

THE HERALD

of Christ's Kingdom

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EDITORS' JOURNAL

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?-Romans 6:1, 2

Grace, faith, and works are three important words in the Christian's vocabulary. They have formed the cornerstones of the church since its founding some twenty centuries ago. But it has never been easy for the Christian to find the proper balance and perspective between them.

Some Christians are oriented to works and leave the impression that they are seeking to prove their acceptableness to God by their frenzied energies in the Lord's service. Others are content to lie back and bask in the sunlight of divine forgiveness and mercy. Nowhere was this controversy more felt than in the early Christian church, where the works emphasis of the law came into sharp contrast with the liberty and freedom in Christ.

Over eighteen centuries under the Mosaic law served well to show the Israelites their inability to conform to God's perfect requirements. It also resulted in many sincere ones dying with a heavy load of guilt for their failure to earn the right to live forever by that law.

The teachings of Christ were in sharp contrast. By emphasizing the spirit over the letter of the law, he simultaneously raised both a higher and a more obtainable standard. The fact that the gospel required control of thoughts and intent of the heart, and not only outward obedience to a set of commands, made the path even more difficult -*strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto life* (Matt. 7:14). Yet while raising the standards of conduct, the teachings of Jesus allowed for judgment to be by intent rather than accomplished action. *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not --* (2 Cor. 8:12).

For the Christian there was both a starting point -- the forgiveness of sins past through faith in Jesus Christ-and a promise of assistance in the future. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous* (1 John 2:1). Indeed, to the Jewish person, coming into Christ at that time was a breath of fresh air, the liberty wherein Christ has made us free (Gal. 5:1). Balancing this new found freedom in Christ with the responsibilities for the good work of character development and service to God became the challenge. That challenge remains with us to this day.

In This Issue

The opening articles in this issue of THE HERALD discuss this theme of the balance between faith, grace, and works. In *Two Dimensions of Grace* the author traces the responsibility of the Christian to match inflowing grace from God with an outward flowing of grace to all those around. The following article, *The Grace Wherein We Stand*, looks at the growing relationship the Christian enjoys as he journeys closer to God, comparing it with the progressive steps in Israel's ancient tabernacle in the wilderness.

A fresh look at what is generally called the parable of the unjust steward is found in the article *Grace Begets Grace*. Complementing the articles on grace is a verse by verse examination, *The Works of Faith*, of the discussion by James of faith and works.

Other articles on the development of the fruits and graces of the spirit include *In Consideration of Love*, *Contention Amongst Brethren*, *Eradicating Selfishness*, and *How to Walk on Water*.

Our regular feature, *Echoes from the Past*, contains a condensation of a discourse by the late William A. Baker on *The King, Eternal, Immortal* describing the ineffable superiority of Jehovah God, who is the "all in all." We are also continuing the four-part series begun in the last issue on *The Word of God*, this section showing the authenticity of the printed Word, of the Bible.

Your Input Requested

In the last issue of The Herald we enclosed a questionnaire to see how we can be of better service to our readers. If you have not yet responded we encourage you to take a few moments to *sill* out the card from the March-April issue and return it to us. This will help us evaluate the ministry of this journal and to improve it for the benefit of all our readers.

Our prayer remains that each of us may be more appreciative of God's great blessings to us, more zealous to show that appreciation in the living of our lives, more studious to know what is God's will for us individually, and more prayerful for one another. May the Lord bless us all in these endeavors.

THE TWO DIMENSIONS OF GRACE

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.-Ephesians 2:8, 9

By Thomas Gilbert

To all who have received and experienced divine grace, the word "grace," like the word "gospel," is a synonym for all the divine mercies God's people may now or ever enjoy. "Grace" signifies unmerited favor. Acts of grace are to be clearly distinguished from acts of justice.

Grace has two dimensions: (1) a vertical dimension, representing God's unmerited favor and assistance given as a gift, and (2) a horizontal dimension, representing dispersal of this same type of favor and assistance to those around us, without regard to any merit on the part of its recipients. Grace, in both of these dimensions, is very closely akin to "agape"-unconditional love.

God's Grace to Us

The grace of God is received by the exercise of faith. Romans 5:1, 2: *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* (See also Romans 4:13-16.) Justification, the standing we have as God's children, and his continuing care for us are gifts from God. They are unearned by anything we have done. We have received them through faith.

[God] has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ.-2 Timothy 1:9, 10

Other scriptures in which Paul is emphatic on this point include his declarations in Romans 4:4, 5;

So that we might have confidence in our standing with God, despite our imperfections, Paul tells us in Romans that God's grace exceeds our sinfulness (5:20, 21). But he is also quick to caution us that this fact is not a reason to consciously or carelessly continue practicing sin (6:1, 2, 14-18).

Grace and Works

While God's unmerited favor-grace-is a major theme in the scriptures, other passages also emphasize the importance of good works. How do we harmonize "grace" and "works"? What is the role of works in our walk, in our relationship to our heavenly Father? Do they not count for something?

Good works are the natural result of practicing faith-faith not only in God's divine plan but also in his instructions for righteous, holy living. Works do not earn God's favor of eventual salvation, but they demonstrate the genuineness of our faith (James 2:14-26). If we are careful to practice good works, as Paul admonishes us (Titus 3:8), we will identify ourselves as servants of God, and avoid bringing any reproach upon him. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul specifically tells us that one of the purposes of God in begetting us to a new life in Christ is to carry out the good works he has prepared in advance for us. A genuine faith is a living faith, demonstrated in many ways in our daily living. If such good works are absent from our life, then

Galatians 5:4; and Titus 3:3-7, and our faith is not a living faith-it is in confessions regarding his own dead, just as James writes. life in 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10 and 1 Timothy 1:12-16.

Giving Grace to Others

Just as we need God's unmerited favor to continue our relationship with him, so too we need unmerited favor from one another to continue our relationships. If we demand justice from one another or impose a sense of obligation, then the exercise of unmerited favor evaporates and relationships will crumble.

We must imitate God's grace in our dealings with fellow human beings. Hebrews 12:14, 15 states, *Pursue peace with all, and holiness without which no one shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any one fall back from the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [crowd in, annoy] you, and thereby many be defiled [KJV with corrections].* Here grace is definitely linked with the character and spirit we manifest. Verse 28 of the same chapter calls on us to demonstrate grace in our lives: *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have [NASB "show"] grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

We are also to exercise grace to one another in our verbal communications. Ephesians 4:29-32 states, *Let no unwholesome words proceed out of your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment that it may give **grace to those who hear** [NASB].* Colossians 4:6 states, *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person [NASB].*

THE GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.-Romans 5:1, 2

By Carl Hagensick

Three conditions in the Christian's upward call to glory are mentioned here by the Apostle Paul: (1) being justified by faith; (2) the grace wherein we stand; and (3) the glory of God. The first two of these are present attainments of the Christian, while the last is his grand prospect of a resurrection inheritance with his Lord and Master,

All three of these positions are described as being attainable only "through our Lord Jesus Christ." In addition the first two are attributed by the Apostle as being "by faith."

Justified By Faith

The relationship between our justification and our faith is spelled out in detail in Galatians 3:24-26:

"Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. "

To the Jew, then, this faith was an end to the law, for with it they were "no longer under a schoolmaster." The faith which performs this freeing work is specifically described as "faith in Christ."

This faith operates gradually in a believer's life. By it he first comes to the Father in prayer. By it he seeks forgiveness for sin. By it he receives leadership and guidance into ever deeper truths. By it he is looked upon as righteous through the eyes of a loving heavenly Father. No wonder the Apostle John could say, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith* (1 John 5:4).

The entire argument in the epistles is that faith makes us acceptable to God. The greater the faith the greater the acceptance-"according to thy faith be it unto thee" (Matt. 9:29). For the Christian consecration to be "acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1, 2), it must be accompanied by faith.

Although "justification" is a word that means "to make right," and that can be done only through the application of Christ's merit to the believer, the Bible does use the word in an accommodated sense. For instance, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Sinner, in Luke 18:9-14, Jesus said that the sinner, rather than the Pharisee, went to his house **"justified:"**

It is in this sense that Paul uses the phrase "justified by faith" in Romans 5:1. This relationship produces "peace with God," a sense of oneness between the believer and his Lord. But more progress is to be made before he attains the "peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

Access To Grace

Paul goes on to assure us that we have more than this faith justification. He adds (Rom. 5:2) "by whom **also** we have access by faith into the grace wherein we now stand." The little word "also" informs us that this is a further position than the first described- "being justified by faith."

The grace here referred to is the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). This is called "grace" because it is an unmerited favor; whereas salvation, though undeserved, is obligatory because Christ died for all. The death of the

Redeemer, however, does not warrant a spiritual call, only a return to the Edenic condition of perfection in the midst of a perfect earth.

Paul makes this point early in the Epistle to the Romans because the balance of his writings exhort the Roman brethren as to how to maintain that position of favor they obtained through the unmerited grace of God.

To obtain this position of grace, there was a responsibility for the Christian: to offer his life in consecration to God (Rom. 12:1, 2). This was the next step of the onward journey to which faith propelled him. Now it was not just the faith of the believer, but the faith of the doer: motivational faith.

The resultant peace, "the peace of God," was another unmerited gift, another grace, from his Lord. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid* (John 14:27).

The Glory Of God

But, praise God, there is more to follow. The Christian not only is "justified by faith," obtaining a relationship with God, not only "stands" in a unique position of grace, but he can also "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Here hope, not faith, is the activating element, because here we have the future prospect of glorification, the sharing of God's own nature: unmerited favor, grace beyond degree.

But, notice that we hope for this glory, not merely wish for it. As opposed to a wish, a hope has a solid foundation, a reason for expecting fulfillment. The believer has many such reasons for his hope; they are the "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:4). One will suffice for illustration, but do not settle for one, seek for more, trust in

them and make them a part of your faith structure. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Not merely faith but faithfulness is required. As we read in Jas. 1:22, *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

The Tabernacle

These three conditions are well illustrated by the three compartments in Israel's Tabernacle in the wilderness. This structure itself had two rooms, the holy and the most holy, set within a fenced enclosure, called the court.

In this court were two articles: a brazen altar for offering animals and a laver for cleansing purposes. In the first room of the tabernacle proper there was a golden candlestick, a golden table with twelve loaves of bread, and a golden altar for offering incense. The innermost room, the most holy, contained only a relatively small box, an ark, in which were stored the two tables of the Law given to Moses, a golden pot of imperishable manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, to show the supremacy of the tribe of Levi. This box was covered with a golden lid, called the Mercy Seat. This lid was topped by two golden figures of cherubim, between which glowed a mysterious light, the Shekinah, signifying the presence of God himself.

The journey from outside this structure into the most holy can be likened to the Christian's approach to God. He, too, goes through stages. In the first of these he appreciates and places his faith in the sacrifice of Christ, pictured by the brazen altar. This faith leads him on to a measure of cleansing, as shown in the laver. To the extent this faith builds, to that extent he is more acceptable to his heavenly Father, more justified by his faith in the blood of Christ.

As his Christian course progresses, he yields himself in full, unreserved consecration to do the will of God. God responds by infusing him with the holy Spirit, a begetting to a new, a spiritual, life. The Spirit, opening his mind, enables him to see the light of truth, to eat of the bread of life, and to offer his prayers as sweet incense unto God.

But though his faith has brought him thus far, still more lies beyond -the holy of holies, the most holy, heaven itself. For this he must hope and increasingly support that hope with faithfulness to his consecration vows. This prospect of being with his beloved Lord urges him on, just as the same joy in prospect proved to be such an incentive for Jesus.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God -Hebrews 12:2

Thus, as Paul says in our text, having access to this grace of spirit begetting, the Christian now may "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

Three Entrances

The three compartments of Israel's tabernacle were entered through a portal, a draw curtain. There was a *gate* to the Court, a *door* to the holy and a *veil* leading into the most holy. Each of these, is representative of Jesus Christ.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.-John 14:6

To receive justification by faith, the believer must accept Jesus as ***the way*** to salvation. He must be willing to walk in the same way Jesus walked, to remold his life in the image of his Master.

To progress further in his faith to "the grace wherein we stand," Jesus must take on a new role for the believer. He becomes ***the truth***, the ultimate verity. As *the truth* he assumes the sole position of headship for the Christian, determining his every action, guiding his every step.

