

THE HERALD

of Christ's Kingdom

September-October 1992

EDITORS' JOURNAL

Starting a new editorial year

This issue of *The Herald* marks the beginning of a new editorial year, with a new board of editors, whose names appear on page 2 of this issue.

"Continuity with freshness" is the goal of the current editors. *The Herald* has filled a special role for many students of the Scriptures for the past 74 years. The editors hope to maintain the tradition of a magazine dedicated to the spiritual upbuilding of truly consecrated followers of Christ and promote the encouragement of all who love Jesus to a closer walk with God.

Stressing the continuity theme, the editorial policies of the board will seek to ensure that all articles be in harmony with the teachings of the Word of God, as well as mature and in-depth treatment of the various facets of Christian experience.

GOADS OR NAILS

King Solomon wrote that "*the words of the wise are [either] as goads, or as nails fastened*" (Eccl. 12:11). The purpose of any writing should reflect one of these two goals-either to goad or to urge the Christian on to greater faithfulness; to nail down or fasten more tightly the unchanging doctrine and concepts of truth which make the Bible such a precious book to the sincere Christian.

For "freshness" we hope to encourage participation of writers whose works have not appeared in *The Herald* before, writers who are known for their deep spirituality and accurate knowledge of Bible truths.

In striving for this "freshness," however, it is not with the thought of omitting the heritage of our brethren of past times. The editors hope to regularly include abridgments of discourses of Bible students who have passed on to their reward.

Realizing the Christian responsibility to develop a Christlike character in devotion and knowledge as well, it will be an aim of the journal to serve these needs also.

NEW FEATURES

Beginning with this issue, the inside back cover will be devoted to a feature entitled, *And Finally* . . . Poems and inspirational prose of both contemporary Christians and those of the past will appear on this page for the meditation of our readers.

To stimulate growth in knowledge and a firm foundation in the teachings of the Scriptures, each issue of *The Herald* will include at least one article of a doctrinal nature, examining anew the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Prophecies also will be continually reviewed, so that we can look at the continuing developments in the world around us and trace "the stately steppings of our God." Many of our readers have expressed appreciation for the

"*Question Box*" feature, and this will be continued on a regular basis. We encourage our readers to submit their questions for consideration in this column.

The regular features of announcing conventions and conferences of ecclesias, and informing our readers of the deaths of brethren in the obituary column will continue as heretofore. We encourage Bible student congregations to keep us informed of their convention plans, and we will be glad to publicize them. We also encourage all of you to inform us of the deaths of brethren so that we may inform our readers of their passing.

The *Newsletter* of the PBI will continue to be published at least three times a year and will be bound in *The Herald* itself as an unnumbered center section.

YOUR PART

Letters from our readers are greatly encouraged. We value your thoughts and comments and can better set our plans for the future with the feedback which you alone can provide. Insofar as possible, we will attempt to promptly answer all such correspondence.

Finally, dear brethren, the greatest need of the editors of this journal is a continuing interest in your prayers, for unless any endeavor be directed of the Lord it will surely come to nought.

With these thoughts, we of the editorial board look forward eagerly to the challenge set before us of honoring God in all that we do by being of service to you, our brethren.

The Basis of Faith and Hope

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. " (1 Corinthians 15:14)

by: F.A. Essler

The Serpent's old lie, *"Ye shall not surely die,"* obscures the importance of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. The immensity of the resurrection is minimized by a philosophy which is built upon that first lie in Eden. It is the common thought that there is no death and what happens when people "die" is only transition. Hence, it is commonly held that Jesus did not die and that his so-called resurrection was no resurrection at all.

Death is the opposite of life, a falling away from life. Resurrection is a setting up again, a giving back, a restoring again of that which was, but had ceased to exist-life. Death is the end of being; resurrection is the restoration of being. The more this truth is impressed upon our minds, the more clearly Christ's resurrection displays God's mighty power, a power superior to sin and death.

The resurrection assures us that the reign of sin and death will end and a full opportunity will be given to all to partake of a resurrection (Acts 17:31). *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."* (1Cor. 15:21)

The deeper one yearns for God, the more the resurrection satisfies our longings. Our sense of love, justice, and equity in the midst of the disappointments, injustices, and failures of this life encourages us to accept the resurrection as a fact. We find the resurrection to be a vindication of God.

Christ arose from the dead. It is a clearly established historical fact; as we read:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1 Cor. 15:3-8)

Do you realize how much your faith and hope rest on the testimony of these witnesses? If their witness is false, the Christian faith is groundless and our hope of a future life vanishes. The New Testament writers appealed to the fact of Christ's resurrection as being the basis of faith and hope. The Apostle describes it as a foundation doctrine of our faith.

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (vss. 17-20)

The Gospel of the Resurrection

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, salvation by his sacrificial death, and his resurrection were the substance of the apostolic preaching:

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25),

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it? . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:24 ,36)

If Christ is not raised, we are still under the dominion of sin and death. Why? It is because no power exists that can deliver us from death and can overcome sin. Without the resurrection, the holy life, the ministry, and sacrificial death of Christ avail nothing. Without the resurrection Satan is the conqueror. Those qualities which Jesus embodied-innocence, purity, faithfulness, truth, love-are crushed, triumphed over by malice, hatred, and wickedness. The Prince of light would be blotted out by the prince of darkness! But how the Apostle's words ring out as a joyful hymn: *"But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20)*

Today Christianity is lightly held. It is the subject of scoffing and is openly assaulted. Such scoffers do not discern that by raising Christ from the dead in the power of an endless life God has set his approval on all that Jesus did and taught. Christ is *"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15: 15)*

Men who love darkness instinctively shun the doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection. By it we are brought face to face with the need to choose a moral renovation and a spiritual quickening. By it the choice between self-will and God's will comes into focus. We find ourselves standing before God acknowledging our nakedness, and we are offered Christ's righteousness as a covering, his Word and his Spirit as our life. There is no sidestepping the issue. To put off making the good choice is in effect rejecting it.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead depended upon his possessing the right to life. If God had resurrected him for any other reason, he would have been acting contrary to his own character; and his creation would never, in the future, have known whether the Almighty could be counted upon to do what he has declared. Yes, Jesus' death was sacrificial and substitutional, as he said,

"I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17,18)

Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice and as an offering for sin to fulfill the Father's will for him

(Heb., 10: 5-9). Because that offering was perfectly acceptable to God, perfectly performed, God raised him from the dead and exalted him.

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death., because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:23,24)

Christ's right to life was never forfeit. That life was yielded up on the cross by the will of God. *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9, cf. 5-11) and "made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).*

Thus, the resurrection of Christ brings a special hope to those who accept it by faith.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (1 Peter 1:3,4)

The upward calling of God is revealed to the church. It is a calling which ends in joint-heirship with Christ. It fosters a purifying hope. Members of the true church sustain a combat with the forces of evil and learn to despise shame and ignominy as it is associated with Christ. By this hope the spiritual mind looks beyond the visible world to things invisible, to count today's afflictions only a moment's inconvenience, *"knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:14).*

Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9); as the man Christ Jesus he gave himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6) so as to become the propitiation for our sins: and not ours only but those of the entire world (1 John 2:2). All mankind are assured of a share in the resurrection through the work of Jesus.

