

Fourth Biennial International Convention of Bible Students

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Fourth Biennial International Bible Students Convention Program

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(France), Roman Rorata (Poland), Carl Hagensick (USA)

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To Timothy, My Dearly Beloved Son-Brother Michal Targosz,
Poland

**The Ministry of Those Who Have Been Called-Brother
Olivier Blecharz, France**

DEAR BROTHERS and sisters of our Lord and Savior Jesus
Christ!

I thank the Lord on this occasion to be able to participate in this
International Convention, in fellowship with all the brothers and
sisters who came from far and near, and to share the blessings
which have been promised by the Scriptures with you.

The words of the evangelist Matthew in chapter 28, verses 16 to
20, will be the source of our study.

THE MINISTRY OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

On the day of passover and the institution of the memorial of his death, our Lord, in the company of his disciples and after having sung a hymn, went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus informed his disciples that he was going to die and quoted the words of the prophet Zechariah in chapter 13:7: "Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." Thinking of his death and resurrection, he told them, "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." —Matt. 26:32

Three days later the angel at the sepulcher told the women that the Lord was risen as he had told them, and that they should go quickly to tell his disciples that he was risen from the dead. "And behold, he goeth before you into Galilee." (Matthew 28:7) The women ran to bring this good news to the disciples. We read in Matthew 28:16: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them."

The apostles had each been selected by our Lord in a special way. They had participated at the last passover and at the institution of the memorial of the death of the Lord. They were reunited at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and they were the mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit.

These were always with the Lord, had been witnesses of his miracles, his teachings, his sympathy, his prayers, his holiness and his own sacrifice unto death. Hence the Lord honored them by appearing to them after his resurrection.

The directives Jesus gave to the eleven apostles—and we will enlarge upon them later—apply equally to the Apostle Paul, also chosen by the Lord, who called him by a brilliant light on the road to Damascus.

Later the Apostle Paul said he was the least of all the apostles, that he was not worthy of this title because he had persecuted the people of God. However, for us who study the work accomplished by this apostle, he is not inferior to the others. We count him among the greatest stars.

By this call God gave proof also to the others that it was He who selected, and that He rejected the selection of Matthias by the disciples, something done before the Holy Spirit was poured out.

The chief corner stone of the Church is our Lord: first-born, unique, perfect in everything. The 12 apostles (the eleven who were with the Lord in Galilee plus the Apostle Paul, the twelfth) are the living foundation of the Temple of God, foreordained before the creation of the world, and of whom the prophets spoke. "You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." —Eph 2:20-22

Jesus Receives All Power

In verse 18 of our study, we read: "And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

The apostles, who were always with Jesus during his earthly ministry, who saw his power and authority, his strength to overcome his trials, and his faithfulness even unto a death on the cross, were particularly strengthened by these marvelous words that they heard.

The lion of the tribe of Judah, who overcame all and rose as proof of his faithfulness; and his Father gave him "Authority and Power."

He who was at the beginning as the Logos and who faithfully accomplished the work of redemption, has been honored with the greatest reward possible in all the universe, the nature that is uniquely possessed by God: "immortality." Having become the second Adam, our Lord has received God's power to deliver from sin and death all who were redeemed by the price of his perfect life. He has received all power over the living and the dead, as well as over all heavenly beings who glorify and obey him.

Through his appearances to the apostles after his resurrection, our Lord furnished the proof that he was no longer a human being, but spiritual, heavenly. The Son of God possessed *all power* and knew the times and seasons of God's plan.

The words of verse 18 in our study show that our Lord is perfectly capable of accomplishing all the promises of God centered on him. These words reveal to us the objective of our Heavenly Father: to establish peace, and that happiness and harmony may endure forever.

We have also seen that the Lord has all authority and all power over everything in heaven and earth, as well as over all angels and humanity. This is he who, by his great sacrifice on the cross, will make peace in the world, thereby fulfilling the words of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 45, verse 23: "That unto me [the Lord] every knee shall bow," a text quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 14:11.

We have learned to know the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is full of virtue and grace. That is why we voluntarily bow our knees.

We have been told about his power by the prophet Daniel in chapter 7, verse 14: "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

His reign has been deferred until the due season according to a precise purpose. God has established in his plan a "due season" for depositing the offering for sins, and a "due season" for the installation of his royal son in power and great glory for the blessing of the world.

