

The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

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Coping With Life in 1997

Editors' Journal

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."—2 Timothy 3:1

News magazines, the daily papers, television, and radio all proclaim the truth that perilous times have come. Crime, drugs, internecine warfare—a whole litany of woes could be cited to give further proof. Luke's version of Jesus' Olivet sermon described it well, "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity." Perplexity is well defined in the literal Greek as "no way out."

"Are you better off today than you were four years ago"? This question from the recent presidential campaign in the United States received pro and con answers. Even those who answered in the affirmative were unsure as to how long their good fortunes would last. The rapid pace of new technology has two sides as well: the ease it brings is accompanied by increasing uncertainty in the workplace, fed by the fear that technology will replace the human work force.

Advances in pharmacology and the medical sciences have produced new hopes of cures for dreaded diseases. Yet this is accompanied by new ailments, some of which, such as AIDS, have reached epidemic proportions.

Budgetary problems add further stress. In America, Social Security has become less secure and funding for health programs has been more and more difficult to find. This increases fears of an uncertain old age for an ever-increasing proportion of the population.

As Charles Dickens wrote, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." The resultant stress from merely coping with life affects us all. That is the theme of this current issue of **THE HERALD**.

Coping with Life in 1997

The articles in this issue deal with the various aspects of living in the world of 1997. The stresses which face the general populace face the Christian as well. Fortunately, the Bible gives some solid suggestions about coping with these conditions in our lives.

The opening treatise, *The Spiritual Mind and Stress*, is a fitting introduction to the balance of the journal, which deals with a few of the component elements of this stress.

In *Peace: The Gift of Jesus* the author concentrates on the rapid pace of our lives. It seems ironic that the more labor-saving devices we produce, the more we labor and the less time is available for doing those things we feel we really should be doing.

Conditions around us produce a frustration that often leads to fits of temper and anger. *A Perfect Hatred* examines justifiable and inappropriate anger. Emphasis is given to practical ways of alleviating this often harmful emotion.

A Christian's walk, often contrary to the world around him, frequently produces opposition. A biblical example of this is found in the life and work of Nehemiah, the Jewish governor appointed by the Persian king, Artaxerxes, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The story is the verse by verse Bible study for this issue, entitled, *Such a Man as I*.

Two severe stresses are discouragement and depression. They have become so prevalent that they are now recognized as a specialized field of psychology. The author of *Lift Your Drooping Hands* looks in depth at available ways to combat this foe of the spiritual man.

Many Christians face physical infirmity or economic hardships. These also must be coped with when walking in the Master's footsteps. An examination of this theme will be found in the treatise entitled *He Addeth No Sorrow*.

The experience of losing a loved one in death is universal. One article relates the testimonies of three brethren who have recently felt such losses. Their ways of coping are given in *Sorrowing Not as Others*.

Peer pressure is yet another force all people feel. This is particularly true of the Christian who seeks to abide by the scriptural counsel to "be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). The author of *Christian Conformity* examines this subject.

The normal *News & Views* feature of this month's issue has been replaced with a two-page special report on the recent *International Convention* in Miskolc, Hungary. This section features highlights of some of the brethren who attended this gathering. For those of you who subscribe to **The Herald** on Tape, you will notice that there are new voices doing the reading. Bro. Herb Snyder, who has faithfully done this reading in the past, has had to decline for future issues. The new voices of **The Herald** on Tape will be Peter and Charlene Mora

Coping With Stress

The Spiritual Mind and Stress

"Casting all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."—1 Peter 5:7 (NAS)

Wade Austin

Is modern life really so much more stressful than earlier times? We struggle to provide food, shelter, and clothing for ourselves and our loved ones. So did our ancestors. The hectic pace of modern life weighs us down, but surely the day-to-day hardships worried people living in earlier times. Whether in times past or in our day, the cares of this world hang upon the hearts of men like a millstone. We are stressed and distressed.

In addition to the cares of this world, cataclysmic events, whether natural or manmade, have caused further anxiety and stress throughout man's history. Wars, famines, earthquakes, droughts, and floods have plagued humankind through the centuries.

Coping with Stress

The wise men of God are consistent in their advice to us about how we can cope with stress. The following counsel is but a taste of the nourishing spiritual food they have provided.

Paul encouraged, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil. 4:6). Peter counseled, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Jesus instructed, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear" (Luke 12:22). Jeremiah assured Israel that "blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him" (Jer. 17:7). Solomon advised, "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed" (Prov. 16:3). David wrote, "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall" (Psa. 55:22).

These men of God did not write these words just for us. Surely they intended to comfort the people of their generation. Thanks be to God that his word, through these faithful men of old, has endured to console us at this end of the Gospel age.

Stress is External, Distress is Internal

Careful consideration of the words of Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets reveals what wise men down through the ages have known: stressful forces come from the outside, but the distress comes from within. Events become stressful by the meaning we give them and the meaning we give to events is revealed when we "listen" to our own words. When we tell ourselves the truth as revealed in God's word, then the significance of all events

in our lives rests in the context of God's will for us. When we deceive ourselves about the meaning of an event, then we tend to wallow in the mire of self-pity.

Events can be stressful only if we attach a negative import to them. Quarrels with others, the death of a loved one, divorce, financial setbacks, problems with children, and physical illness are all common stressors. Here are some examples of how we can produce our own distress and how it may be avoided.

Stress Over Positive Events

To the surprise of many, positive events can also cause anxiety. Getting married, finishing school, being promoted, or preparing for a vacation, all can be stressful, but only if we talk falsely to ourselves. All these situations, both positive and negative, involve change. When we are threatened by or fearful of an event involving change, that event becomes stressful.

Expectation and Stress

A key ingredient of stress is expectation. If we anticipate things to remain the same, then change or the appearance of change causes distress. Likewise, we become distressed if people do not behave as we expect or if events do not work out as we had thought they would.

Does this mean we should not "expect" anything? Should we just let life happen without expectation? The answer centers around confusion between hope and expectation. When we hope a person will behave according to our desires, we may experience disappointment or grief if they do not. Expecting a person to behave as we wish is likely to result in distress if they behave differently.

An example of the stress we cause ourselves by the significance we attach to an event and by the expectations we place upon others is in the account of the conversation between Martha and Jesus in Luke 10:38-42:

" As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me! Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (NIV).

The work that Martha was doing was noble. Likewise the need of Mary to sit at the feet of Jesus was important. Martha's expectation of what both she and Mary should be doing caused her distress when Mary behaved differently. The way she spoke to herself, about what was important for both of them, is what caused her worry. She tried to convince Jesus that it was important that Mary help prepare food. She told herself that Jesus did

not care that she was doing all the work and she may have felt that those around her would think less of her if everything was not perfectly. The truth was that Jesus' time with them was drawing short and it was important for Mary and the others to spend time with him. Jesus appreciated the work of Martha on his behalf but the spiritual work that remained to be done was more needful.

"Let Go and Let God"

"Let go and let God," is the kind of bumper sticker slogan that intuitively makes sense to most people, but the power behind its simplicity is in understanding how restraining and driving forces cause us distress. The restraint of distrust in people, lack of faith in God, hatred towards others, and false beliefs are in constant tension with the driving forces of truth, faith, hope, and love. It is only when we "let go" of the restraining forces in our lives and "let God" work in us to accomplish his gracious purpose that we can be free from the distress caused externally.

The Bible is full of examples of men and women who let go of false beliefs and negative thoughts in order to accomplish the will of God. The wonderful story of Joseph is a shining example to all of us in this regard. Did he distrust his brethren when they came to Egypt for help? Did he hate them for selling him into slavery? Did he lose hope in the true meaning of his dreams? No, he persevered by his knowledge that God meant his experiences for good.

In a like manner, our spiritual mind knows that God cares for us. The Apostle Paul articulated this most clearly in his letter to the Romans.

"In the same way, the spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:26-28, 35, 37-39 NIV). Do we really believe these words of Paul?

Do we really believe God cares for us? It is only when we believe the truth of God's word that "he careth for us" that we can "cast all our anxiety on him." May God increase our faith.

Coping with the Hectic Pace of Life

Peace: The Gift of Jesus

"My last gift to you is peace. It is my own peace that I give unto you. My gift is not a gift the world can ever give. Don't let your heart be distressed, and don't let it lose its courage." John 14:27 (Barclay)

Contributed

Competition, mass production, low profit margin, labor tensions, downsizing, taskmasters of time, short fused personalities, distrust, lack of cash flow, rising debts, fear of the unexpected—the stress of each day continues to increase. The human ability to stretch and conform to new challenges often gives hope that things will change or that it will not always be like this—if only we hit the lottery, if only I can get that degree, if only we get this car paid for, if only we can hold out until the kids get through college, if only I could retire or under the new presidential administration things will get better.

Statistics are constantly quoted in the news leading to concerns that the hectic day outside the home does not stop when the family comes together inside. It is a greater challenge to keep families together. It is harder to keep the outside influences of the world from invading the thinking and relationships within the home; the results can be tragic and heartbreaking. Domestic violence increases. Divorce rates increase. Child abuse increases. Suicides increase.

While the Christians are in the world and affected by the same pressures and environments, they must constantly battle to avoid being of the world. The world's solutions are not acceptable nor are they to be copied. The Christian knows that success in fighting stress is directly related to the transforming of the mind into that of Christ.

A Gift The World Can Never Give

Jesus left his disciples a unique gift— peace. It is such a simple word. It is such a cherished gift. It is a gift that has sustained his followers through years of trials and turmoil. Faced with persecutions of Rome, faced with tortures of the Dark Ages and now surrounded by the wiles of the world and the evil one [the Adversary, Satan] this special gift of our Lord has allowed the Christian to survive the hectic day. "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15 NAS).

It would be so nice to be away from all stress and problems—to run away—to escape, but this is not the plan of the Father. Some Christians in the past tried to avoid the temptations and conflicts of the world by secluding themselves in monasteries or areas of isolation. Their solution avoided the world but did little to witness for Jesus. We are to be shining lights in a world of darkness. You can not do this if your lights are hidden under a bushel or in a mountain retreat away from the world.

We are not to act like everybody else. Knowing about the coming age of peace and blessing that is to cover the earth gives us a great advantage, but it also comes with great responsibility. We can turn this knowledge into a witness by letting our attitude reflect that hope in our daily lives even under the most stressful circumstances. Avoiding the trap of reacting like the world when given similar experiences can be one of the greatest witnesses we can give—the truth in action. We should not allow ourselves to become fearful or intimidated. We should not focus on what the world may think of our actions—think of what God would think. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25).

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear" (Psa. 46:1, 2). The gift Jesus left his followers, passes all understanding (Phil.4:7). Jesus is the Prince of Peace, he does not lead us into stressful thinking, but he helps us through such times by leaving us an example of how that peace should work in our lives even under the most hectic circumstances. He had stressful days, too. His example is a legacy to his followers.

Let us follow him through one of those days —about 24 hours in the day of our Lord.

Matthew recalls how the day started: Jesus heard the news that a close friend, a cousin, John the Baptist, had been beheaded by Herod (Matt. 14:1 - 14). Jesus referred to John with the highest respect. He knew that the day would come when John would die. Knowing John's fate, he spoke to the multitude:

"What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:24-28 NAS).