But the believer hopes for more, even "the glory of God." This he will attain when Jesus becomes *the life*, raising him from the sin, sorrow and degradation of the present life to the glories of eternity in association with himself in the heights of heaven.

Then, looking back, the believer will praise the way God has led him day by day. Then he will say of his Lord: "He is the Way. He is the Truth. He is the Life."

GRACE BEGETS GRACE

. . . *minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*
(1 Peter 4:10)

By Richard Evans

A Gracious Lord

With hardly a pause, Jesus followed the parable of the Prodigal Son with another—commonly identified as the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13). As rendered in most English translations, the parable appears to be a strange story of two rogues—a steward who defrauded his master and his master who condoned the fraud. More than that, the master is said to discharge the steward because of unsubstantiated hearsay.

This rendering, and the traditional title, are misleading and result in a grave misunderstanding of the lesson given that Sabbath day. The focus of the story is not an unjust steward but a gracious lord. It demonstrates in a marvelous way the grace of our heavenly Father and the great love he has for his creation. It also sets forth the necessity for all who serve him to exhibit the same attitude, the same grace. God is not a god of retribution, neither will he have any of his stewards display such character. His son taught that all who follow him must turn the other cheek, love their enemies, and pray for those who persecute them (Matt 5:39, 44).

A Few Pertinent Phrases

The phrase unjust steward reads literally as *steward of unrighteousness* (vs 8). Without context this phrase is ambiguous. Unrighteousness could describe the character of the steward, or it could depict the nature of his stewardship. Either understanding is grammatically correct.

The context (vs. 9-11) concerns the latter, the nature of the stewardship. Lacking any other evidence, the interpretation must agree with this context. The parable is not about an unjust steward but is concerned with a steward who has responsibility over things that are unrighteous—unrighteous mammon. *Unrighteousness* does not describe his character but his occupation, the nature of his stewardship. A stewardship, by the way, in which all the human race share; all are stewards of unrighteousness.

Two other phrases require attention: *children of this world* and *children of light* (vs. 8). On that day Jesus spoke to two very different groups—the scribes and Pharisees, and the publicans and sinners. With this parable he addressed both groups, just as he had done in the parables of the Great Supper (Luke 14:16-24), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), and, subsequently, the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

Children of light applied to those with whom God had been dealing. Specifically, it was the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel. More generally, it was the nation. Of all the families of the earth, only Israel had light (Amos 3:2). It was reflected light, the light of the moon (Rev 12:1); nonetheless, it was light, the only light in the earth at that time. The dawning of the Gospel sun was only just beginning. The *children of light* were. the first invited guests to the great supper, the elder son, and the **rich man**.

Children of this world applied to the publicans and sinners. Particularly, it concerned those who drew near unto Jesus after he declared unto them the terms of discipleship (Luke 15:1). They were pictured by the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind that accepted the invitation to the great supper; the prodigal son, who returned to his father's house; Lazarus the beggar, who was carried to Abraham's bosom. They were also represented by the steward. It is this group that *are in their generation wiser than the children of light* (Luke 16:8).

The Parable

There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. Luke 15:1

The steward was accused of wasting his goods, goods that were his possession. It is the same criticism made of the prodigal son *wasted his substance with riotous living* (Luke 15:13). The Greek word translated *wasted* is the same in both texts.

This wasting of his goods may be summed up best by our Lord's words:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through or steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.-Matthew 6:19-21

The steward was accused of laying up treasure on earth, not in heaven.

*And he [the rich man, representing God] called him [the steward], and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy **stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Luke 16:2***

Two statements were made to the steward. First, give an account of your stewardship. Second, your stewardship is being terminated. The second statement was given as the reason for the first-give an account because your stewardship is ended. There is nothing in this verse, or in the parable, that indicates the termination was a consequence of the accusation. The lord did not say, you have been accused, so you may no longer be steward. To make such a link is to make the rich lord unjust. It would have him judging the steward on hearsay evidence and finding him guilty without any opportunity for defense.

The accusation was not the reason for the termination. Though not given, the reason was probably a simple one, perhaps he was to die, as in the parable of the Rich Farmer (Luke 12:20).

An awesome message! A message all are to hear. There will be a time when our stewardship, too, will be terminated and an account made. Will we have treasures laid up in heaven? Or, will we have wasted our goods?

Verses 3 through 7 outline the subsequent action of the steward. He forgave the debts of debtors. Verse 8 relates the lord's reaction:

And the lord commended the unjust steward [steward of unrighteousness], ***because he had done wisely: for the children of this world*** [publicans and sinners] ***are in their generation wiser than the children of light*** [scribes and Pharisees].

This verse has caused great difficulty for many. If the steward was going against his lord's will by forgiving the debtors, why did the lord commend him? If the rich lord is a picture of the heavenly Father, as most believe, how could Jesus have depicted him commending a steward who acted contrary to his will?

The major obstacle to understanding this lord's commendation has been the phrase **unjust steward**. As shown above, the modifier *unrighteousness* does not refer to the character of the steward, but to the nature of his stewardship. He was a steward of unrighteous mammon. No indication is given of his character in the story, and none should be assumed. The lord's words, accepted as recorded, indicate the steward's action was in perfect accord with his will. The forgiving of debts was what the lord desired of the steward.

The lord of this parable is the father who ran and embraced the prodigal son. He is the Almighty God, the gracious Creator of all things. He has no use for the meager goods of fallen man. He is not a taking God but a giving one. He is a gracious God!

The steward was commended because he had relieved the burden of his fellow men. He had forgiven debtors their debts. He had done exactly what his lord wanted him to do: *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors* (Matt 6:11, 12).

Also, Matthew 19:21: *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* These are the instructions the steward followed. The steward was commended because he had *done wisely*. By forgiving the debtors their debts he had laid up treasure in heaven. He had emulated the gracious character of his lord.

An even broader picture may be seen by having the *children of this world* include the gentiles who draw near unto Christ; and, the *children of light* include the nation of Israel as a whole. Again, the two sets of guests invited to the great supper, the prodigal and elder sons, Lazarus and the rich man.

Jesus next proceeds to give the lesson of the parable.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they [Hebraism, God] may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?-vs. 9-11

This last question must be taken to heart. Everyone is a steward of mammon, a steward of unrighteousness. Are we using our mammon to make friends of our Lord, to lay up treasure in heaven?

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.-vs. 12, 13

This is the culmination of Jesus' teaching from the time he entered the house of the chief Pharisee (Luke 14:1). His parables of the Chief Seat and the Great Supper, his lesson on the requirements for discipleship, the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son all pointed to this one vital principle of life. Grace! All who serve a gracious God must be gracious-*Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.-v. 14

The Greek word translated *derided* means literally to *turn up the nose at*. So, when the Pharisees overheard the gracious words of the Lord, they turned up their noses they scoffed. Luke recorded the reason for their reaction-they *were covetous*, or literally, they were *lovers of money*. By that statement Luke indicated the focus of the parable was heart motive. Jesus had much in his teachings of the grander scheme of things, of the world to come, of the big picture. In this parable, however, he dealt with motivation, the underlying reason for doing things. More particularly, he dealt with the subject of mammon-materialism. He gave this lesson to his disciples in the presence of men whose passion was mammon, men who *devour widows' houses* (Luke 20:47).

The scoffing of the Pharisees is easily understood. The god they worshipped would not forgive debts. Mammon would demand every cent be repaid, with interest. They did not understand a lord who would praise his steward for not collecting debts. Though *children of light*, they knew not of grace. They had so separated themselves from God they were no longer acquainted with him or his character. Just as with the elder son, they could not comprehend such acts of gracious love.

Our Responsibility

Solomon wrote *For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he* Prov. 23:7. A corollary to this principle is that a person's character will reflect the god he worships. This is very evident in the Pharisees. If we want to be commended by our Lord, we must not follow their example. We must have the correct understanding of him and of his character. God is gracious. If we desire to be received *into everlasting habitations*, we must exhibit the same grace. His grace to us should beget a like grace in us. *Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.*-Psalm 119:77

THE WORKS OF GRACE

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.-James 1:25

A verse by verse study in James 2

The debate between the relative roles of faith (or grace) and works has been actively pursued in the Christian church since its founding. The early church, composed largely of Jews, instilled with the work ethic of the law, found the liberty of the gospel a challenging concept. Paul's epistle to the Romans deals largely with this problem, emphasizing the preeminence of faith over works. In his epistle, James covers the same ground, emphasizing the preeminence of works over faith.

Later, in the Reformation, this question again comes to the fore. The sacrament of penitence in the Roman Catholic Church, with the attendant practice of indulgences, emphasized the priority of works. Martin Luther, in contrast, stressed the doctrine of justification by faith. So strong was he in his opposition to salvation through works that he suggested the epistle of James not be considered apart of the Bible.

Rightly understood, however, there is no real conflict between the two concepts. Faith and works are like the two legs of a man; both are needed to make true progress along the narrow way. Grace and its acceptance through faith are totally unmerited and cannot be earned; they are the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

In the first chapter of his epistle, James treats the value of trials and temptations, showing that these are God's tools for the developing of character. In this discussion he describes the gospel as the "perfect law of liberty," in contrast with the strict "thou shafts" and "thou shaft pots" of the Mosaic law.

Partiality

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (vs. 1-4)

It is only too common among humankind to respect men of success. Not only is it their wealth, but with prosperity often goes a certain amount of refinement and social standing which commend the possessor to those around. Often the poor lack these advantages and there is a tendency to respect them less. "Look at the inner man," is James' message.

God and Man

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? (vs. 5-7)

In contrast to man, God has usually chosen the more ignoble of this world. There are reasons for God's selections. First, there is usually an attitude of humility and need in the poor that is replaced by an aura of self-sufficiency in the more affluent. Second, materialism is frequently its own reward and often becomes an all-consuming obsession. Additionally, improvement of the person of low estate shows the glory of the power of God, whereas one who is naturally noble might claim a share in the glory of his life. One poet has expressed it well:

*If I had been more worthy,
And my stumblings had been few,
When men gave God the glory,
They'd have praised my virtue, too.*

*If I'd never lost a battle,
Or had never missed the mark,
As they talked about his goodness,
Mine, also, they'd remark.*

*But my being so deficient,
In thought and word and deed,
Means he'll get all the glory
He deserves it all indeed.*

*When they see this weak mortal
Raised to such immortal heights,
What praise will rise to him
Who in such nothingness delights.*

James then proceeds to call the attention of his reader to the injustices that only too often accompany those of high position. Being materialistic, they are frequently open to bribery. Even in the best of scenarios, those in authority are prone to be unsympathetic to the plights of the poor, not having experienced its hardships personally. Since, especially in Israel, those who sat in positions of judgment were supposedly pronouncing the judgments of God, such inequity from the judgment seat reflected on the character of God; and these judges James accuses of blasphemy. Perhaps for this reason James opens the next chapter with these words: ***Be not many of you masters (3:1).***

The Law of Moses

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill; Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law (vs. 8-12).

Ancient Israel had a law against discrimination. Jesus deemed it as the second greatest of all the laws given to Moses, only inferior to the one preceding it that stated Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart. This law commanded that one love his neighbor as himself. No qualification was put on the term "neighbor"-rich or poor, male or female, white or black-all were to be treated equally. When queried by a lawyer as to the meaning of this term "neighbor," Jesus gave a story which we know as the Parable of the Good Samaritan in which he illustrates that even a despised Samaritan should be considered as a neighbor.

Partiality on the part of the church, to whom James was writing, was to be considered as a violation of this law and thus a sin. Under the demands of Judaic law the attention paid to all other features of the law-the minutiae of cleansings and purifications, of prayer and almsgivings-could not wipe out the violation of this precept of love for one's neighbor.

By using the two examples of the commandments against adultery and killing, James takes our minds back to the words of the Master in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7). Jesus uses these same two commands to show their deeper meaning, of regulating thoughts as well as actions. If lust could be adultery, then hatred could be murder. James implies an even further extension -- discrimination and partiality could be murder, since they involved the slaying of another's reputation.

The Law of Liberty

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment (vs. 12, 13).

It is not the law of Moses but the law of grace, the law of the gospel, where James finds the harsher judgment. "You shall be judged as you have judged others," is his message. It is the same message Jesus gave: ***Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*** (Matt. 7:1, 2). It is the same message Paul preached: ***Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself for thou that judgest doest the same things*** (Rom. 2:1). The Christian is warned of the same danger in the model prayer given to him: *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors* (Matt. 6:12).