Meanwhile there has been provided a period for the call and the preparation of the members of the Church, who will participate with Christ in his honor, glory, and power. During this period our Lord is concerned with his disciples and gives them their nourishment in due season.

All these marvelous things are of God, by and for His son. Our Lord has used his great power from the beginning of his second presence through the first resurrection, as we have been told by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16: "The dead in Christ shall rise first."

Since his second advent, our Lord began the judgment of the world and pronounces sentence upon "Babylon." He gives the order to his people to leave her, as we read in Revelation 18:4: "Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins."

Ambassadors

In verse 19 of our study, the Lord gave two orders to his disciples. By the power of our Lord, the disciples could accomplish miracles and cast out demons before Pentecost, though they had not yet received the Holy Spirit, as we read in John 7:39: "For the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified."

After the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon them, the apostles became the ambassadors and representatives of God. The anointing of the Church is typified in the anointing of Aaron by anointing oil poured upon his head which went down upon his body. Aaron, the high priest, was a type of Jesus Christ, who became a high priest after the order of Melchisedec. (See He 6:20.)

The anointing of the Holy Spirit made the apostles responsible and qualified for divine service. They were the only ones who were authorized to serve as the mouthpieces of Christ for the Church and the world.

Their message is still valuable today, as we read in 2 Timothy 3:16,17: "All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The apostles have become the foundations of the Church and have accordingly received power from on high.

They received the ability that "whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." —Mt 18:18

However God has arranged the Church in such a manner that each of us—each brother and sister—having received the spirit of anointing and begetting, becomes a responsible member of the body of Christ, under the anointed head of Jesus. We must be his faithful and zealous representatives, each according to his aptitudes and capabilities. All of us may have a part in the proclamation of the gospel.

Our Lord told his disciples: "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." (Matthew 23:8) It is to these alone, who do the will of God, and not to a class or group that he gave the authority to testify to the grace and power of our Heavenly Father.

Each of us who has received the begetting of the holy spirit is authorized to proclaim this marvelous truth, according to our opportunities, possibilities, and capabilities within each one's limits and circumstances.

The apostles who lived at the beginning of the Gospel Age were asked to throw a net into the sea. By the truth they proclaimed, they established the Church and provided the doctrine of the high calling.

For us who live at the end of the Gospel Age at this time of harvest, present truth is "meat in due season." The truth is the expression of the will of God in our trials, in our daily life, and in our associations with others; but this truth also does the sifting and separation of wheat from tares.

The Lord gave this directive: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of *all* nations." That is not to say that all nations in their entirety would become his disciples. No. But of the solitary ones, each is individually free to accept the word of God—the truth—or not, whether he be rich or poor.

The disciple of Christ walks in the footsteps of our Lord. He learns of the Master and imitates him. Jesus furthermore gave us an explanation in Matthew 16:24: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself [that is to say, consecrate himself with all that he has, accept the will of God, and humble himself], and take up his cross and follow me."

The way that leads to glory is the narrow way; it is a difficult way. In this way each individual's will must be continually crucified. There is no lack of trials in this way, but we have the assurance that if we suffer with him, we will also be worthy to reign with him.

Baptism

The second order that the Lord gave to his disciples is in verse 19: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

This baptism is the only way to enter into the Church. It is the baptism into *the death of our Lord* that unites us with him and the other members by a unique spirit.

To be baptized into Christ means to be buried with him. Only those who have been buried with him by baptism into his death become part of the Church. Their names are written in heaven and their bodies constitute the home of the Holy Spirit, the Temple of God.

The word of God teaches us that "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." (Matthew 24:14) Those who accept, understand, and appreciate it, will consecrate themselves and be baptized by immersion into the death of our Lord, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

This baptism does not concern the symbolic baptism in water. We must instruct any who have faith about the significance of water immersion; faith and consecration must become their one desire, and it precedes the baptism by which they testify they are dead to the world.

The expression "in the name of" means being in harmony, in communion with. Each disciple must confess the name of the Father, who represents righteousness, and must be dead to all other principles that differ from this name. Each must be entirely immersed into this NAME which is "righteousness" and "truth."