Jesus had power to heal the sick and to read the hearts of men. He always succeeded when debating the scoffers and the Pharisees. He could be confronted by Satan personally—and stand firm and Jesus could escape the traps and elude the enemy because it was not the right time for him to be taken. But this day was different. It was one thing to take the blows and criticisms of others—to feel the stress surrounding him personally. This was part of his consecration, part of the covenant he vowed to take in fulfilling his mission as the Messiah. Jesus knew that his followers would some day suffer for their association with him, but until they were ready, he protected them. (See John 18:8.) Even when he was betrayed that night in Gethsemane, he was willing to be taken, but asked that the soldiers "let these (the disciples) go their way." So when Jesus heard of John the Baptist's death it affected him. To see a beloved friend imprisoned and die for righteousness, and to do nothing—not lift a finger to help was a test for Jesus. Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered and this was one of those learning days.

"Let him seek peace and pursue it" (1Peter 3:11). The thought of revenge—of getting even— of pay-backs, is often the solution of the world. Even under the Jewish law an "eye for an eye," when applied by the community, was acceptable justice. In some religions an additional step is taken. Not only is the murderer killed but a close relative of the murderer is also killed to teach a lesson and add hardship to the family. Superior armies in occupied lands often became brutal in their efforts to impose justice. Whole communities would be murdered and the buildings leveled, crops would be burned, and cattle slaughtered in retaliation for one officer or soldier who had been killed. Jesus never sought revenge for John's death but bowed to the will of the heavenly Father in permitting such an experience.

The actions of Jesus contrast with such examples. Jesus refrained from harming others. He refrained from seeking revenge. Could he not have called for legions of angels to help? Yet his lips never uttered such a request. We see a standard for the Christian which is totally opposed by the standard in the world. Wars have been started over the death of a relative—or less.

"Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:38, 39, 43-45).

How unique by today's standards, to have the power and choose not to use it; how unique to have the right to speak out against the shedding of innocent blood and choose to be quiet. It takes strength to bend to the will of the heavenly Father. It takes strength to restrain yourself when a loved one suffers.

"Now when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from there in a boat, to a lonely place by himself" (Matt. 14:13). Jesus tried to get away from the crowds. He wanted time alone to be with his thoughts. By getting into a boat with his disciples and getting away from shore, he could get away from the crushing crowds that demanded his attention and strength. He wanted time to recoup his strength. He really did not feel like being around anyone. No doubt the thoughts of John were heavily on his mind.

". . . and when the multitude heard of this, they followed him on foot from the cities" (Matt. 14:13). But the crowds followed him anyway. There was no rest. As the boat came close to the shore on the other side of the lake it became apparent that there was no getting away. How many of us would have started to cry from the mere thought of what lay ahead! The anticipation of added stress upon a weary mind and saddened countenance did not make this a pleasant moment. How many of us would have said in our hearts that this was too much to consider in a time of grief?

"He saw a great multitude and felt compassion for them" (Matt. 14:14). Jesus looked upon the growing multitudes with compassion. Compassion is a feeling of pity that makes one want to help or show mercy. Jesus' compassion towards others outweighed his

personal needs. It is a lesson for each disciple. People want attention. Those that suffer want to know someone cares. Jesus cared and it showed. Not only did he offer them his attention, but he healed and spoke encouragement to them from the scriptures. He was the balm of Gilead in a miserable world of sickness and oppression. He listened. He reached out to the poor. He showed pity. He did not murmur or repine at what the Lord's providence had permitted.

When we are weary and the day has been hectic, how do we react when others around us ask for attention? Do we find the tendency to respond in a curt manner? Do we tend to isolate ourselves in our rooms? Do we choose that moment to decide we should study or meditate—to avoid being with others? Who could criticize us for wanting to be more pious? It would be the perfect excuse to be alone and apart from others—even those in need. It may be good to consider our motives if such is the case. Although we are not able to miraculously feed or heal as Jesus did, we can exhibit compassion. Maybe just listening to a problem, especially from one who is sick or who is repulsive to us, would be more than anyone else is willing to do. Sometimes individuals can actually see the best course to take after just talking out the problem with someone who cares—a friend.

A true friend is someone who knows all about us but will not go away, who loves us as we are and not just for what we are able to do, and whose faithfulness is absolutely dependable regardless of the ups and downs of our successes or failures.

A true friend will at least listen. A true friend who knows the right course will want to help us get back on track and thereby share the advice and encouragement learned from the Scriptures. A true friend will do this even when he may be weary and drained from his own personal experiences. He realizes the heavenly Father's compassion.

*There is an eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts
When sink the beams of light.*

*O weary souls with cares oppressed
Trust in his loving might;
Whose eye is over all thy ways,
Through all thy weary night.*

*Whose ear is open to thy cry
Whose grace is full and free;
Whose comfort is forever nigh;
Whate'er thy sorrows be.*

Five thousand gathered to have their sick healed. And he healed them. Each one that he healed drained a little more from his energy, but he did not quit.

Evening came and the crowds still lingered. The disciples suggested that Jesus send them away so the multitude could get food from the villages, but Jesus realized the opportunity to perform one more miracle that day and the multitude was fed from five loaves and two fishes.

What a long day! Again Jesus bent his life to the will of the heavenly Father. He put aside any thought of having a little time alone and continued to use the opportunities the Lord had provided to witness to his disciples and the people. When all were fed, Jesus sent the disciples out in the boat to the other side of the lake. He stayed behind and dispersed the crowds.

Now he had a little time to reflect upon the day, so he went up to the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening, he was there alone. He needed a moment of silence, a quiet time at the end of the day, a time to reflect upon the day and consider the experiences the heavenly Father had permitted.

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). From Mark's account (6:47-56) our Lord's quiet time was cut short. The Lord's vantage point from the mountains let him see his disciples straining at their oars. Unfortunately for them, the wind was blowing against them. They were using up what strength they had but they were not making any progress. So Jesus walked out to them, climbed into the boat, and calmed the storm. The account says the apostles were "greatly astonished." This may have been an understatement. Their Master was unusual, to say the least. In the past 24 hours he had fed five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fishes, healed the sick all day long—he now walked on water and commanded the wind to die down, but the day was not quite over.

"And [the next day] when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. And when they had come out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him, And ran about the whole country and began to carry about on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard he was. And wherever he entered villages or cities or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places and entreating him that they might just touch the fringe of his cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured."—Mark 6:53-56 (NAS)

There was no rest. There was little break from the events of that day. It began with the beheading of John the Baptist and our Lord's words, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31 NAS). That day was anything but restful! There were no complaints. There was no "why me, Lord?"

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). When our day is hectic, when our stress levels are pushed to the edge, when we seek rest and the Lord allows more work or responsibility to fall on our shoulders—consider Jesus.

". . . to suffer when you have behaved well, and to bear it uncomplainingly, is something which is a credit to you in the sight of God. This is the very situation to which you have

been called, for Christ too suffered for you, and in so doing he left you an example, for he wanted us to follow in his steps. For he committed no sin and no one ever heard him speak a twisted word. He did not answer insult with insult. He did not answer ill treatment with threats of revenge. No! He committed himself and his cause to the Judge whose verdict is just."—1 Peter 2:20-23 (Barclay)

Coping with Anger

A Perfect Hatred

"I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies."—Psalm 139:22

Robert Wilson

How did David, beloved of God, cope with his anger? Without knowing more, in this text it is not clear whether he is coping with anger or letting it eat him up. How do you cope with anger?

"Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26). Paul implies that unless we are careful, becoming angry can lead to sin.

The Emotion of Anger

Anger is an emotion, a natural function of being human. It is not possible for one to avoid anger any more than it is possible to avoid love or fear or grief. God himself experiences anger. The scriptures are replete with references to God's anger.

Could God hate if he did not experience anger? We read in Proverbs 6:16-19 of seven things God hates: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." The child of God should likewise hate these sinful characteristics of the fallen nature and be angry at seeing them displayed. This is righteous anger and is not sin.

McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia defines anger as "the emotion of instant displeasure, which arises from the feeling of injury done, or the discovery of injury intended, or, in many cases, from the discovery of the omission of good offices to which we supposed ourselves entitled."

This portion of the definition applies uniquely to us. Notice that it frequently stems from pride! It arises from not necessarily injury actually done but from a feeling of injury intended, or the omission from an honor or position of which we thought ourselves worthy. That should give us great reason to ponder our right to be angry.

Two Types of Emotions

We are told that there are two basic types of human emotions, based on their effect upon the body. The first group includes those that result in over stimulation of various parts of the body: an over stimulation, via the nervous system, of any organ or any muscle or of one or more of the endocrine glands. This over stimulation produces an unpleasant

feeling. Anger, anxiety, fear, discouragement, grief, and dissatisfaction are just a few in this category.

The second group includes those emotions whose manifestations in the body are an optimal (or most favorable) stimulation. These emotions give us a pleasant feeling or a sense of well being. Among these are hope, joy, courage, affection, love, agreeableness, and many others. Would any classify emotions of this sort a sin? Of course not, and yet these are also emotions, as are anger and fear.

That emotions are reactions to stimuli is borne out in the origin of the Hebrew words for anger. Half a dozen Hebrew words are translated "anger," and they all seem to deal with external signs of body reaction to stimulus. One is "to breathe hard," an obvious external sign of anger. Another is "nostril," which flares out when one is angry. Another means to "glow," or grow warm, and yet another means to "froth at the mouth."

Manifestations of Human Anger

Some of the external manifestations of the emotion of anger are a reddening of the skin of the face, a widening of the eyelids, bloodshot whites of the eyes, contraction and tightening of the lips, a setting of the jaw, a clenching of the fists, a tremor in the arms, and often in the voice. The onlooker can detect a state of anger immediately upon seeing anyone with such manifestations.

However, the internal manifestations are much more profound and remarkable. When people become angry, their blood will clot much, much quicker. This is a natural defense mechanism, because emotional reaction often implies a fight, and a wound or wounds, so blood clotting becomes necessary to minimize blood loss.

Another similarly valuable manifestation is that the number of blood cells in the circulating blood increases dramatically. Also, the muscles at the outlet of the stomach squeeze down so tightly that nothing can leave the stomach during anger. The entire digestive tract becomes so spastic that many people have severe abdominal pains during or after a fit of anger. The heart rate goes up markedly during anger, often to 180 or 220, and even higher, and will remain there until the anger has passed. The blood pressure will go up from a normal of 130 to 230 or more, and in anger, the coronary arteries will squeeze down, producing angina pains.

Obviously anyone who undergoes repeated and unrestrained fits of anger also undergoes a great deal of undue stress and strain on the various parts of the body. Physical health is placed in jeopardy. As the apostle points out concerning the integral parts of the body of Christ in Ephesians 4:16, what affects one member of that body will affect other members. Would it not follow that the health of that spiritual body would also be placed in jeopardy by the uncontrolled anger of its members?

Understanding Anger

Understanding the nature and extent of this emotion we call anger can go a long way toward learning to cope with it. Remember the Apostle Paul's admonition above (Eph. 4:26, 27). Note the Diaglott wording: "When angry, do not sin; let not the sun set on your wrath; nor give an opportunity for the accuser." One cannot help becoming angry, but the Christian must not give in to the temptation of venting his wrath. That is what the old fallen nature, which is in slavery to Satan, longs to do. But if one gives in to it, then it becomes sin.

In Romans 8, Paul emphasizes that "ye are not in the flesh," and thus are not subject to Satan; but in the spirit, "if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Furthermore, Paul, in the concluding verses of Romans 12 and the opening verses of chapter 13, explains that we, as Christians, are not to avenge ourselves. We are not authorized to set things right as we see the wrong, but we are to step out of the way and let God handle the matter in his own way. He then quotes Deuteronomy 32:35, saying, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

The responsibility of the follower of Jesus then is to exercise faith that the Lord is not only capable of dealing with the matter but is also active at all times in all such arrangements for the very purpose of giving his followers experiences to test, develop, and strengthen their loyalty and faith. Whenever one is tempted to exercise his personal wrath, he is in jeopardy of preempting the Lord's next move, assuming authority where he has none.