"[God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31)

For Me to Live is Christ

What is the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? It means that God has shown us the power that can triumph over sin and death. It means, also, the vindication of God's justice, wisdom, benevolence. A new and living hope has been given to men, a hope of an *"inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. . ."* (1 Peter 1:4). We can now view all things from a new perspective. Those who are alive in Christ have received eternal life through faith. They can now view their life in the light of eternity. Sin and death will be destroyed just as surely as all who are in their graves are guaranteed to come forth (John 5:28; cf. Rev. 21:1-5).

The resurrection of all is a fact inherent in the words of Jesus: *"I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).* Yes, you can *"sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3:15)*

The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the basis for that hope.

"Feeling intensifies nearly all the difficulties and trials of life; and with the Christian, perfect love for God and the complete realization of the Lord's love for him, should cast out all fear, and produce, instead, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, not only in our hearts, but also in large measure in our flesh."

Question Box

To Whom Should We Pray?

Question: I was taught to pray to God, for *Jesus' sake*. A friend of mine made a very strong plea showing that our prayers ought to be addressed to Jesus. She says that in honoring him we honor the Father; and that the Father is pleased when we go to Jesus in prayer. Jesus is our head. As members of his body, we depend upon him for our life. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, so he has the power to answer our prayers. He is our ambassador, and in approaching the throne we ought to lay our petitions before Jesus. After all if we had business with the Queen of England we would not deal directly with her, but would communicate through a representative.

I was impressed. At home, I went to Jesus in prayer. My words flowed freely and naturally. I felt a nearness of his presence that I never experienced before. I believe it is right, and that we are by no means dishonoring the Father. On the contrary, I think we honor him more by honoring his son. Am I wrong?

Answer - "Accepted in the Beloved"

There can be no question that it is proper to address petitions to our Redeemer and Advocate. He loved us and gave himself for us. He is interested in us-loves us. He is the shepherd and bishop of our souls, and we are his sheep (1 Peter 2:25). He is our faithful high priest, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities and who is ready to succor them that are tempted (Heb. 4:15; 2:18). Nowhere are we told to pray to him, but it could not be improper to do so (Acts 7:59,60; Rev. 22:20). Such prayers are not prohibited, and the disciples did worship him. *"And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him"* (Matt. 28:9). *"And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted"* (vs. 17).

It **would** be an error to suppose that we **ought** to address our petitions to our Lord Jesus instead of to the Father-"for the father himself loveth you" [who are in Christ] (John 16:27). Every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17). All things [blessings] are of the father, and by the son (I Cor. 8:6). Jehovah is the fountain of blessings, and our Lord Jesus is the channel through which they reach us. *"God heareth not sinners"* (John 9:31). Consequently, we who were sinners could have no audience with Jehovah until we were *justified by faith* (Rom. 3:28) in Jesus' offering for sin. God made this offering on our behalf, once for all, in the offering of the body of Jesus, our Lord. Jesus declared, *"No man cometh unto the Father but by me"* (John 14:6). But now, since we accept our Lord's sacrifice for our justification, we boldly enter into the Most Holy [into communion with God] *by the blood of Jesus* (Heb. 10:19), and draw nigh with cleansed hearts and sure faith, realizing that *"we are accepted in the beloved"* (James 4:8; Heb. 10:22; Eph. 1:6).

Our Lord Jesus not only prayed to God but instructed his disciples in a *general* style of petition, saying *"After this manner pray ye: Our father, which art in heaven."* Jesus instructs us to make requests of God in his name (John 14: 13, 14; 15:16; 16:23, 24, 26). **In his name** means more than by *his authority*. It also means more than closing a prayer . with the words, "For Christ's sake." **In Jesus' name** means that the petitioner realizes he is unworthy to be received at God's throne of heavenly grace, or to have his prayer listened to or answered. Such believers rely upon

Jesus' merit as their ransom. They accept the justifying merit of Jesus' great sin offering by faith. That offering he made one time, but it is effective for all men.

Adam communed with and had access to God before he sinned and fell under God's death sentence. All humans who accept God's grace receive this communion back again. It is available only through Jesus Christ, and it will ultimately result in the reconciliation of all the willing. That time when mankind will have been actually restored to harmony with God in the kingdom of Christ and when they shall stand in their own perfection has not yet arrived. We are justified by faith; that is we are counted as being just when we really are not-through faith in his blood, in his sacrifice for our sins. To commune with God, we must recognize the Mediator and his *ransom* for all, by which God counts us acceptable in him.

The Christian Duty of Discrimination

"Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. " (1 Thess. 5:20,21)

by: W.A. Eliason

Discrimination is no longer socially acceptable. In common usage it is not a Christian duty "to make an unfair distinction." Many persons have been hurt by discrimination, but just because people **discriminate improperly** does not mean that the Bible does so.

Biblical discrimination is "distinguishing accurately." It is a duty to scrutinize some things closely, carefully, and completely.

"Despise not prophesyings [prophecies]." To what does the Apostle refer? Old Testament prophecies? Prophecies of Jesus or other Apostles? We think Paul did not refer to either of these possibilities. Why? Because the context shows the "prophesyings" of our text were subject to critical examination. The brethren were only to accept what they found to be good in them. Having proven them and having accepted the good, this they were to retain. This was not true of the Old or New Testament writings which were accepted as the Word of God.

Prophecy in the Church

The Apostle referred, we suggest, to what church members who had received that special, miraculous gift of "prophecy" said. It was one of nine so-called "spiritual gifts" (gifts bestowed through the spirit). Paul enumerates these to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12). These were called "grace-gifts," from the Greek word *charismata*. They were a heritage of the apostolic church and passed away with it.

Was it necessary to prove or test these prophecies? If they were **inspired** by the holy Spirit, sanely the spirit could inspire men to speak nothing but the truth. The Apostle John answers this objection. *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* (1 John 4:1) This warning was needful at that time. If we infer correctly from the text of I Corinthians 12, the early church was subjected to more than just godly proclamations. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Cor. 16:22)

Prophecy was a valuable gift in the Apostolic church. In view of what has been said, it is evident that dangers accompanied this gift.

The Lord safeguarded his church by giving another gift. It counterbalanced prophecy and it was the gift of discernment. The "discerning of spirits" was very important to our ancient brethren. Some brethren could test the spirits and discriminate which were from God and which were trash or worse. This seems to be our text's application within the Apostolic church.

We are, today, long removed from the first century and its miraculous gifts. Christians no longer prophesy in the first century manner. The gift of discernment has also departed. One asks, then, do the Apostle's words have any application to us? Do we need to apply special tests to doctrines (teachings)? We answer yes to both propositions!