Grace received without grace distributed is like a lake receiving water but disbursing none-like the barren depths of the Dead Sea. This dispensing of forgiveness to others becomes a responsibility for those who have received God's grace, lest they receive it in vain (2 Cor. 6:1). It is a "work of grace."

Faith and Works

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say,. Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? (vs. 14-20).

Here is the heart of James' discussion. Faith and grace are both gifts from God, but these gifts are not to provoke idleness but activity. They should energize the Christian. To receive God's forgiveness and the attendant standing with him through justification without showing the same character toward others demonstrates a lack of appreciation for the gift received.

Jesus told of a debtor who was forgiven a large debt but demanded payment from a pauper who owed him a small amount. The moral is given in unforgettable terms:

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?-Matthew 18:32, 33

Forgiveness to those who have wronged us is not an easy task. The disciples found it sufficiently difficult when commanded to forgive one who offended them up to seven times in a single day, responded with the request: *Increase our faith* (Luke 17:5).

James uses a specific illustration to demonstrate the kind of works he is advocating. Again he reverts to their attitude toward the poor. It is not sufficient, he counsels, to commiserate with the poor but seek to give him the necessary clothes and food to uplift him from his condition of poverty. If not dead, such an unproductive faith is at the best very weak. If we find ourselves emulating such a faith, let us ask like the disciples, *Lord, increase our faith*.

Belief, the doctrinal substructure of a Christian, is vital, but by itself is insufficient. Belief as an intellectual assent to certain facts is not unique to good people. Even devils believe. They react to their belief with a certain trembling in anticipation of their judgment. Let

your belief in retributive judgment be a spur to encourage the works of faith and of grace. Do not just receive grace; give grace.

Abraham and Rahab

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? (vs. 21-25).

James evokes two illustrations of his principle from the Old Testament-Abraham and Rahab. Both are named in the gallery of faithheroes in Hebrews 11. Throughout New Testament writings Abraham is constantly referred to as the one who was "justified by faith."

Faith alone did not justify him; he demonstrated his faith in action. If Abraham merely believed that God could raise his son from the dead, it might indeed show a measure of faith. But acting on that faith and showing his willingness to sacrifice his beloved son in death was the true measure of his faith-and that was an action, a work. Likewise it required faith to believe that the invading forces of Israel would be blessed by God in their conquest of Canaan, but Rahab's justification came as a result of acting upon faith and taking the risk to harbor and deliver the spies who sought refuge with her.

Works, the Spirit of Faith

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (v. 26).

For his summary, James invokes the picture of human life. Life is composed of two elements- body and breath forming a living soul: *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul* (Gen. 2:7). So, James reasons, spiritual life is composed of two elements: faith and works. Faith supplies the body, the organism. Works keep that organism functioning. Without the action of breathing, the natural man would die. Without the active functioning of works, the spiritual man will die.

Proper spiritual works are not motivated by a desire to earn salvation or merit favor. Grace remains unmerited. But the gift of grace requires a thankful response on the part of the recipient. He responds with good works, motivated by thankfulness and gratitude.

IN CONSIDERATION OF LOVE

Let love be without dissimulation.-Romans 12:9

By George Eldridge

The Judaic-Christian scriptures cannot be read even cursorily without impressing one with how much they have to say about love.

The importance of Christian love is delineated in I Corinthians 13. There we read that even if we can speak fluently and eloquently on the truth and have not love we would be like metal that, being struck, would issue no sound.

Though we could prophesy and understand all mysteries and knowledge and have faith which would cause miracles and yet be lacking love, we would be nothing spiritually.

Even if we were to give all that we owned to feed the poor or give up our lives to a martyr's death, and have not love, it would profit us nothing. We see, then, how highly love is valued in the Word of God!

The Guiding Principle

The extent to which this Christian grace is being cultivated and regulated in our lives gives us an index as to how much our study of God's Word is helping us spiritually.

If our desire is to become Christlike, pleasing to our Father, we must prayerfully consider whether or not our love is spiritual and whether it is the great guiding principle of life. Do we examine our thoughts and words and deeds by God's law of love? Were our innermost thoughts critical of someone? Could we have said something more kindly? Were we lazy or insensitive when a helpful act should have been done?

Love God, Christ, Brethren

Love begins with love toward God and toward our Lord Jesus *Christ*. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also* (1 John 4:20, 21).

A vital principle of Christian living is found in Matthew 25:40, where Jesus said, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*. How essential it is for us to exercise love! *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another* (John 13:35).

The Badge of Discipleship

Christ has made love the "badge" of Christian discipleship. Love for all the brethren is sure evidence of our love for our Lord (1 John 5:1). The abounding influence of the holy Spirit will produce the grace that makes it possible for us to love all who are in Christ.

We must be able to detect the perversions of love. As water is not able to rise above its own level, natural man is incapable of understanding or appreciating spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14).

Sometimes sentimental human thought is mistaken for spiritual love: a charming and talented leader may appeal to us, and so we accept his doctrines and follow his guidance in our personal lives. Sometimes carnal desires are called love. Our talents are appreciated by another Christian, or he is attracted to our personality. He is surely worthy of our love!

Sadly, many of us, living on a low plane, have confused human amiability and affability with true Christian love. A warm and loving manner is comforting, so we think it must denote more godliness. It may, and we should all endeavor to be amiable and warm and loving.

But atheists and heathens are sometimes remarkably endowed with admirable qualities, and we must evaluate good character for what it is. Spiritual love is characterized by meekness and gentleness: virtues pleasing to God. Pleasing the Father makes Christlikeness far superior to the courtesies of the flesh.

Christian Love

The scriptures teach that the true nature of Christian love is a spiritual grace instilled in us along with faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13). It is a disposition begun at the time of consecration. It is a mark of new life in Christ. Continuing in this new life, it increases and overflows.

Christian love is more than an emotion; it is a righteous principle of life that always seeks the good in others, as Christ seeks it. It is the opposite of the self-love and selfseeking inborn in all of us.

Love in Action

Not only must we have an affectionate regard for our brethren but also a powerful desire to promote their welfare. This is not fickle sentiment, easily offended, but an abiding love which "many waters" of cold indifference, or "floods" of disapproval can neither quench nor drown (Song of Solomon 8:7).

Though we fall far short in comparison to our Lord, we diligently try to be like him who, *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end* (John 13:1).

The best way of obtaining a right conception of true love is to study the life of our Lord Jesus. Here we find the perfect exemplification of such love. By "study" we mean a comprehensive survey of everything recorded of him in the four gospels.

By such study we discover that his love was benevolent, thoughtful, compassionate, gentle, unselfish, self-sacrificing, patient, and unchanging. Such love could delay his response to an urgent request (John 11:6), discuss a matter with his mother before obeying her immediately and unquestioningly (John 2:4), use a whip (John 2:15), upbraid his disciples for doubting (Luke 24:25), denounce hypocrites (Matt. 23:1333), be stern (Matt. 16:23) and even angry (Mark 3:5).

All-Comprehensive Love

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.-1 John 3:14

This is the fruit and effect of begetting as new creatures. It is an evidence of having been accepted into Christ. Love for the brethren is far more than finding one whose temperament is similar, or whose views on the scriptures are in accord with ours. There would be no need for a commandment to love such.

If we are unfailingly sober, we may prefer serious-minded scholars; but we will also learn much from those brethren who have a simple awe of God's obvious works. If detailed doctrines are especially precious to us, let us look at brethren with different views and see why God called them, just as he called us.

Because love is a principle of life, we are determined to love those to whom we have no natural affinity. We rightly exercise this true Christian love by seeking their highest good, not just to please and ingratiate ourselves in their esteem.

Love a Commandment

By this we know that we love the children of God and keep his commandments.-1 John 5:2

What is the true test of our personal love to God? Is it not in the keeping of his commandments? (John 14:15, 21, 24; 15:10, 14). The true worth of our love to God is not measured by our words, nor how loudly we sing his praises, but by our obedience to his word; and his command is that we love one another as Christ has loved us.

How did Christ love us? Romans 5:8 tells us that *While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*. Are we assassinating our brethren, or are we laying down our lives for them? *Destroy not him . . . for whom Christ died* (Rom. 14:15).

Practical Love

Love for our brethren manifests itself in many ways. One way is to pray for them. There are brethren throughout the earth with trials, conflicts, temptations, and sorrows about whom we know nothing. Yet we can express love for them by beseeching God's blessings on their behalf. Our very utterance of such pleas will make us more of a blessing to those people whom we do know.

Whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.-1 John 3:17, 18

Some brethren are poor in this world's goods, a discouraging burden to them. The Lord may permit their trial to cultivate our compassion. It is not only a privilege to minister temporal goods from what the Lord has given us; it is also important to give with sensitivity so as not to embarrass the recipient.

This is practical love. It considers nothing too humbling if the sufferings of a brother can be relieved. When our Lord came, the scriptures tell us that he was filled with compassion at the hunger and suffering of the multitudes.

He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25). He makes our cause and care his own. He entreats the Father on our behalf. No one is forgotten. The lone sheep is borne upon the heart of our Good Shepherd.

By expressing our love for our brethren in daily prayers, we are brought into the fellowship of our great High Priest. We cannot carry our brethren before the throne of grace without cherishing them in our own hearts. If there should ever arise a bitter feeling toward one of our brethren who has offended, the best way to overcome this is to pray for him. Let us try to learn this lesson of cultivating love. We suggest three rules for this:

1. Recognize at the outset that just as there is much in us which will severely try the love of the brethren, so there will be more than a little in them that will test our *love*.

Forbearing one another in love (Eph. 4:2). The very first quality of true love in I Corinthians 13 was that it *suffereth long* (v. 4).

2. To cultivate any virtue or grace, it must be exercised-put into action. Life must be lived by the principle of love. Cold, calculating unkindness dampens love. Set an example. *Overcome evil with good* (Rom. 12:21).

3. Bask in the warmth of God's love. Like begets like; love begets love. Act upon the principle of love until it abounds and overflows; your heart will be drawn out to all the brethren.

We have a beautiful example in the apostle who wrote the most about brotherly love, the one who leaned upon the Master's bosom: *Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him* (1 John 2:5).

May the Lord grant us all the consciousness of this way of praising his glory, to the good of all his people.

CONTENTION AMONGST BRETHREN

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Jude 3

By Charles Redeker

Nothing is more distressing to new creatures in Christ than contention amongst brethren, especially when it concerns interpersonal relationships and behavior. An issue of this kind may elude the sincere efforts of all concerned to resolve and continue for many years. Such a difference can tax the believer's best judgments, and perhaps more than any other matter necessitate seeking the wisdom that comes from above.

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.-Proverbs 26:20, 21

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.-Hebrews 12:14, 15

Brethren . . . this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.-Philippians 3:13, 14

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true . . . honest . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.-Philippians 4: 8

Strife cannot continue unless someone periodically adds fuel to the fire. Talebearing and evil speaking are directly linked to such fuel and need to be guarded against. If both parties to a dispute exercise restraint, the passage of time can work a favorable, moderating influence.

In a dispute of long standing it would be expedient not to stir up ashes of the past. Strong-minded brethren are unlikely to change their position on a major issue. It would serve merely to enflame emotion and feelings all over again.

Renewed debate over who said what is of little value years after a dispute. It is reasonable to believe that both sides tried to exercise sanctified judgment and did as they felt best. It is doubtful that any would go back on what they felt the Lord had directed them to do after days and weeks of agonizing meditation and prayer.

Both sides of necessity have received grievous, hurtful injuries. This is what has made it so difficult and why it has been such a major problem. Dwelling on the details and rehearsing the issues are not healthy responses. These things need to be put aside in favor of a constructive thought pattern. Occupy the mind in more positive channels of trusting God and in serving the brethren.

Openness to God's Spirit

. . . grieve not the Holy Spirit of God . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:30-32). . . . The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22, 23). . . . If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

If a dispute among brethren continues unabated, one or both parties are quenching the Spirit of God. God's Spirit and its fruitage are clearly defined in the texts above. Its manifestation leads away from wrath, anger, argumentation, and strife toward brotherly kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

James 5:14 calls those who grieve the Spirit as being spiritually sick. It implies lack of spiritual growth, for where God's spirit is found, all the fruit of the Spirit will be growing luxuriantly.