Perfect Hatred

What of David's anger as expressed in his phrase, "I hate them with perfect hatred"? In the context we see that he is really echoing God's statement in Proverbs and expressing his hatred for all things wicked in the sight of God. He concludes this psalm by saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (vs. 23, 24).

Think of David's experience with Bathsheba and the lengths to which he was willing to go to have her for his own. It seems beyond reason that he went to the point of having her husband murdered. That is exactly the issue here! It is beyond reason! Love, hate, anger are all beyond reason because they are emotions! After the parable that Nathan recited to him, can we not readily assume that David examined himself and found wickedness in his own character that was beyond his control? Perhaps it was exactly this kind of wickedness that he hated with "a perfect hatred!"

Slow to Anger

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."—Proverbs 16:32

This text tells us how God views the self control of his children and is, of course, the theme of the followers of Christ, changing their character. Changing the character of fallen human nature, for those called out of darkness, has been the greatest work of the past 2000 years of the Gospel age. According to the Apostle Paul, in Romans 8:5-8, the fallen human nature is opposed to God and is not subject to his laws. He even said that it cannot be. That is quite a statement and one most baffling to those in Christendom who presently see themselves in covenant relationship with God on Sunday but pursue their own personal interests the other six days of the week. The law of God has not to do with actions or activities. It is not a set of rules to follow in order to become righteous. The laws given to Israel by Moses were not designed to make Israel righteous. No laws can do that. We reiterate Romans 8:7: "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Becoming righteous is not accomplished by following laws but rather by faith changing the thought processes of the mind and thus the condition of the heart.

The Ten Commandments should control the mind of man. When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus said that love is greatest; first, to love God with all one's heart and soul, and then to love thy neighbor as thyself (Matt. 22:36-40). While love itself is not a physical action, it can only be defined by one's actions. The parable of the sheep and the goats shows that, in the end, it is love in the character that is important and that the character shows itself in one's actions rather than the other way around.

Controlling Anger

It is a simple matter to advise one, "When you become angered, do not let it control you." It is another matter entirely to instill control in one's character. For example: you are driving your car in traffic and others keep cutting into your lane without so much as a signal. You keep slowing down to avoid following too closely in order to allow for a margin of safety. You are just as concerned about getting to work on time as the others, yet you want to get there in one piece. Just how do you "turn the other cheek" in a case like this? Then, with this experience fresh in mind, you arrive at work to find that someone has parked in your designated parking space, and you have to drive around looking for a place to park. Now, arriving late at your workplace due to delays caused by others, your co-workers tease you for over-sleeping. At this point your nostrils have flared, your face has taken on a pink glow, and your breathing is heavy. Are you angry? Certainly! Have you lost control? Possibly, at least to the extent that your co-workers are alerted and they are reacting accordingly.

This is hardly an unusual set of circumstances in the hustle and bustle of today. What will you do about it? How do you cope with your anger when it is piled on layer after layer? One trial at a time you can handle, but this load seems unmanageable.

If we can remember what anger does to us physically and that only spiritual strength can overcome it, then we can seek that strength. In the privacy of our car on a quiet street or before going to work, we can seek the Lord and put the burden on him.

We might do well, in time of need, to be able to call to mind one or more of the following mini-lessons. "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Psa. 37:8). "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding" (Prov. 14:29). "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). flared, your face has taken on a pink glow, and your breathing is heavy. Are you angry? Certainly! Have you lost control? Possibly, at least to the extent that your co-workers are alerted and they are reacting accordingly.

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Coping with Opposition

Such a Man as I!

"And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."—Nehemiah 6:11

A verse by verse study in Nehemiah 6

Nehemiah is the last hero of faith mentioned in the Old Testament. Few men can match his nobility. Although appointed governor by King Artaxerxes, he refused to take any salary for his work. Instead he fed over 150 people daily out of his own resources, feeding them bountifully with sheep, oxen, fowls, and wine (5:14-18). Not content to direct others, he worked side by side with his men on rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Completing the walls in just over seven weeks, Nehemiah proceeded to introduce sweeping reforms, including a return to pure worship and even an attempt to reinstitute the Jubilee (chap. 5).

The Enemies—Verse 1

Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

Nature abhors a vacuum. With the Israelites exiled from the promised land to Babylon, neighboring tribes from the east began to migrate into Israel. The leadership of these nomadic tribes was usually dominated by either the Ammonites or the Moabites. In the opening verse of this chapter, we find evidence of a confederation of three of these tribes, with Sanballat as the first among equals.

Sanballat is called a Horonite in Nehemiah 2:10, designating him as either from Beth-Horon, some 13 miles northwest of Jerusalem, or, more likely, from Horonaim, a city of Moab mentioned in Isaiah 15:5 and Jeremiah 48:3-5. In papyri found at the Jewish settlement in Elephantine, Egypt, Sanballat is called the governor of Samaria. His daughter was married to the Jewish high priest Eliashib (Neh. 13:28).

Tobiah was an Edomite. He is designated as a servant in 2:10, though some translators use the word "official" instead. The word is the usual designation for a servant and probably indicates that he was Sanballat's lieutenant and not a full member of the coalition.

Geshem (or Gashmu, 6:6), on the other hand, was undoubtedly a chieftain from the more distant Arabia and a full partner in the league. Their motive was probably jealousy. The Israelites were newcomers to them and potential rivals for grazing land and for the commercial revenue that would come from caravans traveling between Egypt and points

east. These neighboring tribes had previously planned to enter the city through the breaches in the walls and attack from within. Nehemiah had received word of this and set careful watches to prevent this infiltration (chap. 4). Now the breaches were all filled and only the doors needed to be installed in the gateways. New tactics were called for, and chapter six details these final attempts of Israel's foes to stop the building of the city.

The Plot—Verses 2 to 4

That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

Nehemiah's enemies proposed a peace conference. The site selected was in the lowland plains around the town of Ono, about six miles from the Mediterranean Sea. The location was nearly a day's journey, some 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. The road to Ono led through the narrow valley of the Aijalon river where, it appears, Sanballat and Geshem had planned to ambush Nehemiah and his party. Sensing the trap, Nehemiah demurred, pleading the greatness of the very work his enemies were trying to stop. The wily trio was persistent and extended the invitation four times. Each time, with resolute fortitude, Nehemiah declined.

This carries a lesson for us today. "Just say no" is a popular slogan in our times but temptation does not take rejection easily. If nothing else can be said for our great Adversary, we must admit his persistence. Repetitive temptations often succeed if the first resistance is not strong and steadfast.

The Open Letter—Verses 5 to 9

Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

Evidently the first four invitations had been delivered personally to Nehemiah. Now it was time for the conspirators to make their case public. An open letter to the people of Jerusalem was sent to intimidate them into putting pressure on Nehemiah to come to the conference at Ono.

Two basic charges were being leveled. First, that the people of Jerusalem were planning a rebellion against the Medo-Persian empire and, second, that Nehemiah was trying to set himself up as a rival king to Artaxerxes.

To lend credibility to their charges, they supported them by writing, "and Gashmu saith it." Gashmu is the Geshem of the first verse. He is one of the conspirators. Why should his word lend weight to the charges being made? Evidently Geshem had attained a measure of stature with the Persian monarch. Adding his word to the anonymous reports of the other surrounding gentiles was intended to make the charge more credible.

How often it is true with us that those who would spread rumors seek to make them more believable by attributing the charge to someone in recognized authority. This, in fact, does little to establish credibility of charges. The only one who is in a real position to clarify an unsubstantiated charge is the accused himself. This is one of the main reasons for the counsel given by Jesus in handling disputes (Matt. 18:16-18).

Further support is obtained by quoting certain prophets who had been saying, with Nehemiah's consent, "There is a king in Judah." It is very probable that these words were often spoken at the time. The lie in the charge was not in the words but in the charge that these words were from "appointed prophets to preach of thee [of Nehemiah] at Jerusalem." Nehemiah was interested in restoring the people to a religious fervor and may well have requested the prophets to assure the people that God was once again with them and that he was their "king in Judah." Today also there are those who would misunderstand our words. We do believe that the present evil systems of the world will be replaced by the kingdom of Christ. Some may misunderstand and think that we are advocating the overthrow of government instead of merely predicting from the Bible what we foresee of the future of the world.

Nehemiah does not take the time to give a point by point rebuttal but rather contents himself with a simple blanket denial, attributing the charges to the imaginations of the writer. Here again is a lesson for the Christian. A follower of Christ could spend all his time defending himself against false charges. Such charges are unimportant. They are diversions, detracting one from the spiritual tasks to which he sets himself. There is only "one that judgeth," even "God, the judge of all" (John 12:48; Heb. 12:23).

Realizing the persistency and cleverness of his foes, Nehemiah takes his case directly to God. He recognizes that the entire thrust of the conspiracy is to stop the work of building the wall. This becomes the burden of his prayer, "Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." The petition is simple. He merely asks for the ability to complete the work he has started for the Lord.

A New Plot—Verses 10 to 14

Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

Unable to lure the Israelite governor out of the city, Sanballat and Tobiah sprang a second plot. Their puppet in this ploy was well chosen. Shemaiah was a common name at that time. No less than 12 people by that name are listed in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah alone. However all of them appear to have been either priests, singers in the temple, or other active Levites. Therefore Shemaiah would have been a man of prominence, possibly intermarried with a woman from the area. This would have placed him in a position to both hear of any plots from the conspiracy and yet be in a position to have the ear of Nehemiah.

What is meant by the expression that Shemaiah was "shut up" is unclear. The Hebrew word is open to a wide variety of meanings and could mean that he was confined because of illness or that he was an invalid or that he was under house arrest. Were it the latter, he might have called for Nehemiah to come and offer to exchange some privy information about the conspirators for release or at least leniency in judgment.

In any case his words seemed harmless. He predicted an attempt by night to take Nehemiah's life. He advised that the two of them spend the night behind locked doors in the temple. This would not need to interrupt the work, for little could be done on building the walls during the darkness of night. What was the danger in following this simple precaution?

At this juncture Nehemiah responds: "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."

Notice the confidence of the man. Should such a man as I flee? He will not be linked with the easily intimidated ordinary mortal. His is the courage of conviction. What he has set himself to do he will accomplish. He will not be sidetracked. His is the courage of a Joshua, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). His is the determination of the three young Hebrews who, even if not delivered out of the fiery furnace, proclaimed that they still would not serve Babylon's gods (Dan. 3:18). His is the resoluteness of a Paul who said "this one thing I do . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

Every Christian needs such steadfastness to fend off temptation. It is not self-confidence; it is rather the confidence of one who can rely on Christ to supply every need: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). When buffeted by temptations, let the Christian answer with conviction, "shall such a man as I flee?" There is yet a deeper meaning to these words. Nehemiah had journeyed to Jerusalem only to find a complacent and secular people. His job was not merely in engineering and construction but in galvanizing a people grown lax. They had "lost their first love" and their ardor to rebuild a temple and city for their God. He must not only be their cheerleader and prompter but above all he must be their example. That weight of leadership on his shoulders gave added significance to those determined words, "shall such a man as I": I who urge you to build, with trowel in one hand and sword in the other; shall a man possessed with the responsibility of urging you on, shall such as I, show any streak of cowardice in the sight of danger.