Confessing no other name, the disciples of the Lord must be entirely immersed into the name of Christ, to acknowledge him as their savior, and to become members of his body, of his Church. Additionally they must give a good witness by baptism into His Name and must be begotten by the spirit. Consecrated disciples must lay down their wills and accept the will of their Master and Lord. They are figuratively decapitated; their wills, goals, and earthly hopes become dead. The holy will of God, the spirit and plan of God, must become their will and their goal.

We should emphasize an important fact that is generally well understood by the members of the Church of Christ: baptism in water is an external witness of the true consecration of one's heart to God. Baptism into water is a symbol of our death to the principles of this world and our former way of life. We walk in newness of life with all the body members of Christ, in formation.

The apostles obeyed the order they received to baptize. As disciples of Christ, we must also obey this order and search for hearing ears, meaning those who are interested in the message of Christ, the truth, which we have the honor and privilege to know and present to them.

If they accept the message of Christ—the truth—and if they are prepared to give up their will for that of God, we acknowledge that the Lord has called them. Our duty is then to teach them consecration of heart and the significance of baptism, after which, if it is their desire, to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our duty is to prepare disciples of Jesus and teach and sustain them in their desire to do the will of God and be acceptable to him.

Teaching and Observing

In the first part of verse 20 of our study, we find the last request of our Lord. The apostles received an order to teach, and they bequeathed to all disciples of Christ that which Jesus taught them.

Jesus at his first advent on earth taught his disciples the name of his Father, His character, and revealed the features of His plan to them. He taught them the favor of the Holy Spirit which leads the Church toward righteousness and truth, and which guides it during the Gospel Age, revealing future things and continually recalling the teachings of our Lord.

The apostles also received an order to observe all that Jesus taught them. They had neither the right to add to nor subtract from his words. All Christians must understand that they are sinners and that they have need of a redeemer, Jesus, who came into the world and gave himself as a ransom for all, to redeem Adam and the human race, who had lost life by transgressing the will of God.

During his presence on earth our Lord revealed that righteousness is the foundation of the character of God. He manifested God's great love for all His creatures and he also showed that he was the only way to life. Coming to him we must bear our cross and make progress in the narrow way, in order to attain the objective of our hope, to wit, the reward of the first resurrection.

The second part of verse 20 of our text in Matthew 28 was, for the apostles, a marvelous consolation that fortified them in their faith. This hope and certainty that animated the disciples of Christ during the entire Gospel Age fills us also with enthusiasm and joy.

"And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," said the Lord. Can we know all the import of these words? The apostles had this promise in their memory and the Apostle James, who was the first to be decapitated, paying with his life for his faithfulness to the cause of Jesus, was certainly fortified by this promise. The same for Stephen; this promise was for him an effective aid because he was filled with the spirit and looked toward heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus on His right. These words guided him in his great trial and it made it easier for him to render a witness to the truth.

Our Lord was with the early Church through his spirit and his word, guiding, fortifying, sustaining, and consoling it in its different trials. This certainty gave courage to all who became part of this Church, as well as those who lived in the Middle Ages and those souls who were slaughtered for the testimony they gave about the word of God.

These words, "I am with you always," are equally welcome to us. What magical words, how stimulating to support our faithfulness. Let us not forget them, but recall their precious meaning often, So it becomes solidly anchored in our hearts. May this promise be a consolation in difficult times for us, an encouragement to revive our flagging ardor, rejuvenating our strength, courage and zeal to progress in the narrow way until we can see our King in all his glory.

Having numerous proofs of the love of our Lord, being under his protection and knowing that he is concerned for our spiritual good, and knowing also that all things work together for good to them that love God, we find that our burden is light and easy because Jesus is with us. (Matthew 11:29,30) Oh how sweet are these marvelous promises of the Lord, and what certainty they give us.

The End of the Age

The last words of this gospel tell us, "unto the end of the world." They are meant for us in particular. It is not a question of the end of the earth. The Greek word *aion* means age and not world. These words signify that our Lord is with his people until the end of the age, until the moment when the Gospel Age will have accomplished its objective, to wit, the choosing of the full number of the disciples of Christ. I might add that in the German Elberfeld translation, this verse is written: "Until the end of the age."

Dear brethren, we are living at the blessed time of the vision of Revelation, chapter ten, verse one: "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire."

We are in the day of the voice of the seventh angel who is sounding the seventh trumpet and where the mystery of God should be finished, as it was announced to his servants in verse seven of this same chapter.