The most important issue therefore is the **current heart attitude** of each one. Is anyone carrying a grudge or showing bitterness, malice, or hard feelings? Is anyone resisting the charitable dictates of the holy Spirit? Are there fleshly, self-willed propensities that are blocking the path to full reconciliation? If so, these need to be overcome by allowing God's spirit to have full reign over the thoughts and feelings.

Committing All to God

*Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him (Psa. 37:7); . . . even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps . . . who, when he was reviled, reviled **not again . . . but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Peter 2:21-23)**; . . . every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12); for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive . . . according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10); . . . he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons (Col. 3:25).*

These texts offer a pattern of desirable response to a situation that seems utterly beyond resolution. It is, simply, not to expect our immediate satisfaction but to demonstrate a willingness to commit the entire matter to our heavenly Father. This example was shown

by our Lord, who considered it not expedient to revile those accusing him but committed his all in trust to God.

The reasoning behind such a course seems clear: God is dealing individually with his children and will require a rendering up of each account. He will deal with the parties to a dispute in an impartial and righteous manner in his own way and time. This being so, should not each be content to let the matter *rest in the Lord* and to abide by his judgment?

If in fact the matter were fully committed to God, the temptation to bring up the issue again and again to confirm a personal judgment of guilt and condemnation of the other party would be removed. In its place *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus* (Phil. 4:7).

Willingness to Forgive

God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. (Rom. 5:8, 10); . . . Our Father . . . forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors . . . For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:9, 12, 14, 15); . . . Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him . . . not . . . seven times: but seventy times seven (Matt. 18:21, 22).

The parable of the unmerciful servant who was forgiven a large debt by the king but was then unwilling to forgive a very small sum owed him by a fellow servant is followed by these words:

Then his lord . . . said . . . O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due . . . So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. -Matthew 18:32-35

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies [tenderness of heart], kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. -Colossians 3:12, 13

Forgiveness is given great prominence in scripture. It is an essential way to promote healthy relationships. The willingness to forgive others in matters small or great is a mark of the sincere and mature believer. It is actually one of the highest graces one can develop. When put into practice, it leads to reconciliation and renewal of relationships, which is the desirable but elusive goal in any dispute.

Forgiveness is also a prerequisite for graduation from the school of Christ. Our Lord has set it forth as an essential requirement of all his children. We cannot ignore it: If we insist on being disobedient in this regard and harbor bitterness towards others, we will not only demonstrate a lack of fitness for the heavenly kingdom but we will face serious consequences even in this life. We will bring upon ourselves the mental anguish of the *tormentors* of the parable (Matt. 18:34). In essence, we will imprison ourselves in a cell of revenge and lock ourselves away from the healing process and peace God would provide. Therefore it is imperative that we forgive those who trespass against us, whether the offence be real or imagined.

One of the strongest reasons for being willing, even anxious, to demonstrate forgiveness is the example that the heavenly Father himself has given us. It is a remarkable truth that God forgave the human family and set into motion provision for its redemption while yet in trespasses and sins. So great was his love and forgiveness that he was willing to sacrifice his only begotten Son on our behalf. The desire to forgive should be present in our heart and manifest itself in our prayers and loving actions toward the offender, regardless of whether or not he seeks our forgiveness. This is God-likeness in action.

The disposition and willingness to forgive should be well developed in every new creature, even though opposed by all fleshly inclinations. If the offenses seem particularly grievous, our spiritual development and strength in Christ should rise to the occasion and demonstrate obedience to the will of our Father. The vital role of forgiveness in alleviating disputes among brethren can hardly be overemphasized.

Expressing Christian Love

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34); . . . Hatred stirreth up strifes, but over all transgressions love throweth a covering (Prov. 10:12 [Rotherham]); . . . Love suffereth long, and is kind . . . is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (1 Cor. 13:4-7); . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:35); . . . Put on love, which is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14).

Christian love is valued above even faith and hope. It is a measure of what we are willing to do for one another. Brotherly kindness, sympathy, tenderness of feeling, forbearance, and long-suffering are part of it. At times it seems but a natural response and flows freely; at other times we have to work at it. We are admonished to develop it and put it into practice. Jesus said that when this bond of love between his disciples was properly manifested it would be noticed by the world and provide a unique testimony that they were truly his followers. Conversely, what kind of witness do we put forth if we do not show love for each other?

Protracted disputes may cause one or both parties to lessen their regard for each other, with a lessening of mutual love and respect. In extreme cases evil speaking, shunning one

another, and the development of negative emotions and hurtful thoughts may arise. But such conduct must be recognized as incompatible with Christian standards and ideals and be actively fought against. It is an effort of the flesh to assert itself over the new creature, sometimes in the guise of righteous indignation or justified by a manipulation of scripture.

Kindness, tender-heartedness, and brotherly love, are pleasing to our heavenly father and always in order in all relationships. We are instructed to love our enemies; how much more appropriate to show love to our **brethren**, even if not in agreement on a particular issue or under grievous circumstances.

All of this leads to a fundamental point: Can brethren in good conscience disagree with each other differ in their respective judgments on an issue-and yet in good faith

go on to show love and respect? Clearly scripture teaches us that we **can and should** do this. How much wiser such a course would seem than to expect capitulation on the part of brethren in deeply held convictions and absolute agreement with our own particular viewpoint.

Summary and Conclusions

In seeking the wisdom from above we find the scriptures lay out certain principles and admonitions that are emphasized. This wisdom is revealed to the believer who is meek and humble, sincerely searching for divine counsel, and conforming his life to the pattern of our Lord.

If there is bitterness, envying, or strife in our lives, such are to be recognized as being earthly and sensual and to be fought against. The wisdom from above, in contrast, leads to purity, peace, gentleness, mercy, and forgiveness. These are the fruits Christians are to develop and promote in all their relationships. (See James 3:13-18.)

Openness and obedience to the spirit of God, a willingness to commit all to the throne of grace, forgiveness of the faults of others and expressing true Christian love in all of its many facets cannot help but defuse and eventually dissolve the points of contention that underlie any dispute amongst the brethren.

ERADICATING THE SPIRIT OF SELFISHNESS

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. - 1 John 3:14

Condensed from a discourse by Homer Montague

Selfishness is one of the most predominating influences at work in human beings. When a higher priority is placed upon pleasing self instead of seeking to obey the will of God and manifesting the spirit of love, evidence of selfishness is certain to exist.

The original demonstration of selfishness is that of the great Adversary in Isaiah 14:12-14: How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High

Lucifer was a highly exalted, glorious being who was not satisfied with his station. Because he wanted to have a dominion for himself, he sought the Almighty as his rival. Lucifer's rebellious act enticed the first pair in Eden to sin, and for more than 6000 years we have been witnesses to the disastrous fruitage of sorrow, pain, and death which have plagued the groaning creation.

Selfishness does not merely have a corrosive effect upon character, but the possession of such a spirit can even lead to murder. In John 8:44 Jesus speaks to the Pharisees regarding the Adversary.

Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Satan's "murdering" of the human race and Adam and Eve's disobeying the heavenly Father is a legacy that has continued from one generation to the next.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper? -Genesis 4:8-9

As footstep followers of the Master, the spirit begotten must live by the principles and precepts outlined in the Word of God. The question Cain posed, "Am I my brother's

keeper?" must be answered by a resounding "YES" by all who will prove to be members of the body of Christ.

We can gain an appreciation of how one should be his brother's keeper by studying the practices of the early church. One of the classic illustrations of unselfishness is recorded in Acts 2:44-47.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people.

We are not advocating that believers attempt to follow this seemingly communistic arrangement. Given our inherited weaknesses of the flesh, such an arrangement is not divinely ordained as an environment in which we are to strive to make our calling and election sure. Nevertheless, we appreciate the joy these brethren experienced after their baptism and receiving of the holy spirit as they now walked in newness of life.

Just as we are walking in newness of life, we have individual responsibilities regarding all those who are similarly walking in the same path of consecration, particularly to those members of our home ecclesia. Ecclesias have collective responsibilities. Each member must share to enhance the spiritual well being of all those in the fellowship.

Assembling Together

In reality, our entire consecrated life is spent in one of two activities. We are either assembling ourselves with members of the brotherhood or we are away from the ecclesia, in which case we are attempting to apply the principles of truth we have learned in our meetings. Hebrews 10:24-25 concerns one means of eradicating selfishness.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

As new creatures in Christ striving to overcome selfish tendencies, it is evident that we should stimulate one another towards righteousness and self-sacrifice. Only by the counterbalancing effect of obedience to God, plus fellowship, study, and the sharing of experiences with our brethren will we be strengthened to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. What a wonderful blessing it is to be in the midst of those who hold our welfare foremost in their hearts. None of the Lord's people is so strong that he can stand alone.

We note that even Jesus during his earthly sojourn-although ultimately he trod the winepress alone-received great comfort by spending quiet moments among those who were closest to him.

The business meeting is one of the most important types of meetings the ecclesia can conduct. It helps promote not only the unity of purpose but also the practice of unselfishness. Often, however, business meetings do not always engender the greatest level of harmony. For an ecclesia to meet the needs of each individual as well as the entire body it is essential that there exist some forum for discussion.

Certainly there must be provision for instruction in such matters of the faith, including doctrines, prophecy, and moral conduct. This instruction might be provided through studies, discourses, or any combination of formats. Since all points of truth can rarely be addressed on a specific topic during the course of one meeting, it may be beneficial to have periodic sessions for discussing and answering questions of interest.

Devotional services are extremely critical. The need for prayer, praise, testimonies and meditational readings is evident when we consider the trials, sorrows, and stresses we endure on a regular basis. It is the one type of meeting in which we should talk about ourselves and our feelings, and the commonality of shared experiences enables us to speak in personal terms.

Consider One Another

Interestingly, in the sequence of scriptures in Hebrews 10:24, we are admonished to consider one another even before we are admonished to assemble ourselves together. The matter of considering one another implies a careful study of those in our fellowship. We must be students of our brethren as well as students of scripture in order to be a blessing to them. Each of us has various personalities, peculiarities, and imperfections. When interacting with our brethren, our sensitivity and the spirit of a sound mind should guide us.

In I Corinthians 12:12-27, we are given an extremely important treatise on how to view one another. This passage of scripture characterizes an ecclesia full of vibrancy and love. It does, however, reflect that there are different abilities, talents, responsibilities, and functions for the various members of the body. But it is our heavenly Father who arranges those members of the body in such a fashion that each complements the other.

Love One Another

The inculcation of the spirit of love is the only means for eradicating the spirit of selfishness. Jesus says in John 13:34, 35 --

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Love is not merely an abstract concept, it is an action. If we fail to meet with our brethren, to interact with them, to pray with and for them, to sacrifice for them, how, then, are we to demonstrate our love for them? 1 John 3:14-16 says:

. . . We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death . . . Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Our love for the brethren should draw us together as body members. The ecclesia has been designed to help enhance our spirituality and to instruct us in applying Christian principles. We have been recipients of God's unmerited favor. The exercise of our appreciation of God as the giver of every good and perfect gift should prompt our hearts toward manifesting this same quality of giving to others, especially the laying down of our lives for the brethren.

HOW TO WALK ON WATER

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.-Matthew 14:28, 29

By Donald Holliday

Very early in that morning, Jesus' disciples were in their little boat on the sea of Galilee. A strong, contrary wind whipped boisterous waves against them. There was almost something personal about this adverse gale.

A Joyous Multitude

It had been a remarkable day. Thousands had come to hear Jesus. The disciples felt honored to be associated with the wonderful Teacher. The crowds hung on his gracious words. His doctrines and manner of teaching were delightful. There was a thrilling challenge in his message that searched the depths of their hearts.

Every hearer had some notion of the kingdom hope and the part Israel was to play in it. Most were natural, even carnal, concepts, appealing to human pride; were they not the people of God? But Jesus' kingdom was beautiful-the Lord's hallowed presence enthroned in every heart.

Blessings Now and Later

The throng was hungry for his teachings. They forgot their hunger for food. But the disciples became aware of practicalities. They noticed the descending sun, and became uneasy. They interrupted Jesus, whispering that he should dismiss his audience.

Then followed an experience that would make their minds tingle on every future recollection. They became instruments in an amazing demonstration of power: one lad's supper fed the multitude.

What a climax to the day! They witnessed a portrayal of that blessed time when all human needs would be divinely satisfied and they would again be the instruments used of the Lord to convey blessings to mankind. They were learning to live with the power of God.