This is true, also, at all times of the Christian. As the Apostle Paul says, "we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. 4:9). Our life must be lived in a fishbowl. We are the only Bible that many will ever read, and it is only when others "see your good works" that they will "glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

But above all these, there lurks another thought in Nehemiah's words, a concept suggesting the subtlety of the ruse Sanballat and Tobiah were using. Before convincing Artaxerxes to send him as an envoy to rebuild Jerusalem, Nehemiah had been one of the king's most trusted servants. He was the cup-bearer to Artaxerxes (1:11). He held the same office that the butler in prison with Joseph had in the court of Pharaoh (Gen. 40:2). The word there translated "officer" in the King James Bible should be more properly translated "eunuch." It was normal for kings to require that those who either kept their harem or were responsible for their food be made eunuchs that they might be free from sexual enticements. These were those who "were made eunuchs of men" (Matt. 19:12). It is likely, therefore, that Nehemiah was a eunuch.

The law strictly forbade eunuchs from entering upon the priesthood (Lev. 21:21). While this did not bar them from the temple precincts, anyone found in the precincts overnight lay open to the charge of violating this command. This seems to have been the plot and it was to ensure that the charge would be made that Shemaiah wanted to spend the night in the temple with Nehemiah.

It is interesting to note in passing that one of the first converts to Christianity was the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-39). Just as Peter had been shown, when being sent to the gentiles, that "what God hath cleansed, call not thou common" (Acts 10:15), so the story of the Ethiopian shows that the Gospel is for all—all are cleansed from their blemishes by acceptance of the Redeemer.

Nehemiah's action was resolute. He discerned that Shemaiah was merely a paid lackey and that the desire for him to claim refuge in the temple was not of God. He rejects it

firmly, asking God to make the proper judgments of the perpetrators, including a false prophetess, Noadiah, who must have played some role in the attempted deception.

The Wall Completed—Verses 15 and 16

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

The wall which had been so derided in its early stages (4:2, 3) was erected in record time. In less than two months the city was secured. The quickness of the work, especially under such adverse conditions, impressed the surrounding heathen. Their inability to stop the project was depressing to them but at the same time it clearly demonstrated that it must have been a work wrought of God.

It is good for Christians at the beginning of each year to start with certain specific spiritual projects in mind. If they apply themselves to them, they will find the Adversary scoffing, trying to divert their attention to other matters, accusing them by rumors and open letters, and luring them to their own destruction. But, using the resoluteness of a Nehemiah, they can accomplish that which they attempt in the fifty two weeks each year allots and be ready for more projects in the years which follow.

The Enemy Never Stops—Verses 17 to 19

Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son ohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

The animosity toward Nehemiah does not let up after the completion of the wall. A faithful servant of the Lord, when queried about why he never took a vacation, once said, "I will take a holiday as soon as the devil does."

Sanballat fades to the background and now Tobiah becomes the chief protagonist. As Sanballat's daughter had married the son of the high priest, so Tobiah's son was married to the daughter of one of the men who had worked so hard in rebuilding the wall (3:4, 30), and his daughter was married to Shechaniah, who was probably one of the priests (12:3).

Intermarriage has frequently been a ploy of the Adversary. It was true in Israel's wilderness wanderings (Num. 25:1-9); it brought idolatry into Israel in the days of Solomon and Ahab; and it was a major problem in the days of Ezra. God had chosen Israel, as he now chooses his church, to be a sanctified people. Sanctification, by its very

definition, means a people set apart, separated for holy service. Intermarriage is contrary to sanctification.

The in-laws of Tobiah became his public relations team. They reported all the good things about Tobiah to Nehemiah, hoping to win acceptance for their father-in-law. More than that, they were also spies, reporting back to Tobiah all the information they could glean from Nehemiah. Tobiah used this information to carry out continuous psychological warfare, using a repetitious letter writing campaign to keep Nehemiah in fear. It did not work because the man God had chosen for this work was a man of great determination and resolution.

It must be the same for the Christian today. Satan will not stop his attempts to halt the work of the Lord. One defeat will only make him more determined to try and try again. The Christian must be equally resolute and on constant guard remembering to "Just say no." Every time he is invited to compromise by meeting halfway in the plains of spiritual Ono, he must reply, "Oh no! I will not come. I will not be diverted from my God-given task of rebuilding the walls of my spiritual Jerusalem."

Coping with Depression

Lift Your Drooping Hands

"Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees."—Hebrews 12:12 (RSV)

Thomas Gilbert

To some it may seem odd that a Christian magazine would need to devote space in its pages to the subject of depression. After all, should not those who believe that Jesus Christ has purchased for them eternal salvation from sin and its penalty—death—be among the most joyous people in the world? Should not an upbeat attitude and frame of mind characterize those who believe that "if God is for us, who is against us?"

Yes, Christians should be joyous and upbeat. But like all "shoulds," this is not always the case. As members of the human race, believers in Jesus Christ, and the salvation he obtained through his sacrificial death, are subject to all the maladies of the human race. Despite their special position with the heavenly Father, Christians experience the same weaknesses as the rest of mankind. The scriptures testify of this: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man" (1Cor. 10:13). While this apparent lack of protection from sickness, sorrow, and pain may seem odd to some, scriptures indicate that God has a purpose in allowing his people to experience these things—that they may develop sympathy with those around them and be prepared through personal experience to assist Jesus in cleansing sin and sickness from the world during his Messianic kingdom.

Depression Widespread

Depressive illness, or depression, is a relatively widespread affliction of the human race and Christians experience it too. About 8 percent of American men and 15 percent of American women will suffer from depression at some point in their lives. If a person experiences an episode of depression once, there is a 50 percent chance of their being depressed again. If depression recurs, there is about a 75 percent chance it will return for a third bout. Another form of depression is not episodic but long-lasting and chronic. (This is one of the experiences that the Lord has permitted me to have, and now I count it all joy—most of the time.) Depression can be very serious. At the very least, depression will rob a person of any continuing sense of joy in life. At its worst, depression results in the loss of life itself through suicide.

Characteristics of Depression

Depression is characterized by feelings of sadness, worthlessness, and the utter hopelessness that things will ever improve. It is also characterized by inactivity, because the depressed person believes he or she has no control over the circumstances of his or

her life. Other symptoms which may accompany and indicate depression include poor appetite or overeating, insomnia or oversleeping, low energy or fatigue, low self-esteem, poor concentration or difficulty making decisions, and recurrent thoughts of death.

The number of people suffering from depression seems to be increasing. Partly this is because there is a growing awareness of it, better diagnosis by professionals, and a lessening of the stigma once associated with having mental and emotional problems. Another part may be the fact that social and economic realities, such as the breakdown of the family, the decline of spiritual values in the face of growing materialism, and the intense competition in the job market have created an atmosphere that increasingly breeds negative, depressive responses in our lives.

Have you ever experienced depression? Are you now suffering from depression, or think you may be? If so, have you found a way to effectively cope with your experience of depression or do you just endure it, regarding it simply as your "lot" in life? There are ways to help one cope with, or treat, depression, although only about 30 percent of those who experience depression seek treatment.

Treating Depression

The two major forms of treatment used today relate to the two prevalent beliefs about the causes of depression:

1) Depression is a result of bad, unsound, or irrational patterns of thinking. The interpretations and conclusions a person makes about himself and his situations in relation to others and the world around him become distorted. Distortion results from not taking into account all of the facts or looking honestly at the facts. This type of thinking over a period of time can become habitual and ingrained in their personality; it can be very hard to break or change.

A person can unconsciously pick up, or assimilate, such patterns from people with whom they live or work. In Proverbs 22:24-25 we read: "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself."

Treatment used for correcting this possible cause is called cognitive therapy, or therapy for the way we think. It helps the depressed person explore the patterns of thinking that lead to the interpretations and conclusions and the accompanying feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. This can be accomplished through diligent personal efforts ("self-help") or through professional counseling (talk therapy).

2) Depression may also be due to a chemical deficiency or imbalance in the brain that results in some type of interference with the thinking process. The analysis of information and other stimuli is in some way inhibited and irrational interpretations and conclusions are the outcome. Treatment based on this theory or cause consists of medication to affect

the level, or available level, of chemical neurotransmitters in the brain, particularly serotonin. These medications are known collectively as anti-depressants.

Scriptural Counsel

The first method of treatment—paying close attention to our patterns of thinking about ourselves, others, and the circumstances and events around us—is clearly supported scripturally: "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Prov. 23:7 NAS). "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). "Finally, brethren, whatever is true . . . honorable . . . right . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things" (Phil. 4:8). "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Rom. 12:2, 3).

In understanding this last scripture, we need to realize that the renewing of our minds involves not just inserting new spiritual thought patterns but also removing and discarding old thoughts and thought patterns—those that are of the old human nature and do not serve the interests of the spirit-begotten new creature.

One method to help determine if we are thinking properly is to test our interpretations by imagining and examining alternative interpretations and conclusions. This can help us break out of unsound thought patterns, but it takes work and practice. With work, you will find that in any circumstance there are actually many possible or plausible interpretations of an event or situation. Which one best fits the facts? When we train ourselves to routinely examine several alternatives, our mind is not so likely to jump at and embrace the first interpretation that comes, especially one influenced by past thinking patterns.

Unsound Thinking Patterns

Professional counselors identify about ten categories of unsound thinking patterns that may be involved in producing depression. Here are a few of the major ones:

All-or-Nothing Thinking—This is the tendency to evaluate personal qualities or interpret events in extreme, black-or-white terms. All-or-nothing thinking forms the basis for perfectionism. It causes us to fear any mistake or imperfection; we will then see ourselves as complete failures, and we will feel inadequate and worthless. This way of evaluating things is unrealistic, because life is rarely completely one way or the other. For example, no one is absolutely brilliant or totally stupid.

Example: Because of timidity, you fail to speak in a situation where you believe a Christian viewpoint is needed. You later say to yourself, "I am a total failure as a Christian."

Over-generalization—In this pattern, a person concludes that an unpleasant thing that happened once will occur over and over again. The pain of rejection is generated almost entirely from over-generalization. Usually words like "never" or "always" occur in over-generalizations. When we use them or hear them, take note!

Example: You learn that Bro. and Sr. Hospitality have invited several other brethren to their home for dinner and fellowship next Sunday evening. Disappointed that you have not been invited, you conclude: "Nobody likes me. I never get invited to other brethren's homes." Depression sets in. Is the "never" statement true? In all likelihood it is not.

Mental Filter—Pick out a negative detail in any situation and dwell on it exclusively. Soon we will perceive the whole situation as negative. It is as if we are wearing a pair of eyeglasses with special lenses that filter out anything positive. All that we allow to enter our conscious mind is negative. It is a habit that can cause much needless anguish.

Example: You're at a convention and very much want to fellowship with a particular brother or sister. At every intermission and mealtime, by the time you find that person, he/she is already deeply involved in a conversation with someone else. Bitterly disappointed you conclude, "This is a depressing convention. I wish I had not come."

Scriptural example: Israel's loss of faith when they saw Pharaoh's army approaching them near the Red Sea. They focused on the negative, ignoring all the positive things the Lord had done for them (Exod. 14:9-14).

Discounting the Positive—This is our tendency to transform neutral or even positive experiences into negative ones. We do not just ignore positive experiences; we cleverly and swiftly turn them into the opposite. An everyday example of this is the way most of us handle compliments. We have been conditioned to automatically tell ourselves, "They are just being nice." With one swift thought we mentally discount the compliment. We do the same thing when we say, "Oh, it was really nothing." We may actually insult the person who gave the compliment because we are implying that they are incorrect—what they were complimenting us for really did not deserve a compliment. Discounting the positive is a very destructive pattern of thinking—we search like scientists to find evidence to prove our hypothesis that we are second-rate, inferior. Whenever we have an experience that we interpret as negative, we dwell on it and conclude, "That proves what I've known about myself all along." Whenever we interpret an experience as positive, we tell ourselves, "That was a fluke; it doesn't count." The price we pay for this pattern of thinking is intense misery and an inability to appreciate the good things that happen, the good in ourselves, and the good in others.