"Despise not prophesyings." Today we might say, "Give those who minister the Word a respectful hearing." Long before the New Testament was written the Greeks regarded any public teacher as a prophet. In that sense, prophecy has always been a part of church practice. The Word of God has been a powerful tool to accomplish God's will (Isa. 55:11).

Why should we respect ministers of God's Word? Jesus himself instituted the ministry to nurture his church. ". . . he gave some, . . . pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints," (Eph. 4:11,12). If he gave us this arrangement we should not despise his provision. The word despise, literally means "to set at naught." We do not know all things. Until we do, we need teachers. We all may learn something from someone who preaches the Word in the true spirit of its Author.

Prove All Things

"But prove [or test] *all things."* Most editors insert the word "but" on good manuscript authority. It connects this statement with the preceding. First we listen. Then we test what we heard.

There are obvious reasons to test what is being taught. Jesus warned us to "Take heed that no man deceive you . . ., saying I am Christ . . ." (Matt. 24:4; Mark 13:5). He said that many believers **would** be deceived.

Incomplete knowledge or faulty judgment has lead outstanding teachers to hold and to teach error. They have also incorrectly reasoned upon what they did understand. Mere piety or position is no guarantee that teachers teach truth or that they do so in the Master's spirit. Paul's words apply today: *"Prove all things."*

What we prove refers to Paul's previous statement. Do not read the expression "all things" indiscriminately. We have no obligation to test every theory we hear. We are to prove those teachings that commend themselves as **worthy** of consideration. When we listen to others we will hear things that hold the promise of "good." It makes no difference whether the teaching is new or old. *"Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old"* (Matt. 13:52, NASB).

How should we prove the teachings? Paul does not say. Our only touchstone is the Bible. Test every teaching by it. This might seem a simple thing, but it is not always so.

Scripture is often sufficiently plain that it leaves no room for contrasting opinions. Wouldn't it be nice if it were always so? God has not given us that kind of Bible, and teachers do not always base their doctrines upon plain statements of Scripture. Some ideas are based upon **interpretations** of Scripture.

Several grounds exist for differing interpretations.

- Words, which may have several meanings.
- Points of grammar, which affect the understanding of a verse.
- Context, which bears upon interpretation.
- Other verses, which directly bear upon the verse's topic.
- Punctuation, which may alter the meaning.

The last is the simplest of interpretive forms and its relevance is seen by the much discussed position of a comma in Luke 23:43.

Was it "today" that the thief would see the Lord in Paradise or was it "today" when the Lord made the promise to the thief?

Testing Interpretations

Interpretations must be tested by the generally accepted principles of Hermeneutics-the science of biblical interpretation. While average Bible Students are unfamiliar with the term, a great many sincere, spirit begotten believers have struggled throughout the Gospel Age to bring clarity to biblical interpretation. The fundamental laws they insist upon are sound and reasonable:

"1) Interpretation must be grammatical. Interpretation must not violate known rules of grammar or syntax used at the time when the words were written.

"2) Word definitions must agree with common, historical usage. The interpreter is not free to dream up his own definitions without regard to history.

"3) Literal, figurative, and parabolic usages of language must be discriminated and interpreted according to their own usage. A parabolic or figurative expression is not interpreted literally, nor is literal speech interpreted figuratively or as though it were a parable.

"4) Explanations must harmonize both with the context and with general biblical teachings on that subject.

"Generally, we test teachings by these simple rules, and not teachings only. Translations can and should be proven in the same way. Is this simple and easy? We think not! It is scarcely necessary to add that if two (or more) Interpretations of a scripture pass the tests they must be considered equally possible.

"It would be generally admitted that the most difficult teachings to test are arguments based on details of the original languages. Most believers know that the Bible was chiefly written in Hebrew and Greek. But, how many appeals we hear to-day to that most difficult of pursuits! It seems that every writer who has a novel idea appeals to the Greek or Hebrew to support his theory!

"Such interpretations may have value, but if the student does not know the original languages how can he separate wheat from chaff? (Sometimes, it may be wondered whether the appeal to Greek or Hebrew is an attempt to conceal the weakness of a pet idea rather than a proof of the idea's merit.) A good concordance may help. *Strong's*, *Young's*, and *The Englishman's* are three good, commonly available concordances. The student may find sufficient information to intelligently test the argument being considered.

"Not all interpretations will be clarified merely by resorting to concordances. The writer's word choice is not the only consideration in biblical interpretation. Equally important is how the word is used. Meanings often hinge upon such details. Grammar and syntax can determine the true interpretation. Details like case, tense, or mood are simply beyond the scope of a concordance like *Strong's*. That does not make a concordance a bad tool. It only acknowledges the tool's limitations. No single source can answer all questions of technical interpretation.

"To complicate the matter, every language uses idioms. Scripture is filled with them. This information is often indispensable and it can only be found in standard works on the Hebrew and Greek languages which presuppose linguistic knowledge.

"The public has been slow to appreciate this qualification of a working understanding of the ancient languages. Many Christians think it unnecessary to educate themselves in the languages of the Bible. Yet, without knowledge, they must rely upon received interpretations and trite elucidations, without being able to assign any reason except that they are held by a favorite commentator, or found in a certain system."

Samuel Davidson, LLD. Sacred Hermeneutics, pg.18

Those words were written over a century ago. It is now easier to learn the sacred languages because abundant helps are available. But, if ignorance was to be deplored one hundred years ago by those who handle the Word of God, how much less excusable it is today!

An Example of Critical Study

We have explained the methodology of proving prophecies based on Greek or Hebrew constructions. Now, let us illustrate it by example.

The Greek noun *aion* (pronounced "I own") and its derived adjective *aionios* occur frequently in the New Testament. They are eschatologically important, that is, they relate to the doctrine of the "last things." Even **scholars** disagree about how to translate these words. The King James Version uses terms like "for ever," "eternal," and "everlasting." Other translators (and writers) say such renderings are improper. They assert that *aion* means "an age" and that the adjective derived from it can mean only "age-lasting" (not everlasting or eternal). Rotherham translates *aionios* "age-abiding," Young renders it "age-during," while the *Emphatic Diaglott* does not translate the word at all, simply transliterating it from the Greek. Several contemporary translations (including the Revised Standard Version) retain "everlasting," "eternal," and "for ever." Whom should the student follow? Which school of Bible translators has the soundest approach to this moot question?