For this reason we want to fulfill the command given to the apostles by the Lord, of which we are the inheritors. Let us strive to make our calling and our election sure.

Let us persevere, So that the words of this "priestly" prayer may be fulfilled in us: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one* in us. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." —Joh 17:21,24

Bible Student Activities in Other Lands-Brother David Bruce, USA

Sister Shirley and I are very happy to be here. We bring with us the Christian love and greetings from our brethren in Seattle and an invitation to come and visit us if you are ever in the United States.

One of the special blessings we have by living at this time in history is that we are able to travel to far-away places, quickly and comfortably, to meet with brethren in conventions. It is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 12:4, "Many shall run to and fro . . . and knowledge shall be increased." We use this increase of knowledge and ease of travel to our spiritual benefit when we do it to attend conventions such as this one especially. How much more our prayers mean to us when we pray for God's people all over the world—and we can picture them in our minds as we pray. Truly this is a great and blessed privilege for us at this time.

In most instances, when we meet at our home cities, we meet in small groups. And sometimes when we do so, we may get to feeling like Elijah when he felt he was all alone and the only one who had not bowed the knee to Baal. He said, "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord." —1Ki 18:22

When the convention committee decided to have a report on activities of brethren in various lands and asked me to provide such a report, I wrote to many brethren all over the world asking certain questions. One question was to try to determine, as closely as we could, how many we are in number. (We know such an estimate cannot be completely accurate.) When we did not have a name of someone to contact, we talked to others who had thoughts on the questions. This report is the result of that effort.

Our Numbers

Question 1: "What is your estimate of the number of those who believe in the Harvest Message?" (We asked that Jehovah's Witnesses and others who have changed major points of the Harvest Message be excluded.) As nearly as we can judge from the responses there are, in the world today, approximately 12,000 who appreciate and believe the Harvest Message as presented by Brother Russell.

Question 2: "Of those who believe the Harvest Message, how many are truly consecrated?" Again judging from the responses, the number is 7,000! Just as it was in the day of Elijah, So it is today. "Yet I have left me 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that hath not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:18) This is certainly a *VERY* interesting number. So, my brethren, I hope this will be a comforting thought to all of us as we realize that just as Elijah was not alone, So we are not alone, even though in our various ecclesias we may be small in number. God still has 7,000 whom he counts as His own people. I realize that numbers are not the important thing, but I must confess that I became excited when the numbers were So much like those of Elijah's experience.

Question 3: "How many elders are there in your country?" After totalling the numbers from all countries we find that there are approximately 550. This is about the number of people who are attending this International convention.

Subsequent questions asked about the activities of brethren in groups, in the ecclesia, and as individuals. The responses show that we are all united in certain fundamental activities showing a remarkable one-ness as "body members" on this side of the veil.

Our Activities

Bible study is a major activity everywhere. Paul advises us in 1 Timothy 4:16 and 2 Timothy 2:15, "Take heed unto thyself . . . and unto the doctrine . . . study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

In all the responses we find a united use of the helps that have been provided by our returned Lord and a united respect and acceptance of the *ONE* wise and faithful servant. None can equal the beauty and grandeur of his scriptural outline of the Divine Plan of the Ages. Since his passing, our present servants, or elders as we call them, help us to understand present day events as they fulfill the Scriptures, which in his day Brother Russell could not see as clearly as we do today. He himself said that "Prophecy is best understood after it is fulfilled." I was again excited and pleased to see what and how studies are continuing among God's people.

We next asked what we should emphasize as we gather together for study. Our survey showed that *humility, sacrifice, and attitude* (which includes the thought of *love*) were at the top of the list of those points of truth that are to be considered most important. Next came *knowledge* to be able to know what God would have us do.

Then there seemed to be an equal emphasis upon *thankfulness* and *works* (including works within ourselves and as a public witness to others). Next came *behavior* (which includes the matter of how well we apply the principles of God's teachings in our daily life). Then there was the matter of *suffering*, the item in last position.

In considering how these points were rated I must acknowledge I was pleased with the answers given. It verifies that the battle with self and the development of a character like that of our Lord and Savior is of prime importance to the brethren everywhere.