Jumping to Conclusions—We arbitrarily jump to a negative conclusion that is not justified by the facts of the situation.

Example: Your spouse is unresponsive to your attempts at conversation one evening. Your heart sinks because of the way you interpret the silence: "He/she must be mad at me for something I did or didn't do." In the best of relationships this is sometimes true, but in this case you are unaware that he/she was severely criticized at work and is too upset to want to talk about it or anything else.

Example: You are convinced that you will not have a blessed experience attending a certain convention because not one of the speakers is among your favorites. In fact, you have not even heard of two of the speakers before. Unfortunately, this is a situation in which you can predict a negative outcome and be in a good position to ensure that the outcome is indeed negative (self-fulfilling prophecy).

"Should" Statements—We try to motivate ourselves by saying, "I should do this." These statements to ourselves cause us to feel pressured and resentful. Paradoxically, we end up feeling apathetic and unmotivated. "Should" statements generate a lot of emotional turmoil in our daily lives. When the reality of our own behavior falls short of our standards, our "shoulds" and "should nots" create self-loathing, shame, and excessive guilt. When the performance of other people falls short of our expectations, we will feel bitter and self-righteous. We will either have to change our expectations to approximate reality, or always feel let down by human behavior.

Examples: "I should be on time for meeting." "He should have been able to answer that basic question."

Labeling and Mislabeled—Personal labeling means creating a completely negative image based on our or another person's errors. It is an extreme form of generalization. There is a good chance we are involved in personal labeling whenever we describe our mistakes with sentences beginning with "I am a . . .", or describe others' mistakes with sentences beginning with "He/She is a . . ." Labeling ourselves or others is not only self-defeating or disrespectful, it is irrational. We and others cannot be equated with any one thing we/they do. When we label ourselves or others based on perceived inadequacies, we create a lot of personal pain or hostility toward others. In mislabeling, we often use words that are inaccurate and emotionally loaded.

Examples: "She's a subscriber to The Herald." "He attends a Dawn class."

Scriptural example: "And Nathanael said to him, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see'" (John 1:46).

Personalization—We assume responsibility for a negative event or situation even when there is no basis for doing so. We conclude that what happened was our fault. Personalization causes us to feel crippling guilt.

Scriptural example: Jesus took no responsibility for the failure of the Jews to respond to his preaching and recognize him as Messiah.

Working to undo unsound, negative thinking patterns will help one find more joy in life, especially the Christian life. We will discover an ability to more deeply appreciate ourselves and others around us, especially our spiritual family. It really is a matter of attitude. One time I believe God spoke to me through a fortune cookie at a critical point in my life. (It was the only worthwhile "fortune" I have ever found in a cookie.) It said, "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Professional Counseling

Sometimes our best personal efforts to "renew our minds"—to make these adjustments in our thinking—yield little progress. In that case, consideration might be given to utilizing the assistance of a professional counselor. No professional counselor or therapist worthy of their title will try to undermine your foundation values in trying to help you find solutions. Even so, always remember who is in charge of the treatment—you. Be firm in explaining your values and perspectives to the counselor if a comment or suggestion seems to be in some way contrary to those.

Sometimes cognitive therapy alone, even with a professional counselor, does not bring significant improvement to or relief from the depression. (That has been my personal experience.) In that case the counselor may suggest a trial period of anti-depressant medication to see if additional benefits can be obtained. This, again, is your personal decision. No one can or should make it for you. Realize, however, a person may need trials with several anti-depressants before the right match is found.

Coping with Hardships

He Addeth No Sorrow

*"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."—
Proverbs 10:22*

Carl Hagensick

Christians testify of many blessings received from the Lord. They know the rich joys of a spirit-filled life. They have the closeness of constant prayer communion with a heavenly Father. The partnership and strength of an elder brother is always near. The fellowship of kindred minds is a constant joy. The knowledge of divine overruling of all of life's affairs brings inestimable peace. Yes, their lives are rich indeed.

Yet, Christian lives are not without sorrows. They are not exempt from the full range of troubles fellow humans receive. They sometimes experience hard chastening from a strict Father. They know the bitterness of loss and the sting of trials. After all, they follow a Master who was "acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).

How, then, can it be said that their blessings are not touched with sorrow? It cannot be thus said; nor is it that which is implied in our theme text. This scripture does not read, "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and contains no sorrow." Rather it says that the Lord "addeth" no sorrow. Sorrows are there. They are endemic in certain experiences. But the Lord does not add unnecessary sorrow to the experience.

Pre-Cut Stones

Christian experiences are tailor-made. Christians are being developed for a specific role in God's plan and each event in their lives is given with that in mind. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of" (Matt. 6:8).

The Apostle Peter likens the Christian to a "lively stone" in a spiritual temple of God (1 Peter 2:5). Of the first temple of Israel we read: "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7).

Rough stones were not even brought to the temple site. So accurate were the architect's blueprints that each stone could be individually prepared for its specific place while yet in the quarry. So perfectly did they fit that they could be slid into place without even needing to be tamped by a hammer.

The trials of life chisel each member of the body of Christ. Each hardship endured produces a more precise shaping of character. None are by accident; all are planned for

developing the spiritual man. As a wise follower of the Master once remarked, "your trials are worth millions, do not waste one of them."

Inside the front cover of this journal appears a section entitled, "To Us the Scriptures Clearly Teach." The first two paragraphs of this item are appropriate to our discussion:

"To us the Scriptures clearly teach that the church is the 'temple of the living God'—peculiarly 'his workmanship'; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel age—ever since Christ became the world's Redeemer and the Chief Corner Stone of this temple, through which, when finished, God's blessings shall come 'to all people' and they find access to him (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29).

"That meantime the chiseling, shaping, and polishing of consecrated believers in Christ's atonement for sin progresses and when the last of these 'living stones,' 'elect and precious,' shall have been made ready, the Great Master Workman will bring all together in the First Resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium (1 Peter 2:4-9; Rev. 20:4, 6)."

The Function of Trials

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). The phrase "a far more exceeding" is worthy of careful examination. In the Greek text it is *kath hyperboleén eis hyperboleén*. The repeated word is the one from which we derive our English word "hyperbole." Literally the four words could be translated "from exceeding excellence to exceeding excellence." It denotes progression. One stage of glory is transformed into another stage of glory.

The apostle uses a similar expression in the last verse of the preceding chapter, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

This text implies a progression which may take many steps. In a sermon entitled *Love of the Father and the Son Our Pattern*, Pastor C. T. Russell said the following: "The apostle says that by looking on Jesus we are changed, we are transformed from glory to glory in the present life. As we thus go from one stage of heart development to another, from one step of glory to another, on this side of the veil, we are making the necessary progress, and we will be ready for the great final step, the final stage, when we shall see him as he is and share his glory" (R5727).

By realizing the function of these trials in the Christian life, one is able to rejoice while enduring them. They carry no additional sorrow other than that necessary for the proper chiseling, shaping, and polishing. They "make rich" in their preparing one for a glory that is not temporal but eternal.

Each trial accomplishes its purpose and strengthens the recipient for the ones that follow. This is much as a weight lifter finds his muscles made stronger for lifting ever heavier

weights by working diligently with the lighter ones. Thus the intensity of trials may increase, but they are able to be borne by reason of the easier ones which preceded them.

This constant practice eventually makes even the heaviest of experiences a relatively "light affliction." In view of this, we can appreciate the Master's words in Matthew 11:29, 30: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The Purpose of Trials

While the function of trials is to develop and perfect the character, their purpose is to prepare the recipient for a future work. This work is described in the Bible as being one in close association with Jesus himself: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1John 3:2). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2Tim. 2:12). "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

If the church is to reign with Christ, there must be subjects over which to reign. These subjects are to be those living on the earth. "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10).

Their work is described above as not only that of a king, or lawmaker, but as that of a priest. It is a "royal priesthood," a priesthood "after the order of Melchisedek," who was both a king and a priest (1 Peter 2:9; Heb. 5:10).

The priest in ancient Israel was an intermediary between God and man. This "royal priesthood" is to be a sympathetic priesthood. Like their Master, they are to be "touched" with a feeling of the infirmities of others (Heb. 4:15).

It is the plan of God that all men who have ever lived will come back to life on this earth (John 5:28, 29). These will return with the same character and thoughts they took into the grave and they will need to learn righteousness by proceeding up a "highway of holiness" (Isa. 35:8-10). Guides will be needed along the way to direct their footsteps. This will be the future role of the followers of Christ.

These will need to understand both the demands of a holy God and the needs of man. They will need to have the experience of temptation in order to "succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). They must learn the privations of hardship to comprehend others so deprived. To offer true sympathy to a world plagued by disease, they must feel the pangs of sickness. This is the blessed lot of the church of Christ.

If viewed from this perspective, all hardships—physical, financial, or emotional—are seen in a rosier light. No longer are they severe trials to weigh one down but they become challenges to be overcome. They become part of the subject matter in the "school of

Christ" and are now a portion of the blessed sharing which all the Lord's followers desire to share with him. Joint heirship with Christ is not merely sharing his glory but also sharing his sufferings (Rom. 8:17).

Controlled Experiences

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

In this text there are three assurances of assistance in coping with our trials. The first one we have already examined. All of our trials are common to humanity. Therefore it is to our advantage to have the same experiences as they, so that we can be of assistance to them in their future schooling, learning the lessons therefrom. In order to do this, it is incumbent that we learn the lesson from each of our trying experiences in our present walk

Second, the text gives the explicit assurance that any trial received is no more difficult than we are able to bear. Does your cross seem especially heavy? Take heart, it shows that the Father has evaluated your ability as being sufficient to bear up under it. This assurance is not a prideful self-confidence but faith grasping tight hold on the reality that we "can do all things through Christ" who has promised to strengthen us (Phil. 4:13).

Third, he has promised "a way of escape." This is not a way to avoid the trial, for the apostle says its purpose is "that ye may be able to bear it." The New International Version phrases it thus: "But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." Consider the lowly oyster. Once a grain of sand enters its shell and begins to irritate, the oyster does not exercise its muscles to expel the irritant. Rather it coats it with layer upon layer of fluid, transforming the grain of sand into a beautiful pearl. So with the Christian's trials, they must be treasured and coated over and over again with the holy spirit until they are transformed into beautiful pearl-like elements of character.

The adage is true that "God's wisdom will not lead us where his grace cannot keep us." As one commentator has phrased it, "There is no valley so dark but he can find a way through it, no affliction so grievous but he can prevent, or remove, or enable us to support it, and in the end overrule it to our advantage." It reminds us of the familiar words in the shepherd Psalm, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psa. 23:4).

Consider Job

Job was a man who endured great hardships. These were of the Adversary. Yet they were controlled. When petitioned by the Adversary, "the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job 1:12). Even when permitted to further try Job, the Lord laid down this restriction, "but save his life" (2:6). "Thus far and no further" is the constant assurance we have. The Lord will not permit greater experiences than needed—"he addeth no sorrow."

But while the trial was measured, so was its removal. Not until the lesson was fully learned did God take away the hardships that afflicted this suffering soul. After hearing God lecture on the lowliness of human reasoning when compared with his own (chapters 38 and 39), Job humbly responds, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" (40:4, 5).

Still the experience was not removed. For two more chapters, God continues to lecture his servant. Only then does Job fully repent, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:5, 6). "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before" (42:10).