Any attempt to answer a question on which scholars disagree will seem presumptuous. More than once the author has asked himself, "Where the best scholars cannot agree what can the ordinary Bible Student do?" Nevertheless, we will offer pertinent thoughts on the subject. We are impressed by several facts:

- 1) Scholars who disagree regarding the interpretation of these two words all possessed the same information. They all know the same facts about the etymology of these words. They also know the word's usage in the New Testament, the Septuagint, and classical Greek writings.
- 2) From those facts various translators drew conclusions, using their best judgment. It is apparent that sometimes difficulty arose in their work. They were not all able to remain objective throughout. Doctrinal and other prejudices affect us all. We cannot tell which decisions they made based upon prejudice.
- 3) The information they had is largely available to us. We can consult their sources. What information did they have?

a: Lexicographers do not agree about the primary meaning of *aion*. Many follow Aristotle, who derived the word from *aei*, which means forever. Some believe it comes from a word meaning "to breathe," and has in it the thought of life.

b: In the earliest existing Greek writings, those of the poet Homer, *aion* does not refer to either an age or to eternity. There the word refers to the lifetime of a man.

c: The word was also used by classical writers for other, broader meanings. Sometimes it meant an indefinite period of time, an age, and eternity.

d: The *Septuagint*, which is most frequently translating the Hebrew word *'olam*, generally uses the word with the same meanings as classical Greek writers. There, the context is essential to decide which meaning applies.

The first occurrence of *aion* in that ancient version is Genesis 3:22 for *'olam*. Here, the Greek phrase is usually rendered "for ever." For *l'olam*, Rotherham gives "to times age-abiding," and Young has "to the age." Such phrases are based on "age" as one of the meanings of *aion*. They are obviously vague and cause the reader to ask questions, like, "To what age?" There is no thought in the context of Genesis 3:22 that would suggest that a man who ate of the tree of life would live only to some particular period of age. We are compelled, therefore, to give *aion* in this passage its broadest significance: "forever."

Linguistically, there can be no valid objection to that rendering. *Aion* and *aionios* can denote "everlasting" or "eternal" and often do. This is proven when the words are applied to Jehovah and his characteristics (cf., Gen. 21:33; Isa. 40:28; Ps. 9:7; 119:42). On the other hand, in many contextual occurrences these words limit their meaning to: the lifetime of a slave (Exod. 21:6), the duration of the Aaronic priesthood (40:15), and the keeping of the Passover (12:14).

e: The writers of the New Testament follow the usage of classical Greek and especially the Septuagint, using *aion* in a variety of phrases, often repeated for emphasis, as, "forever and ever."

Idiomatic Phrases

If you study how those phrases are used you will see the absurdity of literal translations. If we render *aion* by "age" the phrase would literally be "to the age." Some translators do this universally, producing translations which generate more questions than they answer. A few examples of this usage are:

"to the age" (1 Cor. 8:13),

"to the ages of the ages" (Gal. 1:5)

"to the age of the age" (Heb. 1:8),

"to a day of an age" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Most scholars agree that such phrases are not meant to be taken literally. They are idiomatic expressions, expressions peculiar to a language that have a meaning apart from their literal interpretation.

Aion's usage in the New Testament sometimes means "age" or "dispensation." Where this idea is meant we often find that the Authorized Version mistranslated the word as "world."

Such places are:

"*this [Gospel] age*" (Matt. 24:3),
"*the age to come*" (the Millennium, Matt. 12:32),
other "*ages to follow that one*" (Eph. 2:7).

Such usage must be clearly distinguished from idiomatic usage or else confusion will result.

From these facts we form a conclusion about *aion* and *aiōnios*. These words have several meanings in both the biblical and secular

Greek. Each time they occur a distinction must be drawn from various possibilities. The phrases with *aion* which do not lend themselves to literal translation are best rendered "forever" and "forever and ever." The adjective *aiōnios* may denote "everlasting" or merely "lasting," according to the context.

In that important and much discussed text, Matt. 25:46, the parallel is *between aiōnios* life and *aiōnios* punishment. Thus, apart from other scriptural teachings, the word "everlasting" seems preferable. Those who seek an easy out by transliterating the Greek or Latin spelling seem to have little to commend their practice. It leaves readers with the idea that the words cannot be translated.

Hold Fast the Good

Our final exhortation is to "Hold *fast that which is good.*" What is it that fuels our hearing and sifting? It is always the pursuit of good. We are to pursue "*that which is good to the use of edifying*" (Eph. 4:29). Good, here, is practically synonymous with truth. Only truth edifies and sanctifies (John 17:17,19).

Whoever seeks to prove all things by the Bible learns that the Bible suffers greatly at the hands of men, and not always at the hands of its *enemies*. *That* priceless book has been "*wounded in the house of its friends.*" Too often, well meaning, misguided Christians twist *the* Scriptures by mistranslation or misapplication because of their own doctrinal prejudices (2 Pet. 3:16). Such abuse of scripture always distorts its meaning.

Our lesson has been an important one since the earliest days of the church (2 Timothy 2:15-18). It is no less so now, especially for those who teach others the Word of Truth.

The words of this article should be included among the "all things" to be proven. Conclusions based upon judgment must be held with only a tentative grasp. Scholars have been known to change their minds. If they, how much more ourselves? Well established facts, on the other hand, can be held more tightly. It has been with these last that this article has been primarily concerned.

"Truth, how sacred is the treasure!

*Teach us, Lord,
its worth to know... "*

"With Christ Apart"

Have you and I today
Stood silent as with Christ apart from joy or fray
Of life, to see His face To look, if but a moment at its grace
And grow, by brief companionship more true,
More nerved to lead, to dare, to do,
for Him at any cost? Have we today
Found time in thought our hand to lay
In His, and thus compare
His will with ours, and wear
The impress of His wish?
Be sure, Such contact will endure
Throughout the day, will help us walk erect
Thru storms and flood; detect
Within the hidden life, sins dross its stains;
Revive our thoughts of love for Him again;
Steady the steps which waver; help us see
The footpath meant for you and me.

Destroy Not the Work of God

"For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense." Romans 14:20

by: Fred A. Grinstead

The first part of our theme text is a direct, if not narrow, instruction. Paul defines a principle that can apply in many Christian ways. Do not destroy the work of God for something as trivial as food.

Can we destroy anything that God is doing? The idea of destroying God's work presents us with a problem. Can God be thwarted? God is God? His work will not be destroyed, nor will his word return to him void (Isa. 55:11).

Rotherham and Weymouth translate this differently. They suggest the idea of throwing down a thing. This clarifies the meaning. We can hamper or impede what God is doing.

No Christian would want to interfere with God's work-however slightly. The believer is called to submit himself to God's will.

We suggest that the surrounding context (Rom. 14:1-15:7) summarizes the ideal Christian attitude towards other Christians. If we adopt this message, becoming such characters, then we are workmen **together with** God-building up his workmanship, rather than tearing it down.

God's Work

God's works are infinite. They could be subdivided into many categories. Our generation is experiencing how man has damaged some of God's works. The works to be considered here are not merely the physical ones that we see.