This is essential to the preparation of the future ministers of the kingdom. Each was a vessel of divine grace, a channel of divine Consider their fear: Here was a love, an instrument through which being with superhuman powerthe Lord would exhibit the glory of power above that of the storm. his power to give life abundant to Even earth's gravity was impotent whosoever will.

A Need for Quiet

Finally, the crowds dispersed, and Jesus was left alone with his disciples-but not before another wonderful moment occurred. The people were so elated by the experience that groups gathered, rallying the support of all. The disciples realized that the hopeful congregation wanted to proclaim Jesus their king !

Knowing the people's intent, Jesus motioned to his disciples, climbing higher up the mountain trail to be alone with God. He longed for that future day when men would respond to divine love in a way more enduring than the fervor of that crowd.

Their Stormy Challenge

He told the apostles to proceed to Bethsaida, leaving him alone with his Father in prayer. The disciples in the midst of the sea, and Jesus on high with the Father, depicted the gospel age night of weary toil for the church.

It was hard for them. A hazardous storm had risen. They strained at the oars, their struggles seeming to avail nothing. Their Master's presence seemed remote. For hours they toiled, the journey taking much longer than they had anticipated. They longed for the sight of dawn and the shoreline.

But Jesus knew. From his vantage point on high, he saw their plight. The watches of the night passed. In the fourth watch, they glimpsed a sight which frightened them. It was Jesus, but a Jesus they had yet to know. He was now demonstrating divine abilities.

Winds and waves threatened their ship; yet there was Jesus, walking on that troubled water as though it was solid rock beneath his feet.

Our Stormy Challenges

This parallels the mighty power of One whose presence is now recognized by saints on earth. Can we comprehend the vast resources of divine power now available to our returned Lord? He is exercising in this earth's atmosphere, in the midst of the storms that bring fear into human hearts, the power of the victor over sin, the conqueror of every evil force released on earth.

We do not cry out in fear, but let us shout in worship and praise to our returned King, no longer bound by flesh but glorious in majesty. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously on behalf of truth and meekness and righteousness* (Psa. 45:3, 4).

The disciples feared because they glimpsed a being with powers of another world. This recognition of spirit realm was awesome. Blessed are our eyes that see beyond human

sight to celestial glory. In awe we see that One who today stands here amidst the earthly scene.

We Learn from Peter

We were not with him on Galilee. We cannot feel the might of battering waves, the force of gale, the surrounding darkness. But our proxy was there, Peter. How we love his earnest heart!

In Peter we see ourselves. His lessons were enjoyed by saints throughout the age. Yet now, the lessons are for us.

When Jesus and the disciples were united in the boat, the storm abated, the wind dropped, the sea became a great calm. Soon they reached the other shore.

The time of trouble will not end, nor the testing of the saints, until the last is gathered to be with the Lord.

That is the dispensational message. There is also a personal message for each saint, pertaining to their walk this side of the veil. It has special meaning for us, in this time of the Master's presence in the very midst of earth's troubled scenes.

Peter was reassured by the Master's voice, Take courage. *It is I! Do not be afraid!* What comfort we find in recognizing One who stands before us now endowed with wondrous powers. The earth hears and trembles; Zion hears and is glad. In the midst of so much disturbance, so many demonstrations of the powers of darkness, when all human existence on this earth is threatened, what comfort to our hearts to hear the voice of our Beloved saying, "Be not afraid. It is I.

Peter was stirred. He saw that Jesus' powers could overcome all limitations of flesh. He glimpsed a higher realm. A blessed truth confronted him, and dear, impulsive Peter wanted to taste that power divine.

Water-walking

The Lord created a scenario, teaching us what Peter sought to learn-how to walk on water.

When Jesus walked upon that sea, he was upheld by an invisible force superior to any power on earth. Here was faith in its fullness, faithfulness that finds the rock on which to walk throughout life.

Peter asked, *Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.* We should not presume, but meekly ask. The invitation comes from him, *Come. Follow me.*

Peter was not testing God. He was asking for the Master's power to resist the downward force that gravitates the mind to earth. Peter wanted to experience the power of God.

It was an impulsive request. He had not learned that long-sighted vision which the Spirit would later endow. That Spirit recognizes that a heavenly purpose is working on a grand scale. It is our privilege to co-work with God toward that goal. And the Lord utilized Peter's impulse to teach us lessons:

First we request the Lord's help to follow him. He does not ask us to do the impossible. God makes all things possible.

We are called to walk in Jesus' steps. How can we do that? He was holy; we are corrupt.

Then Peter had to BELIEVE that if Jesus gave the word, Jesus had the power. Believe! Step out of the rocking boat into the stormy sea. The power is there. This means more than believing when comfortable, in good health. It means to put all our confidence and trust on Someone truly worthy-to accept him as our total means of support.

Jesus walked on water with no visible support. Our visible support refers to job, home, health, family, friends, position, income, material possessions. We cannot depend on them for our peace of mind.

Our Rocky Boats

Believing meant stepping out of the boat. Even a rocky boat is some means of support. Each human strength is like that rocky boat. Stepping out of the boat requires faith.

Are we then at the mercy of the waves? No, we are abandoning the things that can be shaken and placing our feet on solid rock.

Matthew 14:30, 31 records the situation: *When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me! And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

No one can see what supports the child of faith through tribulation and weakness. But the visible effect of faith can be seen-peace, confidence, joy, at times when the world would expect utter dejection -expect us to sink!

The window of the heart opens to heaven when this body of death is locked in its prison. The attitude of prayerful praise is the visible evidence of the rock of faith. The confining of the body quickens the spirit of perception that enjoys glorious liberty as God's sons.

Paul stepped out of the boat and walked on water: *Bonds and afflictions wait for me, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me.* We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. No overcomer cowers in the boat.

How frightening, when poor Peter found himself sinking! Our failures teach us deep and permanent lessons. All saints experience boisterous winds and waves, dark and threatening contradictions to our faith.

Every step of walking on water is a test of faith. There is no retirement from the life of faith. As the years advance, we become like Enoch: this walk with the Lord becomes so absorbing to our mind that we do not see death, only the victorious Lord at the side of God's throne, his voice ringing out, "Come!" This is *the victory . . . your faith.*"

At Golgotha, visible evidence indicated that Jesus had been abandoned. Yet that ultimate contradiction to his faith proved its very reality, faith FULL unto death. Faith is knowing our Father's abiding faithfulness. We know he is there, he is for us, he knows every detail required to bring us to himself in the bond of perfect trust.

When Peter stepped out, he needed something more sure than the rocking ship made with human hands. He needed the most dependable power that exists. To reach for it, he needed faith that can let go, as surely as it can cling!

Reaching to Jesus

Matthew 14, Mark 6, and John 6, each add some precious detail. We read in Mark 6:48, that as the wonderful Master walked upon those waves, he seemed to be passing them by, proceeding towards the shore. It was this realization that spurred Peter on to request the Lord's command to follow him.

Peter did not want the Lord to pass him by. He wanted to walk with Jesus. We do not want the Lord to pass us by. We cannot merely watch him from the uncertain safety of our storm-dashed ship. We are not arm-chair saints. Our faith is on trial Now. THIS is the hour to realize the power of total trust.

Why wait for that hour of tribulation when our ship may break on the rocks? The truth is staring at us today. Jesus defies that which is seen by natural sight. Contradictions are real. This body of humiliation contradicts the high aspirations of the new mind. It humiliates our pure desire for a holy life. Let our clay vessels manifest the miracle of God's power.

Everyone, not just the Lord's people, eventually lose the things on which human security depends—health, strength, partner, friends. All have a coded datestamp beyond which corruption will set in. How vital to our peace that we learn to walk on water NOW, before that evil day.

Then shall we know the triumph of faith that conquers the fury of every storm. Then shall we say, "Let the chill mists gather round me. Let the lights of earth grow dim. Leave me Jesus, only Jesus. I am SATISFIED with him."

THE KING, Eternal, Immortal

(((Echoes from the Past)))

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.- 1 Timothy 1:17

From a discourse by William A. Baker

Four thousand years ago there was a citizen of Uz, a man upright, a just man, a man who revered God and avoided evil, a man around whom one of the most outstanding and dramatic poems in human language has been written. This man laid down a principle, upon which alone true peace is attainable. He said, *Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace* (Job 22:21).

Fifteen hundred years later, a prophet of God, one Daniel, seeing in a vision the tribulations, the persecutions that would come upon the people of God, before which many would weaken and fall, added this comment: *But they that do know their God waxed valiant and performed exploits* (Dan. 11:32).

They that do know their God will wax fat. Valor in the service of the Lord is contingent upon our knowledge of the God whom we serve.

Knowing God Takes Life Eternal

Some centuries later, Jesus declared, *This is eternal life that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3). Jesus, in these words, is emphasizing this thought: The object of eternal life is that ye might know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

These words suggest that throughout the endless ages of eternity we will be forever measuring the breadth and sounding the depth of the intimate mind and character of God, yet we will never be able to comprehend it. To comprehend means to embrace; no creature, however highly exalted, will be able to embrace his Creator.

Peter added his testimony in his second epistle: *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord* (2 Peter 1:2). Grace and peace is contingent upon acquaintanceship with God, knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

The psalmist has said, *Only the fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'* (Psa. 14:1). Belief in God is universal. No matter how degraded, how far a human being has fallen from that perfect image represented in father Adam-still, in that heart and mind there lingers a desire to worship. Man is a worshipping animal.

The Testimony of Nature

All nature bears testimony to the existence of a supreme being. Hebrews 3:4: *He that built all things is God.* Astronomy declares this, chemistry exemplifies it, botany illustrates it, geology proves it, zoology shows it, and the science of physics demonstrates it.

Intelligence is found behind all creation-an intelligent first cause; and, being the first and original cause, it is itself causeless.

The fact of the existence of God, a supreme being, is shown in the infinite design of this great universe, including our solar system and the planet earth. It is seen, too, in organic matter, in inorganic matter, and in the relation between the two.

It is seen in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat. Man was not created for the air or the food. Infinite wisdom designed all this on behalf of man before ever man was created. All nature bears testimony to this design on the part of an all-wise God and Creator.

The existence of man's intellectual, moral, and religious nature proves the existence of a God. Man's abilities are many and varied, but he owes all this to an intelligent Creator who endowed him with similar qualities of mind and heart.

Who, among the new creation of God, could for a moment doubt the existence of God? Every experience in our Christian life testifies to the existence of a personal deity. He possesses us as new creatures and we serve him as new creatures.

The God whom we worship, the God of the Bible, is everywhere, on every page, presented to us as a personal God. He has personality. The Bible reveals that this God whom we worship thinks, feels, and wills.

The fact that he thinks shows that he has an intellect. The fact that he feels proves that he has sensitivity. The fact that he wills indicates that he is perfect in character.

A Personal God

Our God, your God and mine possesses the quality of knowledge. The scriptures declare, *The LORD God of gods, he knows* (Josh. 22:22). He never has to guess. *Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no [other] God; I know not any* (Isa. 44:8); *He is perfect in knowledge* (Job 36:4); *He knoweth the secrets of the heart* (Psa. 44:21); *Known unto the Lord are all his works from the beginning* (Acts 15:18).

This God whom we worship has sensibility. *The Lord pitieth.* (Psa. 103:13); *The Father himself loveth you* (John 16:27); *The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness* (Exod. 34:6).

God Wills

Jesus taught us to pray, *Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven (Matt. 6:10)*. Again, Jesus speaking, *He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven, he will know the doctrine (John 7:17); Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:11)*. The lesson in this statement for you and me is that God is working according to the counsel of his own will.

He has never found it necessary to consult with any creature, neither in heaven nor on earth. How frequently we are prone in our poor, weak way to legislate for God, to try to make decisions for him, when he has already rendered the decision in his own Word. He has never asked our advice. Had he followed our human preferences, many things may have been different, and therefore not at all commendable.

God Has a Body

The apostle says, *No man hath seen God at any time (John 5:37)*. He means by this that no man has seen God's person, God's body, God's organism, at any time. *Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live (Exod. 33:20, 23)*. Again, *John 4:24: God is a Spirit, a spirit being*. Paul, in *I Corinthians 15:40*, declares that there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial-spirit bodies and animal or human bodies.