Herein lies the lesson for the Christian. Only when the lesson from an experience is fully learned and applied may it be lifted. Often this may last until the end of one's life, not because of unfaithfulness in learning the intended lesson but to fully qualify the Christian who is enduring such trials to sympathize with those of the world with similar experiences that continue until death.

The conclusion of the matter seems well summarized in James 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

It is a blessed truth to fully know that whatever trials may come they are enriching blessings, and we can be sure that God will not "add any [superfluous] sorrow with it."

Coping with Death

Sorrowing Not as Others

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."—1 Thessalonians 4:13

Testimonies of Bereavement

Sorrow and grief are natural reactions. No place are they more present than in the house of death. The Apostle Paul's point in the theme text is not that the Christian does not sorrow but that his sorrow is softened by the hopes which he has. The three testimonies which appear below are in response to the question, "How are you coping with the pains of losing your loved one?"

Richard and Carol Tennant

Timothy J. Tennant, the son of Richard and Carol Tennant, died as a result of injuries in a car accident on April 22, 1990. Their testimony follows:

"Tim arrived at the hospital with internal bleeding and a broken leg. The doctor indicated they were going to operate to locate the bleeding and another doctor would set his leg. Much time passed and several updates of Tim's condition were provided. During this time we phoned the class, as it was a Sunday morning, asked for their prayers, and continually prayed that the Lord's will would be done within ourselves. When the nurse asked to speak with us alone, we were concerned but never expected to hear that Tim had passed away. We went into shock but Shelly [Tim's sister] went into hysterics. Tim's grandparents, Joe and Hazel Stratton, were also in shock. We were all a very close family and losing one of the members was like taking half of each of us away. Although nothing could have been more devastating or tried our faith further, we never questioned God allowing this to happen. We prayed the Lord's will to be done and had to accept the outcome.

"When arriving home from the hospital, we found Bro. John Hummel and Bro. Dale Marzewski waiting at the door. What comfort the Metropolitan class and all the brethren were at such a difficult time. Prayers, cards, phone calls, and personal visits were not only appreciated and felt but were treasured and made life livable. Through these prayers we received much comfort, peace, and strength from our heavenly Father and dear Lord Jesus.

"The scripture in 1 Peter 4:12, 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you' became a reality. All Reprint articles on this scripture were read and became part of our rock. Additionally, the six volumes were reread and new insights and drawings to God's plan were received.

Through this trial we drew closer to God and became dependent upon him and his grace. Our love and faith for God and Jesus became a priority.

"We received the booklet, *This Thing is from Me*, from Nancy Hummel. This proved to be a very big blessing, as it was read many times and provided much comfort.

"Because of our memories of attending the Metropolitan Detroit class together as a family, it was far too difficult to continue to do so. Bro. Charles, Sr. Barbara Thornton and Sr. Hazel Stratton visited our home for study every Sunday. This proved to be a big blessing and was certainly part of our healing process. Additionally, starting in the fall of that year we attended the Jackson convention and several others in the years to come. In the beginning we did not expect to be able to stay an hour at our first convention but did so and returned the next day for the entire day. Through God's grace we received many blessings from the discourses and much comfort from the brethren. We met many that indicated they had been praying for us, and we felt every one of their prayers.

"We rejoice in our heavenly Father's beautiful plan and many scriptures have given us much peace, hope, and comfort.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). This scripture gave us the strength to continue our walk, realizing God would not give us more than we could bear.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). We know that trials increase our faith.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). It is comforting to know our precious Tim will not go through the time of trouble.

"Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10). We realized that with affliction came peace.

"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). This scripture was given to Sr. Carol at her baptism and we claimed this scripture, receiving much peace."

Tom and Nancy Machacek

Jim Machacek, the son of Tom and Nancy, was a popular high school student who was killed in a tragic auto accident on December 7, 1990. The testimony of Tom and Nancy follows:

"One of the greatest privileges with which humankind has been blessed is that of becoming a parent. None of the angels possesses this capability. Although the animal kingdom living upon the earth can reproduce, that deep appreciation which a human has for life as coming forth from the Creator is absent.

"In his wisdom, the heavenly Father permits us to bring life into the world, to nurture that life, to help the little one grow not only in physical matters but also to develop the mind, especially esteeming God, his plan, and his people. Considering the number of children who have lived upon the earth, God probably values the role of parent more than we can imagine. There have been many joys for him, and many disappointments. While we as human parents experience the ups and downs of raising children, we look to our Father's example. How did he express himself to the obedient and disobedient alike? How do we?

"With the birth of a child, the parent's heart is full of love, thanksgiving, plans for the future. There are always the testing and skills which both the parent and child must gain—the thrills of growing from an infant into a toddler, an adolescent, a young adult. In the years ahead, that cherished newborn will become an adult and will repeat the process of raising his or her own children. And we know that until Adam's sin no longer rests upon the human race, death will be the end of life, awaiting the resurrection.

"More often than anyone would want to know, the life cycle is interrupted. As it has been said many times, it is unnatural for a parent to outlive his or her child, or for a grandparent to survive a grandchild. Countless times throughout the world this has occurred for generations. How did Adam and Eve react to the death of Abel? His was the first human death. What a hard lesson for these two, who had known God, to experience! Theirs was the gift of life. It is death that is unnatural. How difficult it must have been for our first parents to look upon the lifeless body of their dear son. Nothing has changed since the days of Adam and Eve, and the effect on the heart with the loss of a loved one to death is the same.

"In the 1980's we left our church. The emphasis of social responsibilities rather than the study of the word of God influenced us strongly. For a couple of years a minister served our congregation who proclaimed quite a bit of truth, as our limited understanding could comprehend. He was dismissed. Our disappointment led us to the Bible Students through a previous association with a family who are consecrated to the Lord. Although growth has been slow in the knowledge of the truth, it has been the delight of our hearts.

"We have been asked upon what did we depend in the loss of our son Jim. How did we cope? How did we manage? How did we deal with such a shock? In a word—the Lord. Everything is possible with him and nothing is possible without him.

"At the Miami Valley convention in 1990, we heard the testimony of Sr. Carol and Bro. Richard Tennant regarding the death of their dear son in April of the same year. What an effect their words had upon us! One of the most trying experiences a parent could have—and here they were, an inspiration to those listening! (The Lord wisely applies preparations for all who endeavor to serve him and to know his will).

"Jim died on December 7, 1990. He was 17 years old. It has been a little more than five and a half years since he has not been with us. The mention of time is important because as we grow in maturity, both as humans and as new creatures, the perspective changes. The one thing that has never changed is our peace, our rest, in God and his plan!

"That Friday night we knew something extremely serious occurred to Jim. His failure to telephone or to return home from a basketball game by the promised time was highly unusual, he was always dependable in these situations. We contacted the police and reported the facts. We did what we could to investigate on our own. We prayed. When the police notified us that they were coming to our house, we prayed again, sincerely desiring to accept the will of God. Finally, a police officer, who had coached Jim in tennis, arrived with a representative from the coroner's office. It was probably more difficult for them to tell us our son was dead than it was for us to hear it because of our trust in the Lord. In the days and months which followed, we greatly appreciated the Lord's leading, his words of comfort, the brethren. We were heart-touched that Jim's friends continued to remember him and us. When anyone confronts such a rending situation, nothing is as it seems and the tenderness, encouragement, willingness to listen to the grieving ones are greatly valued.

"As the scripture says, the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). There are two Manna comments which encourage us to trust God even when we cannot trace him, based on the development of our faith in him (Daily Heavenly Manna, September 4 and November 12). The prayers of the brethren were, and still are, greatly valued. Many of our associations, who do not know the Lord as we do, prayed for us. And we are thankful for their interest.

"A variety of trials followed. Some of them were not exclusively related to Jim's death and some were. Some people had good intentions but the results were harsh for us. Looking upon those who desired to do good, but actually had the opposite effect, the eye of love could intervene and remove the sting from our hearts—although that view developed over time. During that period, we knew that, above all, we could depend on the Lord. Recently a brother stated during a discourse that even when we do not understand the reason the Lord takes us in a direction, we must have confidence in him and willingly follow. Do we practice "blind faith?" No! (Heb. 11:1, Diaglott). Would he who loves us desire anything but that which is right for us? No! (James 1:7). Are we alone in our walk? No! (Psa. 73:23-26; Isa. 43:3).

"A comment concerning character seems important. Oftentimes when someone dies, he or she is suddenly a "saint," regardless of past behavior. It is necessary to remember that our loved ones were just human. There is an encouragement which we have held close to our hearts. From various sources, throughout his life, we were repeatedly told of "that good kid." Jim had some difficulties growing up. But he learned to get along with others, to overcome the learning problems, to maintain the focus of a goal, to pursue that success of which he was capable. We shared a wonderful relationship. Jim knew that he was loved and he was a very expressive, loving son to us. While Jim did not accept the truth

for himself, he was respectful for the Lord and the brethren, helpful when he saw the need, participating when asked. We miss him greatly. But we are at peace.

"The concept of time presents itself again. Since that day when we knew that something very seriously wrong had occurred, we can only say with more conviction that the Lord overruled for the good of our individual new creature. One dear sister who was very sick acknowledged before her death that she must require her trial of illness. What an example for us! Well, we must have needed this trial and all the events which it introduced into our lives. In the future, how can all humanity be developed in the kingdom of righteousness except by a sympathetic priesthood? How did our Lord, our head, look upon the masses of people who came to him? He came to serve the will of God and his vitality went out from him (Isa. 53:4; Luke 6:19; The Divine Plan of the Ages, p. 230). Did the heavenly Father abandon mankind to the despair of sin and death? In his wisdom, justice, love, and power, the Creator prepared a means to bring the race out of this state of degradation, to restore what was lost in Adam's fall. The cost of the sacrifice of the life—the death—of his beloved son. The process by which God's plan is achieving its fulfillment has taken over 6000 years for mankind. What have we to gain in the few years, perhaps decades, of consecrated life under the tutelage of the Master? Eternal life! (Titus 3:1-7).

"During the last few months, two other dear young people we have known have died. Their parents walk with the Lord. There is much that is tucked away in memory which was revived with their deaths. It is not our immediate experience, but we are joined with them in theirs. While we know that our loved ones are asleep in death until they awaken in the resurrection, which is a comfort, how do the parents address each day when their hearts are breaking? Our hearts break with theirs. We know the coldness of the mask of death upon our loved ones. But now we know what it is to lack the words to ease their deep distress. Others reached out to console us in our loss. We should have an understanding better than others who have not lost a child of the proper words and encouragement. This experience is perhaps guiding us out of self and toward service for the Lord. We needed this one, too.

"Let us never undervalue the power of prayer. It is an exercise which keeps us in contact with the Lord at all times. We received some of the most wonderful assistance from the brethren through the unity of the spirit. Praying for, serving the brethren, is our privilege: it is as if serving our Lord! While none of us know what tomorrow will bring, we are confident that the Lord will be with us. Life under the Adamic curse is not really life as it was intended to be by the Creator of the universe. Let us persevere, fulfilling our consecration vows, knowing that the "day" will surely revive our loved ones and all mankind from the dead in the blessed mediatorial kingdom and, if faithful, to truly live throughout the ages to come."

A. Hazel McClellan

Bro. Robert McClellan collapsed and died suddenly at the school where he was a teacher. The following testimony is from his widow, Sr. A. Hazel McClellan.

"How do I cope with widowhood?"

"I start the morning with the *Morning Resolve*.