The verses preceding our theme text show that one work of God (vs. 20) is developing the Christian's righteousness, peace, and joy. Peace with God and fullness of joy are only found in his presence:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the holy Spirit. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God? (Rom. 14:17)

God's Righteousness

Righteousness is comprehensive. It does not exist in isolation. Being right with God (i.e., "righteous") includes love, goodness, faith, faithfulness, and meek submission to his perfect will. While we rejoice in the imputed righteousness of God (which we enjoy by faith in Christ Jesus), we should also see that **imputed** righteousness is not our goal. We should set our sights higher: on absolute obedience to God; absolute righteousness. Only when we *are* righteous will we be like God whom we desire to please.

The fourteenth chapter of Romans encourages us to adopt attitudes that agree with God's work in ourselves and in our Christian brethren. The church will need actual righteousness to be used by God in the resurrection. We must develop that righteousness now.

As with imputed righteousness, peace and joy follow actual righteousness. Righteousness originates with God and grows in us by Christ. It is God's work.

Paul describes how God works in us. He stresses the importance of God's work and the perfection of his standard. The brethren in Ephesus included faithful followers of Jesus Christ who were acceptable to God because of Jesus' imputed righteousness.

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 fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

The standard would be daunting if we ever forgot that God is the workman. We are merely the medium in which he works. What comfort lies in that wonderful assurance: *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6)*. One of the marginal readings of this passage offers even more encouragement when it uses the expression that God "will finish it [his work]" in the day of Jesus Christ.

Although the work is God's, we play a part in it.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

Labor with God

The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 6) harmonizes beautifully with the chain of Christian graces (2 Peter 1.) God's work in the believer harmonizes with the believer's wholehearted response to God. He accomplishes his good pleasure in us while we work out our own salvation with reverence and humility.

When God's spirit works in the believer, it bears fruit. What fruit? Love, peace, goodness, longsuffering, gentleness, joy, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. The apostle Peter assists us in working out our salvation by telling us to

"make every effort to supplement faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love. "

Notice how God's work complements the believer's work. Should it not be so? Believers are begotten by God's spirit. We should expect harmony between God's purpose in man and the goal which a spiritual man recognizes for himself.

Our Part

What part do we play in working out our salvation? Romans 14 describes attitudes which promote spiritual development. These attitudes are not self-centered. They focus on our brothers and sisters in Christ.

There is a harmonious, godly economy at work here. We are commanded to love another. Likewise, we are urged to esteem other brothers better than ourselves. While we are trying to do these things we are also growing emotionally and intellectually. What happens is that these attributes become a part of us and we no longer need to "try" to do them, We obey, instead of trying to obey. We love our brothers and sisters in Christ, instead of trying to love them. We learn that they really are better than ourselves in certain instances (or perhaps all), and we no longer have to imitate what we know full well. Whoever puts another's welfare before his own benefit develops a little more of Jesus Christ's character.

Destroying God's Work

How does God carry out his developmental work in the believer? This discussion will support the assertion that God's work (vs. 20) refers to the character he builds in the body members of Christ. If this is true, what happens if we find ourselves destroying or setting back God's work in any way? Viewed in this light, Paul's message takes on the sober importance he intended.

*Having "love" in our hearts
is insufficient if our behavior denies it.
It is not enough to say that love is present,
it must be seen...*

The Weak and the Strong

Who did Paul mean when he called some "strong" and others "weak" (Romans 15:1; 14:1)? These expressions are part of a general instruction to Christians. The terms cannot refer to physical strength. The words are chosen on the basis of the instructor's estimate of the one being instructed. Paul is teaching us how to walk the Christian walk, and he sees a similarity between us and the Romans.

Everyone regards his own beliefs as true. If that was not so, we would change our beliefs until we believed them to be true. A person cannot go about believing that he is wrong without ultimately destroying himself. Once a person is in heart accord with what is thought to be true the next step can begin.

What happens if Jack thinks the Bible teaches a particular thing, but Jill has an opposing belief. It follows that Jack must regard Jill as being in error. Conversely, Jill considers Jack to be in error. Since Jack is sure his view is right, he must think that Jill misunderstands. Jill, likewise, thinks Jack is wrong.

Jack and Jill, in this little proverb, are the people who should benefit from our Romans 14:1-15:7.

Errors Or Differences?

Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Rom. 14:22,23)

The church at Rome had entertained differences of opinion on two matters. Paul does not try to define which of the commonly held views was right or which wrong. He indicates, in the verses above, that either side could be right or either could be wrong. The faith of *the individual believer* was to be the determining factor. When he talks about stumbling a brother (vs. 21) he infers that the person holding the correct opinion could well fall into the greater error than the one holding the erroneous opinion.

What is Paul telling us? We should accept the differences of opinion between fellow members of the Body of Christ! Before exploring Paul's answer to the problem, let us look briefly at the vehicles he chose for the lesson.

Eating All Things

God had formerly instructed man concerning what meat was fit for food. These commands were to protect man at a time when hygiene was poor and bacterial toxicity was a life threatening reality. We see, in Peter's housetop experience, that human knowledge and practice were progressing. God had at one time told his people certain things in the wilderness. Now, the vision of the unclean beasts modified these commands by divine revelation to Peter. He reluctantly accepted God's revelation, demonstrating to us how important the earlier rulings about food were to the typical Jew of that age.

Meat offered to idols introduced a new slant Ø the subject of food. Jews (and Christians) knew God's stand on idols-of any kind at any time. To discuss anything related to idols, therefore, had a life and death effect upon a man. Paul here points ahead to the abstract idols that are so prevalent in the twentieth century. In teaching a person to avoid meat offered to idols he was pointing also to our day in which spiritual adultery has become prominent. We must retain an aloofness from things, desires, persons, or groups of people and must loyally worship God and God alone.

Esteeming Particular Days

God's commandments were for Israel's good. The benevolent nature of his commands is obvious; such commands as the seventh day of rest attest to their wholesome benefit. Men have perverted God's wholesome purpose by transforming divine commands into troublesome rituals. Taken out of the context of human life, these rituals disguise the good intended to accrue to man and result in divisions among God's people. Today, various sects esteem the figurative counterparts of "one day" over another, continuing a tradition begun in Israel.

Such rituals can consume those devoted to them. Our Lord was not exempt of this accusation. In his day, those who honored the letter of the law above its spirit repeatedly accused him of violating it. But they could not see in his miracles how he perfectly fulfilled the spirit of the law. In our day we too could use more of the spirit of the law-human and divine. What occurred then occurs today.

Features in Common

Paul used two examples in this context. They are typical but not exhaustive examples of differences that cause one believer to think that he is strong and that his fellows are weak. In the Roman church some believed in eating all things, and others esteemed certain days as more important than other days. To apply Paul's teaching properly we need to note what these sample doctrines have in common.

Both doctrines were important to the brethren involved. At the time, it would have been difficult to find two more important teachings.

Plausible scriptural arguments existed so that both sides thought that they were right.

Our first lesson is that confidence in our belief must never prevent us from receiving our brother as a brother: with all the warmth, compassion, and fervor that brotherhood in Christ demands.