Our next category is group activities as it concerns first those activities to serve the brethren and second those activities connected with the public. Paul in Galatians 6:10 makes a similar distinction: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, but especially to the household of faith."

In most countries we find the brethren following the pattern established by Brother Russell.

1. Having a central publishing place where truth literature can be printed for the benefit of all the body members. Brethren work as volunteers, not receiving any pay except for things needful. The

work is supported by the various ecclesias. Monthly or bi-monthly truth magazines are printed with articles taken from lessons of Brother Russell's or articles from brethren regarding how truth brethren should look at today's events.

2. Study meetings are held regularly as often as possible. The Apostle Paul said this is important: "Forsake not the assembling of ourselves together . . . and So much the more as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25) What day? The day when the church is completed. If our numbers are correct about the number of consecrated still left on this side of the veil, 95% of the church is gone and are with the Lord. Only 5% of us are left. Someday someone will be the last one left and be all alone. World events certainly indicate that that day may not be too far away.

3. Conventions are also held for meeting together. These serve the purpose of exchanging thoughts and blessings and are very beneficial. We not only exchange thoughts on doctrine, but in our fellowship together one with the other we learn of the struggles and difficulties of our brethren and how they are dealing with these. We learn and hear about examples of faith through trials of others that help us to stop complaining about the cross we must bear. It is *So small* compared with the cross others are carrying.

4. Pilgrim service is another blessing which continues to fill a very important need. Those who are isolated, the "ones" and "twos" and "threes," are especially blessed by actual visits from others. Telephone calls are fine, letters are fine, but for those who are alone, an actual personal visit, a touch of the hand, seeing a smile, hearing a voice, and being able to ask questions is a source of comfort that cannot be measured by us unless we have personally been isolated for a time.

5. Hospitality for visitors from other cities and countries is one of the most pleasant duties that is provided. The world cannot understand how we can go into other countries all over the world, not knowing anyone, yet be with friends who take care of our needs. We enter another home whose owners give up their own comfort for us. No payment is asked. Each considers it a great honor to provide for the guest who has come to enjoy Christian fellowship. Those in the home sacrifice both money and effort on behalf of the welcome guests.

These activities are universally practiced by all brethren everywhere. Brother Russell calls this a part of our "present inheritance." The question we all should ask ourselves is whether

we are taking advantage of all these provisions that have been made for our spiritual benefit. We must, however, caution those who would abuse some of these arrangements by remaining beyond a reasonable length of time. We would not want to create a hardship for one's host and his family. So we must be aware that it is better to leave sooner than expected than to stay too long.

Special Activities

We asked about *SPECIAL* activities which done for the brethren as well as the public. Note that I am not naming any organizations. It is no secret to any of us that within our fellowship we have divergent opinions as to *WHAT* we should do, *HOW* we should do it, and divergent views on some features of Scripture and their application. Thus we have divisions which may affect our activities and even affect those with whom we meet. But I feel as long as there is a unity of the spirit, each one should be permitted to work in that corner of the vineyard for which they feel they are best qualified and which they can support with all their heart, leaving the rest to the Lord. There is more than one work to be done. There is more than one right way to serve the Lord. The Apostle Paul had to deal with a similar problem. How did he deal with it? His answer is in Philippians 1:15-18. We will read only verse 18: "What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein I rejoice. Yea, and will rejoice."

What are some of these activities that we might join, if we are not already participating in one of these *SPECIAL* activities?

A very special type of activity was one that started in England. This was to provide a place where brethren could retire in their late years especially when they were alone and had no family to care for them. This place is a Retirement Home called "Gainsborough House. It is doing well and plans are under way for more building. We also now have a Retirement Home in the United States in Gresham, Oregon. There are plans for another home to be built in another location when the Gresham home is filled. I understand the Polish brethren are also in the process of establishing a Retirement Home.

We have brethren who have joined together on a volunteer basis within an ecclesia to reprint many of the old books, articles, and literature that cannot be done by a central publishing house. So an ecclesia establishes a reprinting project to make these blessings available to others.

Some ecclesias in the United States send out a newsletter reporting about conventions, those who are in special need or facing difficult problems, or some who have had special joys in witnessing.