Then:

*To follow where an unseen Captain leads,
To heed commands unheard by mortal ear,
To battle with a known, yet unseen, foe—
Ah! This Faith.*

*To fix your eyes on that "within the veil,"
Your heart's devotion set on things above,
To wait with patience until God calls you home—
Faith's victory won!*

Psalms 91:4, "Under his wings I take refuge," and verses 11, 12, and 15 are a comfort and a solace to me.

"Letters to write and to answer, studies to meditate upon—both personal and with brethren (Heb. 10:25)—are a big help. I have been able to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. There have been letters—especially from widows like myself—in which I have both received and given encouragement. By attending as many conventions as I can lay up savings for and both by driving my own car (picking up others with the same goal in Christ) and flying with a group of brethren to such places as the International Convention, Israel, Greece, Turkey, and Egypt has given me the accompaniment of saints.

"Tracting has been my joy; to dispense the truth upon whomever that witness falls. I look forward to join with other brethren at fair booths when the occasion arises. I make individual telephone calls to help the younger babes in the truth. These encourage me to use the redeemed time more profitably for the Lord.

"I appreciate the home where I have been allowed to remain. Here I have physical responsibilities, such as attending a small garden out back which supports my table. Having the dear brethren in my home, to provide nourishment and rest for the evenings when conventions arise, and then having their warm hospitality of heart to share with me while we talk by the fireside—in all of these ways the Lord has been so good to me!

"Yet all that I have said above does not annul the flesh that I live in (this old clay pot) from having feelings of deeply missing the one who sat in that front room arm chair resting his weary eyes, worn down by teaching all day. His loving, caring, smiling face, and his arms which held me in their nest each day, have been sincerely missed and I long to meet him on the other side. The anchor I am attached to beyond the veil, has been tugging at my heart, longing to meet him once more, but in that promised new immortal nature above."

Coping with Peer Pressure

Christian Conformity

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."—Philippians 3:10

Homer Montague

The concept of conformity has the thought of being submissive to or complying with an accepted standard or pattern. It is the heavenly Father's will to have a divine family with Christ Jesus as its head and 144,000 individuals redeemed from amongst mankind who ultimately will receive glory, honor, and immortality. The specifications of this class are found in Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Believers in Christ have appreciated the scriptural testimony that the path to such a lofty reward involves a process of self-denial, cross-bearing, and following in the Master's footsteps. The Apostle Paul in this connection states, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2).

A key to the successful completion of this course is the submission of ourselves to the doing of the heavenly Father's will. The holy spirit's influence, as revealed through the study of God's word, will guide us into all truth, and when applied faithfully in our lives, will yield a righteous character.

To the extent that, as Christians, we are becoming conformed more and more to the will of God, the sanctifying influence of the truth will enable us to progress spiritually. However, sometimes there can be pressures both from within the ecclesia and from the world outside to have our behavior or beliefs conform to standards which do not necessarily represent what we understand to be God's will for us or what we believe are scriptural teachings on a given matter. Since each Christian must render an account of his stewardship to God (Rom. 14:12) and should not be guided entirely by what others may think, we must make the truth our own as we "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21), as did the noble Bereans of old (Acts 17:11).

Prejudice at Antioch

In considering influences toward conformity of thought or action within the ecclesia or by giving undue regard to how fellow believers might perceive us, a forceful lesson is brought to our minds in Galatians 2:11-21. The Apostle Paul recounts an occasion when it was necessary for him to rebuke the Apostle Peter who was probably considered by

many Jewish Christians as the chief apostle. When Peter first came to Antioch, he freely ate with Christian converts who formerly were gentiles. Subsequently a group of Jewish Christians came from Jerusalem for a visit. Apparently, they still held to various observances under the Mosaic law, and when they arrived, Peter ceased to fellowship with the gentile brethren for fear that news of his conduct would get back to Jerusalem. Additionally, Barnabas and others followed Peter's example. Peter well knew, in connection with the conversion of Cornelius, that God was not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34); and, therefore, he erred by refusing to eat with uncircumcised believers, implying that the Mosaic law afforded a higher level of sanctification than the righteousness of faith. Paul, appropriately, accused Peter of hypocrisy by pointing out that Jewish Christians had a new standing on the basis of faith in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and that they were dead to the law. Accordingly, since the law could not justify anyone, gentiles should not be placed under it.

If a spirit-begotten pillar of the church, such as Peter, could wrongfully succumb to the influence of an improper belief held by some of his Jewish brethren, could we not be vulnerable today to the opinions of others within the church?

The ecclesia is a very special arrangement which our heavenly Father has provided so that we might be nurtured and developed as we seek to make our calling and election sure. In our mutual studies, we should consider not only the factual content of what we are studying, but also the spirit behind the message.

We read, for example, in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." In all of our interactions with one another, that is surely a scripture to be kept in the forefront of our minds. Yet, because we have this treasure of the new creature in an earthen vessel, and because we are eager and zealous to serve the Lord, it is quite apparent that at times we will find that there are opportunities for friction when we may express ourselves differently from another individual in our class. Let us conscientiously strive to look at one another not from outward appearances according to the flesh but let us believe and act upon the knowledge that just as God has called us so he has found other jewels who are struggling with their flesh as we are; and we should focus upon those things which bind us together in the spirit of love.

Christian Liberty

The matter of Christian liberty with regard to those items of truth which are not supported by a "thus saith the Lord" is to be recognized. It is not a matter of mere conjecture that each of us should engage in, but if indeed we have a scripture to prove what we have to say, that should be the end of all controversy. If there is a thought given that is not in harmony with the way in which we believe it should be expressed, then we should be free to speak to our brethren and discuss it in love until such a time as the heavenly Father designs to clarify the matter for one or the other. In any event, force should not be used to attain conformity of thought but, as the Bible declares, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5).

From earliest New Testament times, congregations of the Lord's people were established in various locations. The scriptures give rules for the setting up of these units (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Those who serve, be they elders, deacons, or whatever, are elevated to positions of service by the vote of the ecclesia. As such, it places the congregation as a higher authority; should the judgment of the class with regard to certain policies or practices differ from that of the elder, the elder should submit to the will of the class where it is just a matter of ecclesia preference, as opposed to doctrinal matters, moral issues, or violating one's conscience. On the other hand, however, in keeping with the responsibility of selecting elders in whom they have confidence, and recognizing that the Lord has overruled so that by the vote of the congregation a specific individual was chosen, it would be the obligation of the class to support and encourage the elder in proportion as they note his striving to know and to do the Lord's will in a faithful manner. Should it subsequently be determined that an error in judgment was made on the part of the class in their selection, such a matter should be rectified at a subsequent ecclesia election. Party Spirit

Party spirit among the fellow members of Christ's body should be striven against. We read in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

The concept of division among the people of God should be of concern, especially if there are pressures exerted to hinder opportunities for fellowship with other believers that we consider to be spirit begotten. Loyalty to, and support of, one's ecclesia should be expected, but efforts to prevent the exercise of one's liberty to attend a large gathering of brethren not of our immediate fellowship would be improper. There are, of course, very legitimate reasons why a physical separation among the Lord's people is sometimes necessary. Nevertheless, to the extent that we recognize one another as brethren in the body of Christ, there should be no manifestation of a party spirit. If we create man-made barriers which are not scripturally authorized and believe some brethren are unworthy of our fellowship because of minor differences, then there is a possibility of exercising a party spirit which is contrary to the doctrine of the unity of the body.

Creating Idols

Closely allied with the foregoing is the possibility of creating idols of our leaders in the ministry. Revelation 19:10 reads: "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said, unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

It has been suggested that the Apostle John in this context is representing the faithful members of the body of Christ, especially at the end of the Gospel age. Carrying this

thought further, we would be admonished not to worship angels or messengers who would be instrumental in nourishing us with God's truth. There is a tendency or danger to worship the creature rather than the Creator who uses human instrumentalities in his service. We should appreciate the faithful efforts of all who are engaged in the Lord's service but we should not place them as idols of worship. This same thought seems to be found in the words of the Apostle Paul, as we read in Colossians 2:18: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind." The giving of undue homage to those who serve is an improper spirit of which we should be aware, and we should not promote such an attitude even though we should recognize and acknowledge all who are faithfully ministering in God's service.

Pressures from the World

Concerning pressures which may come from the world in conformity to its standards, there are many influences which would be pleasing to our flesh. It is for this reason that we read: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2,3). Many activities that are not sinful are pleasing to the flesh relating to culture, recreation, and hobbies. An appreciation of Christian liberty reminds us that unlike certain prohibitions which were given to the nation of Israel under the law covenant we do not find many "thou shalt nots" in the New Testament as they relate to the conduct of believers. Thus we desire to fulfill in our hearts the spirit of the law of love and the law of righteousness. Although Christian liberty does not allow any of us to make a set of rules for one another, it also does not mean we are free to do as we please without repercussions. Thus, it is essential that we seek scriptural guidelines to help us determine the degree to which various experiences either gratify the flesh or comport with the spirit of sacrifice and consecrated living. If, upon individual scrutiny, we find that a particular activity is edifying, ennobling, and glorifies the heavenly Father, we should participate in it to the greatest extent possible. If, on the other hand, it does not appear to have spiritual value, we may desire to put even such a good thing on the altar of sacrifice.

Our Homes

Another possible area for our consideration deals with our dwelling places. Certainly all of the Lord's people are differently circumstanced and the financial resources of which we have been made stewards vary considerably. It is for each individual to seek God's guidance in this realm, as in every undertaking. We know for a fact however, in the world great stress is placed upon having a fashionable home. Most of us are probably aware of individuals who have mansions furnished with every possible convenience and yet, for some reason, have become dissatisfied, sold them, and purchased an even larger, more exclusive dwelling. We have probably heard of individuals who have bought a beautiful home and before moving into it have had the entire interior gutted and rebuilt at great expense.

Similar illustrations which could be given are probably endless, but we ask the question, "Could the Lord's people also be affected by an extraordinary concern for the appearance and size of their homes?" It is possible to rationalize that we must make extensive changes in our present abode, at the cost of great time and expense, because we want to accommodate visiting brethren in a comfortable manner. Do we enjoy frequently changing the furniture or other furnishings of the house every few years because we want a new look? No one is in a position to judge what another brother or sister may be doing along this line, but we may need to prayerfully commune with the Father for some time and inquire whether or not this is his will for us to do, and whether or not such involvement or activity will detract in any way from the covenant of sacrifice we have made.

In the Work Place

With regard to our jobs, some of us may find ourselves in very difficult, trying situations which bring considerable discomfort to our flesh. Sometimes an extremely favorable job opportunity might present itself, but it might require working a different schedule or at a distant location, the ultimate effect being a disruption of our spiritual fellowship. We might have to miss certain meetings now because of new working circumstances. How much we need to rely upon seeking the Lord's will before making any decision one way or the other! Is it not possible that the difficult condition to which the flesh was subjected was permitted because the Lord saw that we needed to have some experiences that would teach us patience and reliance upon him? Surely there could be extreme pressure to yield to the flesh in this matter.

On the other hand, a move could be the Lord's will, as it was when he sent Phillip to the desert to witness to the Ethiopian eunuch.

We would be well advised to consider the question as to how we might avoid any inclination toward compromising in seeking to be conformed to the will of God. The obvious answer is by remaining very close to the Lord.