Our next lesson is that Paul's rule should apply by extension. It applied to important teachings which the Romans thought were fully supported by God's word. It should apply today in important cases as well. Not only so, it should also apply to less important matters, those about which we are not so sure or which require private interpretation of inconclusive scriptural evidence.

Now seems an appropriate time to look at the instructions about what to do about the weak brother. Remember, the reason that the other person is thought to be weak is because we believe our own belief to be correct. If we admit that the other is strong, we would have to say that our opinion may be suspect.

Doubtful Disputations

Paul places only one restriction on whether to receive a brother who holds differing views. We must not receive him "to *doubtful disputations*." No other conditions were imposed. The word *disputations* points to an argumentative attitude, which contrasts with an air of open discussion. When coupled with the word *doubtful*, the distinction seems related to the result of the disputation. Disputations which may have no beneficial result, from such refrain.

Clearly, **we are obligated to receive the other brother.** When you receive those you think to be in error, make sure it does not lead to arguing in a way that excludes spiritual profit. God's Word should profit all who discuss it. And that profit should be in a spiritual sense. You and I are to make sure that it does.

Nowhere is it said that we should forsake our beliefs or dilute them because a brother has different views. It is always wise to prayerfully examine our understanding against the only authority, the Holy Bible. If the Word of God indicates we should change our mind, then change is appropriate. We need a mind open to the work of the holy Spirit.

Correction

Correcting error in others is difficult, even when we are right. The direct approach rarely helps. What normally happens when someone tells you, "You are wrong because of fact 'A,' 'B,' and 'C'"? Is it not typical to respond by saying, "No I am not, because of fact 'D,' 'E,' and 'F.'" When

the discussion has progressed thus far both parties go off in search of more arguments to support their viewpoint.

Prompting the search for truth is a noble cause, but pushing a person closes their mind. Once their mind is closed they see what they choose to see. Truth, on the other hand, is non-discriminatory. It frequently lies *between* the opinions expressed. You will seldom find it by only seeking proof that you are right. In that frame of mind, both parties become more entrenched in their view. If the view is wrong, it is entrenchment in error, a reinforced stumbling block. This is an example of doubtful disputation.

Is it not better to rejoice together in points of agreement and to mention in passing an interesting verse which the other may ponder later (in privacy). Perhaps we could say something like "Time does not permit it now, but next time we get together I would be interested to learn how you take Romans 14:1" (for example). Relating a personal experience which may have broadened your understanding of a particular scripture may also be profitable. However you do it, avoid offending the other by speaking in a way that disparages their opinion.

When we feel obligated to correct an erring brother we ought to consider Paul's words: "*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth, Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand*" (Romans 14:4).

Correction Or Judgment?

Some may think that we have confused judgment with correction. Surely, this is a matter of sequence. Judgment is followed by correction. Put another way, correction is always preceded by judgment. One message in our passage is that it is not our place to judge others. This instruction is couched in words reminiscent of our own accountability. Obviously, we need to judge; we face many decisions along life's way. We judge every doctrine in the spirit of soundness that we have received. Our passage says that we must avoid personal judgment, particularly of brethren in Christ.

*Love, hidden behind argument,
will never inspire the welling up of
a kindred response in other hearts...*

No one reading these words needs be reminded of the injunction from our Lord (Matt. 7) against judging our brother. Those words always apply and every other understanding must harmonize with them.

Stumbling-blocks

We can stumble another brother in several ways. Criticism can stumble him. Rejection, or the way we avoid a subject, may force him into an unfruitful course alone or with others in error. We need divine care and wisdom if we are to follow Jesus' example and Paul's instruction.

Romans 14:21 speaks of tempting a brother who believes a certain conduct is wrong. What brother "A" does he does not believe to be wrong, but brother "B" sees the action and it goes against his conscience. It is sin for anyone to do what they consider contrary to God's laws. Two citations are helpful in this regard.

"Halt thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:22,23)

*"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient: all things are lawful for me, **but not all things edify**" (1 Corinthians 10:23).*

Whenever we cause a hazard which could result in a brother tripping or in **reinforcing an error**, we may hinder (in the **Rom. 14:20** sense) God's development of him as a new creature.

Trespasses

Our passage does not address the question of trespasses. Our Lord gave separate instructions in that regard (cf. Matt. 18:1-20). We might just observe that his instructions there immediately precede Peter's question about how many times Peter should forgive a brother. Our Lord replied that he should forgive his brother 490 times.

The Answer

"He that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." This is how we should receive any brother of differing opinion. We are to receive him with the proviso mentioned. This cuts both ways. In the case used to illustrate, Jack receives Jill and Jill receives Jack.

They receive each other not to dwell on or promote their differences. Rather, they foster unity in God's Spirit, the joint hope of the high calling, the unifying love of an all-loving God, constrained (that is, "tugged together by") the love of Christ.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (vs. 13). Stumbling stones describe attitudes in this context. If we are not to stumble one another, we must do something else: edify them. We should not hinder the work of God.

Not Unique

Paul is not introducing a new idea. He has merely elaborated upon a characteristic of love **Lord and Savior said**, "love your *enemies*." Should we be less affectionate towards our brethren? No. Love --

... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:5-7).

The Apostle does not say that love bears all things except doctrinal differences! No. Love bears all things.

God commanded that we love our neighbor as ourselves. Our Lord's new commandment told us to love one another as he loved us. Having "love" in our hearts is insufficient if our behavior denies it. It is not enough to say that love is present, it must be seen. Love, hidden behind argument, will never inspire the welling up of a kindred response in other hearts.

Bearing Infirmities

When we disagree with our brethren we must be prudent, deliberately and prayerfully using the spirit of a sound mind, which God gives.

- 1.) Joyfully respect the other's right to believe as he feels led.
- 2.) Check your own beliefs against the only authority, God's word. (Galatians adds a word of caution on this *subject*-"*considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* ")
- 3.) Gently offer a word to edify, but only when it is seasonable for the other.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves " (Rom. 15:1). What clear support for the ideas just considered. Bearing our brother's infirmities seems to be more than just "receiving" him. It is tolerance of what we see as error with a view to gently leading that person to where God can carry out his perfecting work. It clearly says that we are *"not to please ourselves."*

"Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification" (15:2). Christian love requires us to please our neighbor. This verse defines a limit-but how beautiful the limitation is-*"For his good to edification."* Our efforts should be aimed to help our brother grow in Christlikeness. Whatever our present company, neighbor, brother, or alone with self, all we say and do should be far edifying.

We close our thoughts with the fitting words of Paul:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God (Rom. 15:4-7).

The true doctrine of Christian liberty is not our right to think for ourselves, but the right of the other man to think for himself. . . Nothing can be more certain than the preservation of Christian liberty for any if conditioned on the concession of that liberty for all.