Several groups of brethren put on radio programs. Some of these are in the United States but reach other countries such as Mexico and South American. Others are in France, Canada, Australia, India, and Africa. The brethren in Canada broadcast a program in the Ukrainian language even though Canada is primarily an English and secondarily a French speaking country. We recognize that access to broadcast time is not necessarily allowed by every government So this activity cannot be done everywhere.

Television is also used. We in the United States broadcast the gospel message as we have opportunity just as Brother Russell, in his day, tried to use the latest technology.

Newspaper and magazine advertising is another public witness activity used in many countries to encourage the distribution of booklets on various topics to the public. We plant the seed and let the Lord provide the increase.

On an individual level we find brethren using their talents to provide public witness helps such as motion picture films to be shown in public places, and slide presentations such as *For This Cause*, *The Great Pyramid*, and *Archeology Proves the Bible*. Some of the discourses are recorded on cassette tape So they can be shown in a home that has a video cassette player. *For This Cause* has been updated to use motion, not just slides, and is now available on video cassettes.

Many send out tracts by mail to bereaved ones, or just to a mailing list. This activity can sometimes find a grain of wheat. In Seattle we had just such an experience. We mailed 1,000 tracts to a mailing list and found one grain of wheat that had been planted 19 years earlier. That person is now attending our meetings and rejoicing with us.

After many years of radio witness and personal visits, a recent activity in South American resulted in the first convention to ever be held there since the days of Brother Russell.

Many ecclesias or some brethren on an individual basis have placed sets of the six volumes in public libraries.

A pilgrim trip throughout Mexico and several South American countries was recently described and received much interest. A grain of wheat was found here and there struggling to learn about God's love in many isolated places.

Young people's seminars are held so that children of consecrated parents can be with others their own age. This also provides our young people with an opportunity to invite their school friends to attend and learn about the truth.

A new daily *Manna* has been published in English that is easier for young people to read and understand.

Brethren are working on sophisticated computer projects to make the Bible and the volumes quickly accessible for topical study. Others are using computers to organize Brother Russell's thoughts by Scripture citation in an easily accessible set of books. Brethren everywhere are trying to use their talent for the Lord.

Those unable to attend conventions are being sent letters and cards with many signing them and including a word of encouragement. This provides a rich comfort to those who are unable to attend, but who have done so in the past.

Two years ago at this convention we had an example of a brother who sent his greetings via video tape. What a blessing it was to hear and see Brother Felix Pilarski who was able to do it thanks to modern technology.

Brethren are taking video tapes of conventions and making them available to those who cannot attend. It is almost like being there. The old audio tapes that brought us only a voice are now being replaced with video tape.

Personal witness activity should not be forgotten including the witnessing to our neighbors, friends, fellow workers, and anyone else who will listen.

And finally, let us all by our example show others that we have been with Jesus and learned of him.

I trust that this report will be of benefit to us all as we consider it and as we use its examples of activity to honor and glorify our Heavenly Father.

Amen.

The Spirit of Truth-Brother George Jeuck, USA

TRUTH IS A word which was used by Jesus to describe the Holy Spirit. As his earthly ministry was drawing to a close, Jesus, keenly aware of the uncertainty in the minds of his disciples, promised to send the Holy Spirit to give comfort in their disappointment. Some of the thoughts of our Lord are recorded in John 14:16,17. *I will pray to the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, the SPIRIT OF TRUTH.* Later in this same conversation, Jesus repeated this expression. *I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot understand them now. When the SPIRIT OF TRUTH comes it will guide you into all truth, and it will show you things to come.* —Joh 16:12,13

After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples did not have long to wait for the fulfillment of this promise. Fifty days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of truth came, and was made manifest just as Jesus had previously described. Even though certain accompanying signs were evident, such as tongues of fire and the miraculous ability of the apostles to speak in foreign languages, nevertheless, in principle, the things that it *heard* were what it *spoke*, as Jesus had said. It SPOKE by way of opening to the minds of the apostles an understanding of certain portions of prophetic Scripture (the things that it HEARD) which prior to that time were a mystery to them.