God is spirit, and his organism, his body, is spirit. This means that his organism consists of immaterial, spiritual substances. He is spoken of as a consuming fire. It is declared of him that he is light. These are all immaterial essences.

The Immortal God

It is declared of him that he is *immortal-the King eternal, immortal (1 Tim. 1:17)*. The best definition of immortality is the one for which we have the authority of Jesus himself: *As the Father hath life in himself, so has he given unto the Son of Man to have life in himself (John 5:26)*.

Life in one's self. There is a difference between the eternal nature of God and the immortal nature of God. Immortality is the kind or quality of life which God alone inherently, originally possessed. Eternity has to do with existence.

God himself said, *I am the first and I am the last, and besides me there is no God (Isa. 44:6)* Notice, he said he was the first, and he is also the last. How is this true? It represents this fact: that he in all the universe is the only creature of his kind. That will be true of him, exclusively, throughout all the endless ages of eternity.

The Self-Sufficeint God

I am that I am (Exod. 3:14). God in his very nature is self-sufficient. He needs nothing to add to his own personal sufficiency. Acts 17:25: *Neither is he worshiped with men's hands, as though he needeth anything*. Sometimes we presume to think that God might need something—for instance, he might need our advice; he might need our assistance. What difficulties this brings to our experience and into the experiences of others! How can he need anything, seeing he giveth to all creatures life, and breath to all things?

God is a benevolent God, a giving God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, the giver of life, breath, all things.

God is an invisible God. *Who*, speaking of Jesus in his resurrection glory, is *the image of the invisible God* (Col. 1:15); *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God.* (1 Tim. 1:17).

God is Love

In his personality he is a unity, not another personality, but in and of himself.

Deuteronomy 6:4: *The LORD our God is one LORD*; not many. Originally, man was a monotheist, a worshiper of one God, not many. After the deluge, when idolatry began to lift its ugly head among men, polytheism was introduced. The attributes of that one God were broken down into many and personified in different gods, and thus polytheism spread in its many forms throughout the earth. Our God is one. *That all the people of the earth may know that Jehovah is God, and that there is none else* (1 Kings 8:60).

Paul says, . . . *to us there is but one God . . . of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things* (1 Cor. 8:6). This is the Bible testimony. The doctrine of the trinity is a delusion and a snare, in whatever form it may present itself to the mind of man.

Omnipotence

Our God is an omnipotent God. Omnipotence means almightiness, the ability to do anything. God has the ability to do anything. But he reveals to us that he has placed a limit upon his omnipotence. We are told in Titus 1:3 that God cannot lie; in II Timothy 2:13, that he cannot deny himself; in James 1:13 that he cannot favor nor be tempted by sin. Our God is a holy God, a righteous God, a God of justice.

The scriptures define this omnipotence: In Psalms 115:3 we read, *God is in the heaven. He hath done whatsoever he has pleased*. Isaiah 46:10, 11: *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. I have spoken it. I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it. I will also do it.*

God's omnipotence is represented by his power. Genesis 18:14: Is *anything too hard for the Lord? No*. Thus is he able to perform all his good will. Revelation 19:6 refers to him as the Lord God omnipotent who reigneth. In Revelation 21:22 he is referred to as the Lord God Almighty, having all might and all power.

Numbers 23:20 declares that no one can reverse his mercy. No one can change that. Deuteronomy 3:21 states that he is greater than all others combined. [Moses] *commanded Joshua . . . saying, 'Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings.'* The LORD delivered the kings and their people and their land into the hands of Israel, and Israel smote them until none remained. *So shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest.*

I Samuel 4:10, 11 shows that God is not dependent upon others. Israel, in its own might, lost the ark of the covenant to the Philistines in battle. But God (chap. 5), with no human help, severely punished the Philistines for taking it.

His power delivers. In Daniel 3:17, we read of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace; Daniel 6:27 tells of Daniel's rescue from the den of lions.

He is /as boundless in the exercise of his power as is the universe itself. Isaiah 51:10: *Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?*

God is a Person

The God whom we worship is a person. He has all the qualities peculiar to personality. The Bible speaks of the ears of God, the eyes of God, the mouth of God, the face of God, the finger of God, the hand of God, the arm of God, the feet of God.

The psalmist, in the 94th Psalm, gives us a hint of what these terms indicate as they are applied to the omnipotent God. He says, *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?* How strange it would be if one could create an ear that could hear and had not the sense of hearing himself. God has the sense of hearing. God hears everything, everywhere, all the time, from even the most remote corners of his great universe.

Again the psalmist says, *He that formed the eye, shall he not see?* (Psa. 94:9). God sees everything, everywhere, all the time. Nothing is hidden from his omnipotent vision, no matter how small or how great; God sees it.

Jesus declares his omnipotence, and he must have spoken these words in reverence and in awe: *Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground but what my heavenly Father knows it falls. The very hairs of your head are all numbered* (Matt. 10:30). This simply expresses the fact that this is an all-knowing God, an all-seeing God who sees and hears the faintest whisper of all creatures in his universe.

If we could just appreciate this last fact, perhaps we would be more circumspect and cautious in some of the whispering that we do, feeling that we are secure in the thought that God does not hear, but he does.

He is a personal God. The Bible tells us some facts concerning him as a person. It tells us that he is from everlasting to everlasting, that he never had a beginning; he always was.

Without Beginning

The Bible emphatically assures us that while he himself had no beginning, his works did have a beginning, and it follows thus logically that if God had no beginning

but his works had a beginning, God must have existed before the works of creation. And if he existed before creation, there must have been a time when God was alone, when nothing else existed but himself.

When we contemplate his revealed character, his self-sufficiency, we are impressed with this fact: he could be just as happy, just as content alone as with all the works of creation in heaven and in earth that today exist.

Then, why did God go to all the trouble to create this universe? It was no trouble at all! Nothing troubles God, the God of divine revelation. He does the most difficult task as easily as he does the easiest task. We cannot qualify God's character. We cannot say of him that something is easy or something is difficult. What he wills, he does, and nothing can resist that will.

When God Was Alone

What was God doing when he was alone? What was he doing when he was doing nothing-paradoxical as that may sound? God was never idle. When we think of someone who is busy, we think of a person who is making a lot of noise, kicking up a lot of dust-the louder the noise, the bigger the cloud of dust, the busier we think that person is. That does not necessarily follow.

The God of the Bible is the great, supreme architect of all that exists and will ever exist. He planned it all according to the counsel of his own will. In all that endless eternity of the past when he was alone, God was formulating the plans and purposes which he will carry into execution through all eternity, through whatever agencies he may employ.

Our finite minds stagger before the contemplation of such a situation. We and all the hosts of heaven are just like little children playing with grains of sand upon the shore of the great ocean of eternity. Before our startled imagination spreads the boundless purposes of the Creator, fathomless and immeasurable.

This is the God of the Bible, the God before whom you and I are privileged to come as new creatures, in full assurance of faith and in the utmost confidence that he will see and hear, calling him our Father who is in heaven. Hallowed be his name.

Omniscience

Omniscience, too, is a quality of God's character. Omniscience means knowledge of all things. He perceives all things. He remembers all things. He reasons out all things.

We have his assurance that he is also able to forget. That, too, is a quality of omniscience. Speaking to Israel, promising them a new covenant, he says that, when this new covenant goes into effect and when the purposes for which it is established are accomplished, *I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*. Memory is something with which we can also forget.

All things are naked and revealed before him. God's mentality, in its perceptive powers, has an aptitude, calculation, order, color, weight, size, form, detail, time, place, harmony, construction, beauty, sublimity, and above all things else, intuition-with all of their ramifications and implications.

He has all the senses (Psa. 94:9)-sight, hearing, smelling, touch, and taste, and what no other creature can have, intuitive knowledge. He perceives everything past, present and future.

The Mentality of God

God's mentality in its reflective powers has the aptitude of remembering all things that he has ever perceived, and all that is yet to be seen. God will have the aptitude to remember in detail through all eternity.

In his omniscience, his reasoning powers enable him to draw perfect inductions and deductions, reasoning from some particulars to general conclusions, and from general conclusions to details. At the same time, he can draw definite conclusions as to all possible contingencies anywhere and everywhere.

God's mentality, according to divine revelation, in its imaginative powers, due to its perfect reflection and perception and reasoning, has the aptitude for inventing his plans and creations. Think of the infinite mind that was able to invent everything that exists in this great universe, in the spirit world and in the material world. They are all creatures of his mind, the products of his power. God alone creates.

All these intellectual powers referred to are infinite in their capacity, infallible in their uses, and perfect in their development. This is the omniscient God.

Man-In God's Image

In the creation of man, God endowed man in perfection with similar capacities, limited in scope to his environment, but capable of expansion in every division of learning and of science throughout the endless ages of eternity.

When, at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, mankind stands once again before the Creator in perfection, man will just be standing on the threshold of the opportunities, the possibilities that are to unfold, ever unfolding throughout eternity before him. He will have just begun his education. He will have been equipped with perfect functions and qualities of heart and mind which he will then, for the first time, begin to use perfectly.

God planted a garden eastward in Eden for the perfect Adam. It was only a kindergarten. All eternity awaited Adam, had he remained obedient and perfect. He would only have just begun to learn the possibilities with which he was endowed by the Creator.

We are too prone to think of Adam coming into existence with a college degree. That is not true. Adam had to learn to see, to hear, to walk, to talk. He had to formulate a language. He might have had help from very competent sources. Being perfect, he could learn quickly, but he had to learn.

We learn that the Lord God caused all the animals of the garden to pass before Adam and whatsoever he named that animal, that was the name thereof. Adam was learning about his environment, his possibilities, his potentiality. He was learning something of his resourcefulness of heart and mind.

Man has these capacities in a limited way. God has all these capacities inherently, omnisciently.

Omnipresence

Our God has the quality of omnipresence, not personally, but God is present everywhere.

Being a person, God has size and dimensions.

Years ago, an atom was the smallest particle of matter; if you were to take a drop of water and divide it and subdivide it thousands of times, you would finally come to the place where you would have a molecule of water. We thought that was the smallest particle of water you could have. If you made another division, you would resolve water into its constituent element. The formula, H₂O (two atoms of hydrogen, one atom of oxygen) makes water. The word "atom" is from a Greek word that means indivisible, something that cannot be made smaller.

The matter rested there for a number of years, but later a tremendous discovery was made: that infinitesimal particle, so small that no one has ever seen it with the most powerful of microscopes, is in itself made up of particles infinitesimally smaller in an

infinitesimal arrangement. It is a little solar system in itself. The particles of which it is made are so small that the distance between them relatively is greater than the distance between the sun and this planet.

God Existed Before Time

Isaiah 43:12 (Fenton): *I existed before time itself.* He did not use the word "duration." Fenton knew "duration" would not apply. Time is used in this place as a unit of measure. There was a time when God did not need a unit of measure of that kind. But the time came when a unit of value in respect to duration became essential.

God is an exact timekeeper. He is carrying out his plans according to a definite schedule. When the clock of eternity strikes the hour, God moves, irrespective of who stands still.

In the eighth chapter of Proverbs, Solomon speaks of Jesus, the Logos, under the symbol of wisdom, he puts these words into his mouth: *I existed before as yet he had created space* (Fenton).

When the great supreme architect began to put his plan into execution, he seems to have pushed back the walls of nothingness and created space. He sowed space with the constellations of the heavens.

God Sees and Hears All

God has the quality of omnipresence. We speak of everything we see as being in our presence. God sees everything. The boundless universe is embraced in the compass of his vision. His power lays hold on everything in the universe. All of his senses are exercised in every respect and direction, separately and collectively, everywhere, all the time.

No wonder Jacob, on that night as he laid his head upon the rock and went to sleep at that place he subsequently named Bethel, said, *Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not* (Gen. 28:16).

Solomon, in dedicating the temple, realized how circumscribed it was, to be the meeting place between the God whom he worshiped and the people who were to serve him, asked the question, *Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heavens cannot contain thee; how much less the house that I have builded* (1 Kings 8:27).

Incomprehensible

Jehovah our God is the great emperor of the whole universe, and his wisdom, power, goodness and benevolence are abundantly equal to all the responsibilities of so exalted an office. The human mind staggers in the effort to comprehend the mental resources of a being who is able to assume and to bear such responsibility. Think for a moment of the memory that never fails, of a judgment that never errs, of the wisdom that plans for eternity without the possibility of failures for ages to come, of the power and skill that

can harness even every opposing element, animate and inanimate, and make them all work together for the accomplishment of his grand design, of the tireless vigilance which never ceases nor seeks relief from the pressing cares of universal dominion, whose eye never sleeps, whose ear is ever open, who is ever cognizant of all the necessities, and active in all the interests of his broad domain.