-New York Examiner

St. Peter's Restitution Sermon

"Times of refreshing shall come . . . times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19, 21)

The apostles received a special anointing, the holy Spirit, at Pentecost. God's spirit gave them courage and sound judgment, not fear. Peter and John were leaders among the early believers. After they received the gift of the holy Spirit, these two men went to the temple to pray. Did they go there because they thought it was the only proper place to offer prayer? We think not. They went there because they knew it was a place to meet people.

They soon found their opportunity. A poor, lame beggar was sitting outside the temple. They understood him to be a man of faith, someone who trusted in God. Peter and John stopped to look at him. Peter said, "Look on us," and the beggar responded. He probably thought they were going to give him money. Peter surely surprised the man when he said, *"Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that give I unto thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk"* (vs. 6).

The lame man was just as astonished at this offer as we might be. Surprise, however, did not stop him from attempting to stand. In struggling to rise he showed just how much faith he had in God's power. Peter, seeing this faith, took him by the hand and assisted him. He both helped the man to stand and helped the man's faith.

God blessed the man. His muscles, which had withered from years of disuse, soon bore his full weight. Once he had gotten his balance, he followed the apostles through the Temple, clinging to them and shouting praises to God. He was thankful that God's grace had *shone upon* him, and he would acknowledge God's gift in front of all men.

A Notable Sermon

Jews began thronging the apostles as the story of this healing spread. Here was Peter's opportunity. Now he could offer a great witness to the Lord.

Peter was not proud or boastful. He said nothing to draw attention to himself or to his work. Rather, he meekly inquired why they were so interested in seeing the apostles. They had no special holiness, he told them. He and John were just instruments of God's work. What had happened was a manifestation of God's mercy. The miracle was done in Jesus' name-in the name of the world's redeemer.

Peter told his audience that the nation had acted wickedly when they crucified the savior. He went farther than justly accusing them. He assured them of God's mercy. Repentance was still possible. If they returned to God and renounced their relationship with those who had acted wickedly, they would be blessed by God.

From verses 13 through 26 he gives the people a view of God's plan of the ages. He cites reasons why they should give their lives to God.

They needed to repent of their sins: personally and nationally. If they repented they would also have to turn their lives around-undergo a conversion experience-ceasing to live in sin, living instead a life of righteousness. This would require their intelligent obedience to Jehovah in the form of following Jesus whom they crucified. Faithfully doing all these things, Jehovah would cover their sins and adopt them as children through Jesus' blood.

The implication is that their sins would ultimately be blotted out completely-when they were changed in the first resurrection. It is this change that Paul wrote about saying, "...sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown an animal body, raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:43,44).

A Process Described

Peter was explaining the process of salvation. Their sins would be blotted out. They would be freed from sin and its blemishes. Then would come the glorious times of restitution of all things. These "times of restitution" all of God's prophets had declared in the past.

The restitution experience was to be refreshing. Elsewhere it is described as a thousand years long, and it will be for the restitution and refreshment of all things.

This is the time during which God will fulfill his promises to Abraham, to Isaac, and to the *prophets*. *Messiah's* glorious kingdom will return the earth to edenic conditions, just as the *prophet had* said that God's footstool (earth) would be made glorious (Isa. 66:1; 60:13). The curse of death would be rolled away, and God would bless all men.

The Antitypical Moses

Peter pointed out that Moses had predicted the coming of a special prophet (Deut. 18:17-19). Moses typified this great Christ. He told Israel, "*A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren*" (vs. 18). God did raise up a prophet-Jesus. He was a greater prophet than Moses. Moses pictured this greater *prophet*, but when Jesus appeared upon earth all that Moses had represented became clear in our Savior.

Peter says that God first resurrected Jesus. Since Pentecost he has been raising up Jesus' brethren, removing them from the dominion of death and seating them in the heavenlies-the apostles first, followed by all the saints of the past nineteen hundred years. These are the ones who have responded to God's calling, whom the Bible calls the bride of Christ.

When the antitypical Moses shall have been lifted up and glorified, then the time will cØ for the world's blessing. He will open the eyes of their understanding to the prospects of life everlasting through him and the restitution then due.

During that thousand year kingdom salvation will be simple. Whomever listens to that great Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be able to enter the blessings of atonement with God and of physical, moral, and mental restitution. Whoever rejects that prophet will, simply, be destroyed from among the people. That is the fate of those who are incorrigibly wicked: "*All the wicked will God destroy*" (Psalm 145:20). Jehovah's blessings will begin with Israel, the children of Abraham

to whom God gave that unalterable covenant. Those who were an *"Israelite indeed"* (John 1:47) were gathered out from among the nations.

Next, God set aside the nation from his favor and opened a door of opportunity to the gentiles. These gentile believers have been enjoying God's favor for nearly 1900 years now. When the elect shall have been gathered out from among the nations, then the present Age and its object will have been completed. Restitution can then begin, as Paul explained (Rom. 11:25-32).

Not Holding The Head

"Do not allow yourselves to be condemned by anyone who claims to be superior because of special visions and who insists on false humility and the worship of angels. For no reason at all, such a person is all puffed up by his human way of thinking and has stopped holding on to Christ, who is the head of the body. Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God wants it to grow." - Colossians 2:18,19, TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

How do you feel about the men and the women whom God has raised to prominence within the church? Those who have been raised up by God should surely be respected, but what if some of those leaders have arisen by the compulsion of their own egotistical pride? How grueling a test this is; trying to do what is right. Should we look to human leaders? Or should we look only to our one true head, the Lord Jesus Christ? Your mind is the terrain on which a battle far your attitude is taking place. What will your answer be?

Within the Colossian congregation were men who assumed a preeminence over the others. They proudly imagined that Jesus' cause depended upon them. Assuming too much leadership, they thought that if they did not establish truths or repel errors no one else could do so.

The average Colossian was not without blame. They gave their support to wrong ideas by their silence. Without realizing it, they injured themselves by their silence. It was wrong for them to defer to those proud teachers. In doing so they were effectively worshiping the messengers of GØ more than they were worshiping God! They also sent the wrong message to the proud: that the church of God could be taken over by men of pride and ambition.

God's messengers to the church (Rev. 1:20-2:1) should be respected for their faithfulness, their good works, and their humility. They are not to be worshiped.

Opposing Dangers

Christ is the only head of the church. We err if we exalt ourselves by taking his place in the church and ignoring his arrangements. We err, too, if we quietly submit to those who do such things. If we reverence those who take his place in the church more than Christ to whom the place belongs, we have failed to "hold the head."

If we believe that Christ is the head over all things to the church, then let us rest in that fact. Do not feel, for a moment, that the plan of GØ will fall to pieces unless you steady the ark (1 Chron. 13:10). You are not the main spoke in God's program in the little town in which you live. The Lord Jesus Christ is that spoke, and he is always able to intercede.

