"-this is God speaking- "and my right hand hath spanned the heavens. When I call unto them, they stand up together" (Isa. 48:13).

Then comes this challenging word which, taken literally, must arouse the wonder and excite the envy of any modern astronomer, "*He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names*" (Ps. 147:4). Astronomers have long since run out of names for stars and designate newly discovered ones by code numbers. Words like these express in terms simple enough for all to understand how what Gatland calls the "Infinite Consciousness" brought all things into existence by an exercise of will, of thought, by Divine Word.

If one were to inquire how such a consciousness itself came into existence, or if it is conceivable that in fact such always existed and never had a beginning, the only answer to matters that lie so completely outside the range of human understanding and reasoning is that given by the Arabian philosopher Elihu four thousand years ago: "*God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out*" (Job 36:26). We can never hope to perceive more than an infinitesimal fraction of the nature and activity of God. Elihu's contemporary Job grasped that fact very clearly when, after recounting examples of the mightiest phenomena of the natural world and accrediting them all to God, he said "*Lo, these are by the outskirts of his ways; and how small a whisper do we hear of him*" (Job 26:14, RSV)!

So, then, life and energy are characteristics of God and have their origin in him. All creation stems from that. These twin factors imply intelligence associated with action, activity. That too is characteristic of God. Omnipotent, all-powerful, as the heavenly chorus in Revelation the nineteenth chapter, verse six has it: "*Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.*" Omnipresent, his presence is a reality in every part of his wide-flung creation. No one need feel far away from him or that events are slipping out of his control. "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good*" (Prov. 15:3). Omniscient, knowing all things and

fully cognizant of all things, from the most profound mysteries of creation to the faintest half-formed thoughts in the hearts of men.

"...stop and consider the wondrous works of God ... the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:14,16, RSV).

"Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. 139:4, RSV). It is impossible to ignore the fact that these men of ancient times possessed a positive knowledge of the existence of God which the discoveries and principles of modern science are increasingly tending to confirm and cannot overturn.

This, then is God.
God is!
And God is great.

- Bible Study Monthly, England

Praise Our King

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
To his feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore his praises sing:
Hallelujah! hallelujah!
Praise the everlasting king.

Praise him for his grace and favor
To our fathers in distress;
Praise him, still the same as ever,
Slow to chide and swift to bless:
Hallelujah! hallelujah!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Entered Into Rest

Adeline Beuthin, AUSTRALIA
Ellie Hall, CA
Harold O Hoffman, OH
Jacob W Komen, WA
Anna Weaver, CA