The Word of God—It's Authenticity (Part Two)

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . ."—2 Timothy 3:16

Richard Kindig

There are many ancient books. What is so special about the Bible?

The Bible speaks in a straightforward way that has the stamp of truth. In its account of creation, the Bible passes by obvious opportunities to speculate, and describes with simple precision the order in which life appeared. The fossil record stands today as indisputable proof of the accuracy of the Bible account.

Like the people in a masterful novel, Bible characters come to life as we read. The complexity and good qualities of its bad men come through—and the faults of even its most saintly people are honestly presented.

For the last century, scholars did not believe the Bible account of the destruction of Jericho. But recent discoveries reveal the complete destruction of ancient Jericho at the precise time that Bible chronology records. Even the Bible statement that one small portion of the wall escaped intact is verified by recent archaeological evidence.

Higher critics once ridiculed Luke, the author of the book of Acts, as mistaken when he referred to the Philippian rulers as praetors. According to the "experts," two "*duumvirs*" would have ruled that city. But recent archaeological findings revealed that "praetor" was indeed the title they used.

The Accuracy of Luke

The following passage in the Book of Luke, contains more than a dozen references that can be checked for accuracy against secular history:

"In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitus, and Lysanius was tetrarch of Abilene . . ."—Luke 3:1

Every one of these facts has been verified. This kind of historical accuracy led Sir William Ramsey, the Oxford professor who spent 15 years trying to refute the New Testament, to finally conclude, "Luke is an historian of the first rank. [He] should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."

When critical scholars first began questioning the reliability of the Bible text itself, the oldest New Testament manuscripts were copies made almost a thousand years after the original was penned. But in the last hundred years, thousands of older manuscripts have

been found. Two complete ancient copies date back to A.D. 325 and 350—less than 250 years after the original writing.

The oldest surviving copy of Homer's Iliad was made 500 years after the original was penned. Other surviving ancient texts, whose authenticity no one doubts, range from 500 to over 2000 years more recent than their ancient originals. But some recently-discovered copies of New Testament books date back to 125 A.D.—just 25 years after the Bible was completed!

Only ten copies of Julius Caesar have survived from antiquity, seven copies of Plato, 49 copies of Aristotle. Among the major ancient books, the Iliad has by far the most numerous surviving manuscripts, with 643—except for the Bible, which has 24,000!

In addition, scholars have now documented 89,000 quotations of the New Testament by ancient writers. These quotations contain all but eleven verses of the New Testament!

The Old Testament is equally reliable. Higher Critics who questioned the accuracy of the Masoretic Text have had to accept the overwhelming evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls that the Hebrew Bible was flawlessly preserved for two thousand years. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered since 1948, have verified every book of the old testament except Esther.

Though written by forty writers across 1500 years, the Word of God has one harmonious theme. Its subject matter ranges widely from history to law to poetry to visionary prophecy, to personal letters. But one golden thread unites the entire book: the process by which a single creator-God plans to bring redemption and peace to the world of mankind.

The Dominating Figure

One figure dominates the Bible from beginning to end: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. We read of Him in the first few pages of the Bible. The human race has been deceived. Paradise is lost. God's face has turned away from man. But God stirred their hopes with one clear promise: that an offspring of the woman would "bruise the serpent's head."

We read of Jesus in the last few pages of the Bible. He is a King, reigning with his bride. He lays hold of the figurative serpent and destroys him so that the nations will no longer be deceived. Paradise is restored. God dwells with man, his face once again can be seen. The nations are healed, and death itself is destroyed. From Genesis to Revelation, Jesus Christ is the glue that binds all the pages of the Bible together.

Jesus, the Word of God

The Word of God is so preoccupied with Jesus, the Son of God, that it shares its name with him. He is the Word of God personified. The man who spoke of himself as the way, the truth, and the life, also said that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word

that proceeds out of the mouth of God." And the writer of Hebrews made it clear that Jesus was the complete expression of God to man:

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke to us by his servants the prophets, has in these latter times spoken to us by His son."— Hebrews 1:1,2

Jesus is the Son of God, because he fulfilled hundreds of prophecies of the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God, because Jesus was raised from the dead and proved the Bible true. Let's look at what the Word of God said about the Messiah:

He would trace his genealogy to the tribe of Judah, and present himself to Israel as the Prince of Peace. (Genesis 49:10)

As Messiah, he would purge the temple—which implies that he appeared before the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. (Malachi 3:1)

He would present himself to Israel 483 years after the command to restore and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and would die 3-1/2 years later. These chronological prophecies were fulfilled precisely on time. (Daniel 9:24)

- He would be the Promised Seed of Abraham who would bless all the families of the Earth. (Genesis 12:1-3)
- He would be the great Prophet of which Moses wrote. (Deuteronomy 18:15)
- He would be the great King who, in the new world, would reign on David's throne. (Psalm 2)
- He would be pierced. (Zechariah 12:10)
- He would be crucified. (Psalm 22:14, 17)

By being hung up on a tree, as despised as a dead snake, he would become the healing agent for the entire world. (Numbers 21:8,9)

The reliable history of the Word of God identifies Jesus of Nazareth as this promised Messiah. He traced his human life back to David, and yet was David's Lord. In fulfillment of scripture he was born in Bethlehem, fled to Egypt, and settled in Nazareth. Like Moses, he was led into the wilderness, and fasted 40 days before beginning his work.

When asked by John the Baptist's followers if he was truly the Messiah, he asked them to go tell John of the work he had done: heal the sick, feed the hungry, comfort the brokenhearted, give sight to the blind, preach the gospel to the poor, and raise the dead—all of them works that the Word of God had predicted of the Messiah.

He strikingly fulfilled Bible references to the manna or bread from heaven, the sacrificial lamb, the veil of the temple, the high priest, the blood of atonement, the passover lamb.

He was born at the time of the day of atonement, died at the time of the passover, and was resurrected at the time of the offering of the first-fruits—itself a picture of resurrection.

Yes, Jesus was the Word of God personified. As he stated repeatedly, he came to do the Father's will, as it was written in the "scroll of the book." By healing all who came to him, he demonstrated his title as Lord of the Sabbath Day—the great future Day of the Lord that all Jews hoped for.

Jesus, the World's Savior

He is the Ransom, the savior of the world.

Just as the sin of one man became the cause of hereditary death for all—so the righteousness of one man became the cause of a hereditary blessing—the free gift that in due time will come to all men, justification to life.

Even while dying on the cross, Jesus disregarded his own pain, and focussed his mind on fulfilling the will of God, as expressed in the Bible. He meditated on prophecies about his death, and the glory that would follow it.

He recited aloud the first and last verses of the well-known 22nd Psalm. True to Jesus' experience, the Psalm described the feelings of the crucified redeemer: his bones were out of joint, the proud and rebellious mocked him, the soldiers drew lots for his clothes. They pierced his hands and feet. Even his one mention of himself while on the cross was uttered, according to John, so that bystanders would recognize he was thirsty and fulfill the last remaining prophecy about his death: that in his thirst, he was given vinegar to drink.

As he breathed his last, he prayed yet again. "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Immediately, an earthquake shook the land, and the four-inch thick veil of the temple was torn in two.

The human Word of God had died, after fulfilling every detail of the written Word of God concerning him—every detail, except one that God alone could now bring to pass: the resurrection.

The Resurrection of Christ

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is held up as the central fact of the Bible. It is not enough to believe that Jesus was a great teacher. He taught that he was the son of God. He taught that he would be raised from the dead.

Five hundred eye witnesses saw him, not in a momentary vision, but repeatedly and in different circumstances, over a period of five weeks. They had time to cross-examine themselves, question what their senses were telling them. There were skeptical voices, and challenges to their reports. They had opportunities to touch, eat with, and converse with the resurrected Jesus. So convinced were these eye-witnesses of the reality of the resurrection, that their transformed lives transformed the ancient world. And though they often faced a martyr's death, the eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection insisted to the end that Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God, lives again. The only evidence for entire ancient races is often a few shards of pottery, a few fragments of bone. The identity of entire ancient dynasties is often found in a hieroglyph or a third-hand scrap of history.

By comparison, the evidence that Jesus lived, died on a cross, and was raised from the dead, is compelling, rational, and complete. Professor Thomas Arnold, professor and author of *History of Rome*, stated:

"I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence than that . . . Christ died, and rose again from the dead."

Evidence to satisfy the human mind and hope to sustain the human heart: these are the treasures of—The Word of God.

[This is the second section of a four part series on The Word of God originally prepared as an audio-visual program for the 1992 International Convention of Bible Students in Poitiers, France.]

NEWS & VIEWS

ANNUAL MEETING

The **PBI** Annual Membership Meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m., EDT, Saturday, June 4, 1994, at the Holiday Inn, 1600 E. Beach, Gulfport, Mississippi 39501. The local brethren have also invited those attending to worship and fellowship with them there the next morning, June 5.

Room accommodations should be paid for at the Holiday Inn. Each room will have two double beds accommodating two adults only comfortably (or perhaps four children). The cost of the rooms will be \$55.00 plus 10 percent with an additional charge of \$10 plus 10 percent for each adult over one. Children under the age of 18 are free. The cost of one adult occupying the room would be \$60.50; if two adults, \$70.50, per night. The local brethren will provide lunch and dinner on Saturday and lunch only on Sunday. Any additional meals may be obtained at the coffee shop.

There is an airport in Gulfport, approximately five miles from the Inn. Shuttle service is provided by the Holiday Inn from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Please make reservations with the PBI secretary, James Caudle, 2905 E. Sunset Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226, phone: (206) 671-8661. Please reserve your spot as soon as possible, but no later than May 1, 1994. It is important to specify the nights you will need the room and the number in your party, including the ages of the children under 18. If you share a room, one person must be designated as responsible for the room cost.

We look forward to your presence at the meeting and our fellowship together.

New Booklet

God's Kingdom, a new book published by the Institute, will be available soon. It includes a lengthy discussion of the scriptures which describe the kingdom on earth. Questions answered include, What will that kingdom be like?

Who will the kingdom be for? What is necessary to have a part in that kingdom? Why does it take so long for it to come? Why does God permit evil? What are the signs that the kingdom approaches? The book should be ready some time in May. An important first with this booklet will be the availability of a videocassette version. Professionally narrated, this video will be an excellent tool for witnessing about the kingdom. Watch for the notice in a future issue) of THE HERALD.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Re: November/December News and Views

"Middle East Peace Process"

What we may have in this process is the lead up to Jacob's Trouble. Jeremiah 30:5 reads, "We have heard a cry of panic, of terror and no peace." (RSV) Verse 6 states, "(Ask now and see) can a man bear a child?" Evidently not, as borne out by the statement, "Why has every face turned pale?"

Their military forces and hi-tech weapons in which the trust cannot save them nor secure the nation, nor bring peace. Zech. 14:1-3 reads " . . . The spoil taken from yo . . ." All the territories gained in battles over the year will be lost to them and divided up amongst the victors The Jewish remnant left will be in dire circumstances until our Lord takes a hand in the matter.

(S.J. and M.J. Barling, Brisbane, Australia)

Re: Diamond Anniversary Supplement

I was thrilled to receive the Diamond Anniversary

HERALD. The history of the Bible Students was excellent You've provided a gold mine of information heretofore un known, and its about time. A proper history, even such brief one, is long, long overdue.

I've done some fascinating research of my own-all 10 percent favorable to Pastor Russell. My research plus al new information goes into much more detail (with full documentation and illustrations) about facts just brief) mentioned in the Diamond HERALD.

(Jonathan Ross, Sunnyvale, California)

Re: January/February issue

I wish to commend the editorial staff for the "new look." The new format is much more readable and attractive. I like the bright color and layout of the cover. I especially appreciate some of the articles which apply to our daily living.

We are planning a trip to the British Isles for Bible Students from July 30-August 18. It will include two weeks sightseeing in Britain and Ireland followed by the Bible Students Convention at High Leigh.

The brethren in England are very much looking forward to our visit. I have been in contact with John Thompson and Derek Nadal and Bill Simmons on accommodations. He would appreciate it if we could tell him the exact number of brethren to expect because their room situation at the conference grounds is tight.