Self-conceit is treason to our Savior! Did he not tell us that without him we could do nothing (John 15:5)? Has the Lord put you in any kind of position to influence others in the church? Are you an elder, a deacon, a Sunday school teacher? Remember that you, personally, are not indispensable. God grants you a share in the work of building up the body of Christ. That is a favor, pure and simple. Not only is it a favor, but you are blessed in the doing of it. However much you serve you receive in the very act of service far more than you give. Consider, therefore, whether you should rather feel humbled than proud. You have had your part to play, but have you

glorified God in everything you did or said? If not, why should he have bothered using you? Remember, Jesus promised that those who lift themselves up are going to be humbled. Wouldn't you regret losing the privilege and opportunity you have? Wouldn't you regret it even more if you discovered that your own pride has injured one or another of the Lord's own?

Those brothers and sisters who quietly permit others to exalt themselves are not doing them any favors. Sometimes the rebellion comes openly; the proud one calling the church "my church" or "my followers." Sometimes the usurpation is not so evident, with the proud one working and arranging behind the scenes so that things work out their way. However it occurs, those who submit to such conditions or such language demote that they do not appreciate the liberty by which Christ has set them free (Gal. 5:1). Those who do such things are either babes in Christ or else they have fallen asleep as far as the honor of the church and its head are concerned.

Excuses can always be made for both of these behaviors; but no humble elder of the flock would ever assume the Master's place, and no flock will listen to another shepherd unless they have been lured away from the true Shepherd.

The poorest spoken and weakest member of the body, if he esteems the Lord as head, is more qualified to teach others than he that puts himself forward and assumes for himself the place of a leader in the church. If the offender is allowed to continue teaching, they will teach opposition to the Lord by their actions.

Mark Well the Apostle's Words.

"[They are] vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding fast the head, from whom all the body being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19)

Self First, God Second

". . . in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . . traducers, heady, high minded; . . . having a form of godliness, but ignoring the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:1,2,4,5).

This pictures the mixed condition within the visible church throughout the Gospel Age. Paul wrote forcefully on this point, but his force should not be construed as lacking sympathy. Neither should referring to his words be taken as a lack of sympathy on the part of the author. The trouble he warns about is a grievous one, and it is especially harmful to those who yield to pride. Nothing saps one's spiritual vitality or leads on to doctrinal and spiritual darkness so quickly as pride.

The apostle James warns us about this danger as it affects the Lord's more talented followers. Be not many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that that man shall receive the stronger testings (see James 3:1). A true love for your brother in Christ, an appreciation of their services and our proper esteem for their labor in the Word, demands that this point be pressed. Would you rather have a few moments of uncomfortable conversation while the problem is small or see the flock of God injured by listening to a false shepherd? When the error is new and fresh it is easy to be corrected. After the trait has been suffered for years, it becomes a part of one's character and is infinitely harder to correct or to have it corrected.

Wherever you are placed in the Lord's body, remember Paul's admonitions. Our Lord humbled himself, and God subsequently exalted him. God demonstrated the universality of this principle in

his son, his well beloved son, and it is the foundation upon which his royal priesthood is being developed. If you want God to exalt you, then humble yourself before him. If those who love the brethren love God, then you must not only humble yourself before God but also before the brethren (James 5:10; 1 Peter 5:6). In the process of laying down your life for your brethren you will find out for yourself that your own exaltation is never as important as the assistance of others.

Even the apostles were not immune from these problems. We remember that they too argued about who would be greatest in the kingdom. Remember the Lord's words to them: "Except ye humble yourselves and become as little children ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom."

Only the Humble Are Safe

Jesus' own words mark humility as essential. Have faith, and do not doubt. Many have grasped at greater power and wider authority with the desire to benefit the church. They have seen trouble or error that they thought should not be allowed to stand. Their faith was too small to realize that God is able to overrule every incident that occurs among the assembly of his own. Greater faith in God will minimize the human urge to run the church's affairs. Remember, God is able. He can and will run the affairs of his own body-and he will do it after his own counsel-he is not obligated to seek your approval or mine.

Our highest place is lying low before him. The greatest mastery this earth knows is self-denial. Whatever success we may have in taking Christ's rightful place will not work to his glory, or even our own. Thus, we need to keep self under the rulership of the new creature. This is self-preservation as well as reverence to God. Remember the lines of the poet, and apply them daily:

*O! to be nothing, nothing,
Painful the humbling may be;
Yet low in the dust I'd lay me
That the world my Savior might see.*

*Rather be nothing, nothing
To him let their voices be raised;
He is the fountain of blessing,
Yes, worthy is he to be praised.*

The apostle is our best example in this area. We are reminded of what he taught, and how:

*"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake"
(2 Cor. 4:5).*

*What was he doing all that time,
From twelve years old to manly prime?
Was he then idle, or the less
About his father's business?*

And Finally . . .

Faith

*Securely cabined in the ship below
Thru darkness and thru storm I cross the sea,
A pathless wilderness to me:
But yet I do not fear, because I know
That He who guides the good ship oer the waste
Sees in the stars her shining pathway traced*

*Blindfold I walk this life's bewildering maze;
Up flinty steep, thru frozen mountain pass
Thru thorn-set barren and thru deep morass.
But strong in faith I tread uneven ways
And bare my feet unshrinking in the blast,
Because my Father's arm is round me cast.
And if the way seems rough I only clasp
The hand that leads me with a firmer grasp.*

The Word Of God Is Not Bound

*The Word of God is free,
The Word of God is strong,
The Word of God is like a tree
Where dwell the birds of song,
Or like a river broad,
Majestic in its flow.
Men cannot bind the Word of God,
Or tell it where to go.*

*To fetter truth's great power
Men vainly have assayed;
In ages past has been their dower,
With forces blind arrayed.
But bands of steel were weak
When God his arm has shown,
And when he caused His Word to speak,
Truth's liberty was known.*

*The Word of God is deep,
A mine where jewels dwell,
'Tis like a torrent in its sweep
Or like a crystal well.
This law flows from the height
Where saints and martyrs trod;
Men cannot curb the ocean's might,
Or bind the Word of God.*

br Walter Sargent

The Sweet Brier Rose

*Besides my cottage door it grows,
The loveliest, daintiest flower that blows
A still more wondrous fragrance flows,
The more my fingers firmly close*

*At dewy morn or twilight's close,
The rarest perfume from it flows --
This strange, wild rose.*

*But when the raindrops on it beat,
Ah, then its odors grow more sweet
About my feet.*

*Oftimes with loving tenderness
Its soft green leaves I gently press
In sweet caress --*

*A still more wondrous fragrance flows,
The more my fingers firmly close
And crush the rose!*

*Dear Lord, Oh, let my life be so --
Its perfume when the tempests blow,
The sweeter flow!*

*And should it be Thy blessed will
With crushing grief my soul to fill,
Press harder still,*

*And while its dying fragrance flows,
I'll whisper low, "He loves and knows
His crushed brier rose."*

By: Gertrude Siebert