Four Important Steps

The four important steps to resisting peer pressure are:

1. Engage in frequent personal study of God's word. Since we are committed to being footstep followers of the Master, it is essential that we find time to regularly search the scriptures for the purpose of seeking the Father's will and leadings in our lives and to become familiar with the scriptural principles which can be applied in our conduct. If God truly is first in our lives, we must arrange our schedules so that we can communicate with him and receive the strength which he desires to give us.
2. Support our ecclesia through regular attendance at the meetings. We are very familiar with the admonition to "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25), and we should appreciate the ecclesia arrangement as an important means of receiving

instruction from the heavenly Father. Such association with one another in this setting will facilitate, among other things, the kind of interaction which will allow the diverse contributions of one another to provide for the mutual strength and edification of all if we are rightly exercised. We are informed that "every joint supplieth" (Eph. 4:16), and as we meet with those of our immediate fellowship and other brethren as we have opportunity, we will be guarded against the spirit of self-exaltation.

3. Live a life of sacrifice. The greater the degree of our self-denial, the less exposed we will be towards a covetous spirit by which the adversary seeks to entrap us. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) are all obstacles which can and must be overcome through the influence of the holy spirit and obedience to the heavenly Father by striving to walk even as our Master walked.

4. Engage in frequent, focused prayer. If in the personal scrutiny of our lives we find that, contrary to God's word, we have erected some idol in our hearts, we can take comfort from such texts as 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Thus we see that it is our privilege to go to the throne of grace for cleansing and assistance with regard to those things that we do that are not pleasing to the Lord. Additionally, if we are very sensitive towards righteousness and pleasing God, even when we are not aware of some indiscretions, the prayer of our hearts will be such as is recorded in Psalm 19:13, 14: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

When we consider that we have been called to be part of the divine family, it should make us so revere God that we would do anything to please him, to honor him, and to sanctify his name. Truly, reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. 111:10).

Echoes from the Past

Every effort of Satan to *frustrate dad's plan boomerangs back upon himself!*

Satan Hath Desired You

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"-Luke 22:31

Excerpts from a 1913 Convention discourse in Springfield, Massachusetts by Walter Bundy

Not only did Satan desire Simon, but he desires all those who have entered into a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice. No doubt, since the awakening of the faithful overcomers, Satan has been especially solicitous to hinder further developments of God's plan. This attitude was doubtless promoted by jealousy and envy, realizing that others would obtain even greater blessings than those he forfeited.

But how blessed to know also that God desires us and has provided every possible means whereby we might attain the heavenly relationship. Surely it is not through any worthiness of our own but because of our relationship to Christ by his grace.

Jesus, our blessed Lord, also desires us to be his bride and is bringing to our lives the comforting assurance of his grace, the blessed promises of his word, and the holy direction of his spirit of love. By these means, with full submission to the divine will, we may eventually become fully and completely his.

Little does Satan realize how useful he is in God's plan. Every effort he makes to frustrate this plan serves as a boomerang back upon himself. I used to wonder if Satan could hear us when we talk about him, and if so if he understood the significance of our words, but I have learned that spiritual things are discerned only by those who have the spirit of Christ, and I am certain Satan has none of this. I fancy one of the bitterest disappointments in Satan's career will be the ultimate realization that everything he did to hinder God's plan was overruled for the furtherance of that very plan

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." There is a suggestion in this of utilizing our shortcomings and blunders for the help of othersOur failures, if we are truly penitent, can be overruled by producing in us a loving sympathy and consideration toward others who are similarly weak.

"I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Ah, that is the test, "that our faith fail not," and if there ever was need for faith in character development that time is now. Many of us have no difficulty in exercising faith in the plan of God, and have full assurance of God's truth and his wonderful word, but some of us are frequently overwhelmed with the thought that we can never expect to attain, that we are too weak to hope for these

blessings. While the Adversary thus insidiously hurls the dart of doubt, with it comes the thorn of discouragement, and, continuing in this attitude, we would be completely overwhelmed. One resolution I have made is this: No matter what the Father may see fit to give me, knowing that it will be better than I deserve, at all hazards I am determined to die fighting.

"Sift you as wheat." This is surely a sifting time and we need to be sober and careful and use every experience for the honor and glory of the Lord. At the very time of the utterance of these words the disciples, forgetful of the necessary humility, were agitating a question as respects their place in the kingdom. What a lesson this should be to us and what occasion we shall have for humility and full submission to the divine will . . .

Present tests reveal our weaknesses. Are we allowing earthly cares and obligations to choke out spiritual interests? May we not be sacrificing to others instead of to the Lord? Let us carefully consider the motive of our service. We fear that we often spend unnecessary time upon non-essentials. Also, we may magnify our own troubles, forgetful of others. In our effort to serve we may fail to develop the Mary spirit and learn more of him. Let us see to it that our love for the brethren is not a selfish love. Let us direct our heart-searching more carefully upon ourselves and less upon others.

News & Views

International Convention Highlights The eighth biennial International Convention of Bible Students was held on August 4-9 in Miskolc, Hungary. There were 935 people from 19 countries including 136 from the United States and Canada. Some were attending the International Convention for the first time; some had attended them all.

We asked those from North America who were there and who could receive electronic mail to send us a brief, memorable highlight that we could share with others. Not surprisingly, many different things were memorable from that blessed week.

Probably the greatest fear on the part of those who have never been to a convention like this is that they will be confused by all the languages during the fellowship period.

The highlight for me was the privilege I had each day of the convention to look into the eyes of older brothers and sisters from other lands and leaping over the language barrier seeing a connection in the love and experiences we share only by God's grace. *Dan Wesol*

I loved the three sisters who sat in front of us. They could not speak English and I can't speak Polish. I did not realize how close I could feel toward three sisters whose only communication with me was their smiles. I don't even know their names, but I'll never forget them, my neighbors every meeting of the entire convention. *Joy Kandel*

We appreciated the warmth and the joy of God's love received from and extended to brethren whom we had never seen and with whom we could not speak due to the language barrier. (*Vanatta Simon*) The young people who helped us communicate were truly outstanding and dedicated to the Lord. *Dick Simon*

It was wonderful to see the excitement for the truth among the eastern European brethren. You can see it in their faces and in their actions. The truth is well and very much alive in Eastern Europe. *Gretchen Griehs*

Singing is an important part of the convention. Because everyone sings in his own language, someone observed that the International Convention is the only place where you can sing the wrong verse and no-one will notice. There was also an opportunity to sing in various languages in the convention choir. It was so wonderful to hear the hymns sung in so many other languages. *Lois Austin*

My highlight was singing in the choir. It was very powerful. *Noemie Brychcy*

I especially enjoyed singing with the young people, whether in Polish or English. (Polish was a lot more difficult for me!) Singing was an undercurrent through the entire week for me. *Emily Kindig*

Sometimes in the outer courtyard brethren from a single country would get together and just sing.

I enjoyed the spontaneity of brethren from Romania and Moldova breaking forth to sing hymns together during the intermissions. One imagines their joy, so long repressed under Communism, now bursting forth as will the Hallelujah chorus from mankind in the age to come. *Bob Wilson*

My personal highlight was hearing the Romanian young people sing "Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this Place." *Paul Lagno*

Each morning there was one study session just for young people. Leaders from various countries who were fluent in English conducted the sessions. Translation into Romanian, French, and Polish was provided using the same FM-radio transmitter technology as the main auditorium. At least 150 young people were present at each session.

I appreciated Bro. Daniel Mlynek's youth study because it enthused me to study deeply in the scriptures and utilize my understanding of the scriptures through analysis, formulation, and synthesis, and the knowledge of older brethren. *Karen Earl*

Because of a concern that poorer brethren might feel compelled to contribute toward convention expenses, for the first time no contribution box was displayed. Projections indicated that the registration fee would be enough to pay for everything.

I noticed at a little distance an interchange between two sisters from generally poor countries. They paused briefly to greet each other and one was prompted in her heart to make an offer to the other of some assistance. However, as they did not speak the same language, the offer could not be understood. Noting the problem, the first sister opened her purse and showed some of her native currency, offering some to the other as a gift. When the second sister realized the others intent, she very graciously declined, but with much, much thanks for the generous spirit. Evidently both were from humble circumstances, and I could not help but think of our Lord's commendation of the poor widow throwing her two mites into the treasury for a noble cause. *David Rice*

Many of the European brethren *thought the* language barrier would be insurmountable. But of course *broadcasting the* languages *through headphones* and putting colored dots on badges solved most of the problems. This year there were many brethren who saw this *high technology* for the first time.

It was thrilling for me to see the excitement on the face of a near-by Romanian who put on his headset, tuned his radio, and heard what was being said in his own language. He immediately nudged his neighbor to do what he had done so that she could have the same thrill. *Florence Tabac*

We liked having the wonderful opportunity to meet so many brethren from so many parts of the world, of being together with the Romanian brethren, being able to hear everything in our own language, and Bro. Carl Hagensick's closing discourse. It made us realize the history of how we came to meet in that place, and God's love which we all felt. *Daniel and Lidia Bujor*

I have to say that Bro. Carl Hagensick's closing service had the longest lasting impact on me. I don't believe any other individual could have duplicated the kind of reaction it had on the brethren. *Sandy Koterba*

Each discourse is translated into English in advance and read over the *FM broadcasting system* as the speaker delivers his remarks. Sometimes it is surprising to see someone say in a foreign language what you have said in your own.

I was spiritually uplifted as I listened to Brother Ioan Neagomir. He quoted the saying, "Plant a thought, reap an act. Plant an act, reap a habit. Plant a habit, reap a character. Plant a character, reap a destiny." Just weeks before we shared this same thought with the young adults at the General Convention. Bob Goodman even prepared cards containing this saying together with references to the scriptures and reprints. Here was an evidence of the holy spirit speaking to us in the same language even though our fleshly language is different. *Wade Austin*

For the first time there were Lithuanian *brethren* at the convention.

One of the first countries we heard from after the Iron Curtain fell was Lithuania. For the first time we met three young sisters and one young brother from that country. The brother works for a radio station. Whenever there is an opening, he puts in a truth program to fill the gap. It was a joy to have the opportunity to talk with him. Other brethren in Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia are very active in spreading the message of the truth in spite of the little they have to work with. It is a wonderful example for us. They have so little and give so much. *Alpha Koterba*

It was wonderful to hear how much is being translated from English to Finnish, Russian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Romanian, Estonian, Ukrainian, and Bulgarian. The young brother from Lithuania has translated the first two volumes and is working on the third. He has reprinted the Lithuanian PhotoDrama. He has translated *For This Cause* and other videos into Lithuanian and has arranged to have them broadcast free. They also have a table in the city center where they can display literature-the closest thing in Europe to our fair/flea booths in the U.S. *Ruth Cunningham*

My personal highlight was meeting the brethren from Lithuania. While there are only about 40 brethren in the country, they had the vision to print 1000 copies of a newly translated Photo Drama of Creation. Already 250 have been placed through a table in the market place. It was inspiring to me to see how much can be done by so few. *Carl Hagensick*

Those with special assignments sometimes get special experiences.

When I got up to deliver my discourse, I looked out upon the sea of brethren gathered from all over the world. So many thoughts passed through my mind. I thought about those many brethren from Eastern Europe who were attending the convention for the first time. I thought about how much I would miss by not being here to meet my precious brethren. I thought about the brethren I see only every two years. I thought how fortunate I was to be there with the Lord's people. I thought about how much my consecration had been renewed since I have been attending the conventions and sharing experiences with those many brethren. At that moment, I pledged that I would never miss another convention, the Lord willing. Then I began to read. *Len Griehs*

The next convention is *scheduled for* August 9-14, 1998. There is a possibility that an English-only youth seminar may be organized for August 3-7. The location will *probably be Miskolc, Hungary*, unless a better site is found. If you have never *had the* experience of an International Convention, you might begin thinking about whether it would be the *Lord's* will for you to attend your first in 1998.

Michael Nekora