(Dennis Thorfeldt)

Editor's note: Those wishing information on the trip should contact Dennis Thorfeldt at: 612 Crescent Drive, Downers Grove, IL 60516, phone: (708) 969-8838.

Re: January/February Diamond Anniversary issue

The January HERALD very interesting. Two points in the list of dates of events 1879-1918. Start of British work shown as 1895; was in fact 1881 when Bender and Sunderlin came from USA to distribute *Food for Thinking Christians* in 18 or so cities of Great Britain from London to Aberdeen. First British organised class Glasgow 1883, London 1885. By 1900 there were nine classes in London area aggregating some 500 brethren. First British convention 1892 with 400 present. By 1900 a goodly number of classes all over the country. The other point, opening of London Tabernacles shown as 1900 was in fact 1911.

We as a community in UK are diminishing fast. 1993 saw 15 percent of those we had pass on to be with the Lord. 1970 saw a sudden increase in the annual rate of deaths. Sixty percent of the UK brethren seceded from the Society at the advent of Rutherford in the early 1920s, but 70 years later they are just about all gone and a good many of the later adherents also.

One last matter. The article, "The Midnight Cry" by Charles Ryba interested me greatly from the author's evident close knowledge of the connection between the early Bible Students and the Miller movement. Could I be put in touch with him? I feel there are some things he could tell me in regard to this phase of Bible Student history.

(A.O. Hudson, Middlesex, England)

Editor's note: A.O. Hudson has been editor of the Bible Study Monthly magazine, published in England for many years. Please see notice of a change in the organization there in the next section.

Re Activities in Greece

Editor's note: The following letter from Greece is corrected for spelling only. The writer's dedication and sincerity is captured in his use of English, and it is fitting that his letter go unedited as much as possible so that readers can experience his situation.

It was with great joy that I received the November/December 1993 issue and so to know better you and your

excellent spiritual present service. It's very encouraging for me to know about all the brethren everywhere. I was in organization of Jehovah Witnesses for 16 years and really thought I have the only truth. I meditated the Bible and it was difficult to reconcile the simple words in Eph. 4:4 etc. with the instruction of "Two Hopes." So I started one very long and full of adventures personal study. Finally, I understood the big mistakes of organization and so leaved her.

I was sentenced to 26 months in prison because I refused to go in to the army. That painful experience was a good chance for gathering and decision taking. After that, I was ready for a new course at freedom.

From that time, I have like a flag this phrase: "None church or religion organization cannot save us, It's only our personal relationship with Jesus that can save and give us the precious and grandest promises!" So I am striving to impart this big truth and I am thanking God for his pity and blessing to me.

Here in Greece, I am serving our dear brethren through a magazine called *Light-A Magazine for Thinking Christians*. I publish this magazine from 1990 only in Greek and thus I try to hold high the flag of truth in my country and aid many who are slaves in dark of Devil.

If possible, send me please the address of Paul Mali, who was the organizer of the convention and tour at Israel. I am interested to organizing a worldwide conference of Bible Students in Athens, near to ancient Supreme Court where Apostle Paul has declared the gospel of Christ's kingdom.

(George Vlandis, Athens, Greece)

BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION

The Institute was notified in January of a change at its associate in Great Britain, the Bible Fellowship Union, publisher of the Bible Study Monthly. Since many of our readers also subscribe to that publication, we are publishing the notice from Bro. A.O. Hudson.

From 1st January 1994 the central address of the BFU will be 4 Manor Gardens, Bamstone Nottingham NG13 9JL. Bro. B.G. Dumont is succeeded as Secretary by Bro. D. Nadal. All activities with the exception of Editorship of the Bible Study Monthly will be concentrated at the new address. Bro. A.O. Hudson remains Editor for the foreseeable future and Bro. B.G. Dumont becomes Consultant Adviser. The new treasurer is Bro. N. Charcharos. Advancing years of Bros. Dumont and Hudson have dictated the change and in the Lord's providence a younger team have come forward to assume the responsibilities.

This new prospect for the future has given confidence for an extensive reprinting programme and we now have stocks of all items listed in the BSM.

The last major change was in 1935 when the original committee set up in 1919 at the formation of the UK Fellowship by those seceding from the old Society retired in favour of a younger team for the same reason. Although the tale of brethren in this country is noticeably diminishing the scope of the work, across the wider circle to whom truth continues to be witnessed is perceptibly increasing, and we have good hopes for the future.

A.O. Hudson, Chairman, Bible Fellowship Union

BIBLE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Editor's note: James DeGroot, a Bible Student from Petosky, Michigan, recently completed a one-month pilgrimage to Israel in search of Bible Students living there. There were at the time about six brethren known to have migrated there. Bro. DeGroot discovered about 35 heirs of the Bible Student movement in Israel. Following is a brief report of his trip.

During a one-month trip to Israel during November and December, 1993, it was my privilege to meet many Bible Students that were unknown to us. Upon entry, I knew of only six, but after one month I knew of about 35. About one-third are Jewish, including a former Orthodox rabbi. The brethren there are multi-lingual and comprise a most interesting and eclectic group. Some are native to Israel. Others come from the USA, Morocco, Australia, Philippines, Romania, Austria, Germany, Mexico, India, Ireland, Russia, and Poland. Many of these brethren did not know of one another, often thinking that they were the only ones in Israel. I have put them in touch with one another.

For myself it was a great and uplifting experience to meet so many of them. It became apparent that a complete library would be beneficial to the brethren. With the cooperation of many individual brethren, classes and movements, I have already begun to establish that library. The secondary mission in this effort is to supply all of the brethren in Israel with truth books and literature.

James DeGroot

Anyone having extra material which they would be willing to donate to the brethren in Israel should make an inventory list and mail it to James. He will direct shipment of the material, as the approval process is quite unique. James DeGroot can be reached at: Circle Enterprises, PO Box 324, Petosky, MI 49770, phone (616) 348-9858.

AROUND THE WORLD

Israel

The health care system that will belong to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is in shambles. Power has been cut off from many neighborhoods. The sewage system is not functional in many areas with waste water flooding the streets. tap water is contaminated. It is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with 260,000 people per square mile. Many inhabitants are unemployed. There are only 1,000 registered physicians in the Gaza Strip. The six hospitals have had the same number of beds since the 1967 war, although the population of the area has doubled since then. "The (health) system depends entirely on the Israelis to survive," said Dr. Khamis Najjar, general director of health.

(New York Times, 1/16/94)

While attention has focused on Palestinian rule in Gaza and Jericho, Israel has been establishing strong settlements around Jerusalem. Maale Adumim, spread across hilltops 4 1/2 miles east of Jerusalem, overlooks the Moab and Edom mountains. The name comes from the Book of Joshua and refers to the route from Jerusalem to Jericho. The residents view themselves as Jerusalem suburbanites. "Experience has proved that in order to defend Jerusalem, one must have a strip of defense surrounding it," said Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur.

Other efforts include enlarging the Jewish population north and south of Jerusalem as well in communities such as Givat Zeer and Efrat. Work continues on a tunnel complex that will allow the Jews to bypass Arab population centers like Bethlehem on the drive to Jerusalem. According to a recently published study, the Israeli government has declared several areas around Jerusalem as "nature reserves" to prevent Palestinian building. "The purpose is to build another ring of Jewish settlements around Jerusalem," said Sarah Kaminher, former city planner.

(New York Times, 2/19/94)

There are reports of increased anti-Semitism in Russia. Fires at several synagogues and a strong electoral showing by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, an ultranationalist, have Jews in Russia worried. The hardline newspaper Pravda has accused Jews there of ritual murder.

There are thought to be 2.5 million Jews remaining in the former Soviet Union, most in Russia. Baruch Gorin, editor of the monthly magazine *Lechaim*, said, "The atmosphere for Jews is very dangerous now and may become more dangerous. History shows that when life becomes hard, so does anti-Semitism become hard."

(Washington Post, 1/5/94,

It is estimated that fewer than 8,000 Jews remain in Poland compared with 3.5 million before World War II. The head of the Catholic Church there, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, is an admirer of Poland's largest anti-Semitic prewar party, the National Democrats.

(Jewish Historical Institute in Poland)

Chief Rabbi Yisrael Lam offered gifts to Cuban president Fidel Castro during a meeting in Havana. The rabbi called Castro a "great friend of the Jewish people. Anti-Semitism is extremely hateful to him."

(Agence France-Presse 2/94)

One curious ingredient of the more militant Jewish movements like the Jewish Defense league formed by the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, is the disproportional presence of Americans, even in Israel. American-born Jews count for about 15 percent of all settlers in Israel, and probably a higher percentage in military movements. Unlike the Jews from Europe who flee to Israel to escape persecution or anti-Semitism, American Jews migrate as they embrace Zionism. Israel generally attracts American Jews gripped by the fervor of building a Jewish homeland while standing against an enemy.

(New York Times, 2/27/94)

England

Bishop of Rochester Michael Turnbull will become the new Bishop of Durham in July. It is the fourth most senior post in the Church of England. The government appoints clergy at the level of bishop because the Church of England is Britain's official religion. Turnbull told reporters that he holds orthodox views, believes in hell-although not in eternal damnation-and is satisfied that Christ was born of a virgin mother and was physically resurrected from the dead. David Jenkins, who will retire from the post, denied reports that he is a blasphemer who does not believe in hell. He said what he actually told reporters in an interview last year was that "Hell certainly exists, but I cannot believe in any permanent hell in the sense of eternal torture-a loving God would not do that."

(Reuters News Service 2/94)

America

Angels are appearing everywhere in America. For more than a year books about angels, letters and personal encounters have dominated religious best sellers. Book sales approach five million. There are computerized angel conferences. There are support groups like Philangeli - friends of angels.

"It's a New Age answer to the homelessness of secularity," says theologian Ted Peters of Pacific Lutheran Seminary. Much of the new age angelology is lifted from Roman Catholic sources.

In *Ask Your Angels*, the author states that Lucifer "has been miscast as the evil one. In reality he is an aspect of God dedicated to our growth by helping us strengthen our spiritual muscles." Prof. Robert Ellwood of the University of Southern California, summarizes it this way: "With angels around, people feel they don't have to bother an Almighty God in order to get help."

Commentators believe that the current belief is similar to Gnostic activities in the era 200 B.C. to 200 A.D-there was a quest to experience self as an uncreated spark of God.

(Newsweek, 12/27/93)

Books about death have become one of the fastest growing categories in publishing. The fastest growing segment of the death market is New Age, which is not scientific, but spiritual in its focus. Among the recent favorites is *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, a 1992 book about an ancient Buddhist philosophy of death. Booksellers say they've never seen anything quite like the current boom. One reason cited is the amazing success in 1991 of *Final Exit*, a precise prescription for "self-deliverance" by prescription drugs.

The most popular book currently is *Embraced By the Light*, Betty Eadies' account of a near-death experience in which she says she was escorted to heaven and talked to Jesus. The book has sold more than a million copies in hardcover and is now the number one book on every major non-fiction (?) bestseller list in the country.

(Wall Street Journal 2/23/94)

One Hundred Years Ago

The following article appeared in Zion's Watch Tower on June 1, 1894 (R1652).

The Tel-EL-Amarna Tablets

Science contains an interesting account of the Tel-El-Amarna tablets from the pen of the Rev. Thomas Harrison, of Staplehurst, Kent. These tablets, 320 in number, were discovered by a fellah woman in 1887 among the ruins of the palace of Amenopis IV, known as Khu-en-Aten, between Missieth and Assiout, about 180 miles south of Cairo. They have been found to contain a political correspondence of the very greatest interest dating from some 3,370 years back. Many are from Palestine, written by the princes of the Amorites, Phoenicians, Philistines, etc Among the enemies against whom help is . . . invoked are the Abiri, easily recognized as the Hebrews. The date fixes that of the Bible (1 Kings 4:1) as accurate. Many names occur which are familiar in Scripture, as for example, Japhia, one of the kings killed by Joshua (Josh. 10:3); Adonizedec, King of Jerusalem (ditto); and Jabin, King of Hazor (Josh. 11). Very pathetic are the letters of Ribadda, the brave and warlike King of Gebel, whose entreaties for aid are observed to grow less obsequious and more businesslike as his enemies prevailed against him, robbing him eventually of his wife and children, whom he was powerless to protect.