New Understanding of Old Prophecies

One of these prophecies was Joel 2:28-32. Peter, newly endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, came to a sudden awareness that this Scripture was beginning to have a fulfillment. He realized that the recorded prophecies, visions and dreams which God had visited aforetime upon his people of old, but shrouded in mystery for ages and generations, were now commencing to be understood for the purpose of giving vision, hope, and a message of prophetic truth for the call of a new age then beginning. He said:

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days [afterward —Joe 2:28], saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. —Ac 2:17,18

After long centuries of obscurity, this portion of God's Holy Word was being unveiled. Indeed, the descendants (sons and daughters) of historic Israel, as they were represented in the apostles and their associated Jewish disciples, were on that very day *prophesying*, giving public witness to the call of a new dispensation, the call into Christ. They were the *young men* (Hebrew: select men) selected to interpret past visions. They were also the *old men* (Hebrew: elders) chosen to *dream dreams* (Hebrew: bind dreams), to make firm an understanding of things long past received from God and written as if in dreams, for the instruction of those called as servants (servants and handmaids) of God. This call would be to the Jew first, but eventually to those called *out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation*. (Revelation 5:9) This new and broader aspect of God's dealings to be accomplished by the pouring out of His Spirit, was concluded in Peter's sermon in these words: *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* —Ac 2:39

Other vital truths began to unfold to the apostles as the Scriptures took on new meaning. They were able to understand that Psalm 16:10 was not written about David, but was a prophetic statement pointing to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Peter's oration on that day included a quotation from Psalm 110:1, where he applied this verse of Scripture to mean that Jesus' kingdom was future and would be a heavenly or spiritual government, a truth which heretofore was not understood. It confirmed what Jesus had implied many times, that his kingdom was not of this world.

Based on this new understanding, Peter as spokesman for the apostles appealed to his listeners to join with them in accepting a call to be joint-heirs with Jesus in a heavenly kingdom—a kingdom, the preparation of which was to be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit of truth. *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* —Ac 2:38

The close association of the Holy Spirit with the word of truth was expressed by Paul in his letter to the Corinthian brethren. He wrote, *But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* (1 Corinthians 2:7,8, Revised Standard Version) The Scriptures which hold the secret and hidden wisdom of God were written in ages past for the glorification of the saints of the Gospel Age. But no one, not even the nation of

Israel in whose care the oracles of God were entrusted, understood this ultimate purpose of God written within their lines. Supporting this fact with Scripture, Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4, *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.* This brief observation, made some 700 years before Christ, ends Isaiah's treatment of the matter, but Paul, who was writing to those for whose glorification the Scriptures were ordained, hastened to add: *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep [mysterious] things of God.* —1Co 2:10

The deep things of God are in reality the simple truths of the Bible which reveal to us the various features of His plan necessary for our justification and sanctification. (James 1:18) They are called *deep* or *mysterious* because others not enlightened by God do not see them. Paul says that this special enlightenment comes through the influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth: comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:11-13)

Through this enlightening process which God brings about in various and individual ways to those whom He has called, the Scriptures are no longer shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding, but reveal the *things that are freely given to us of God*, So that we might conform our lives to His will and purpose.

Three Basic Truths

The Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of Ephesians, systematically outlines three basic truths disclosed to us through God's Word, which form a foundation of knowledge necessary to intelligently yield ourselves to the counsel of God's will, and be sealed thereto *with the Holy Spirit of promise, as an earnest (or evidence) of our inheritance.*

Beginning with verse three he writes:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children [sonship] by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Here the apostle beautifully expresses the first of these important truths So inseparably linked to the work of the Holy Spirit: *THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS*. He tells us that before this present world [*kosmos*, order of things] came into existence, God, foreseeing the evil environment of this time, preordained to use it as a testing ground for the selection and preparation of a spiritual family—children to be associated with Jesus in his own divine household. The accomplishment of this supreme act of grace by the good pleasure of His will, required those called to be thoroughly tested and perfected in the heart qualities of faithfulness and holiness, being without blame before Him in love. This unique and important feature of God’s plan is So concealed in the abstruse language of the Bible that it is not clearly discerned except by those who, by God’s grace, are given understanding to rightly divide the word of truth. It was God’s purpose that the high calling be accomplished through the call and selection from among mankind of those who would be willing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, heeding his invitation to take up their cross and follow him. In order to do this objectively, like Jesus, they too must be made aware of their calling. Like Jesus, they must find in the *volume of the book*, all the Scriptures which, taken together, reveal in scope the hope of their calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what they must do to qualify for such a great reward. As the logic of the Apostle Paul subsequently unfolds in this first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, his sound reasoning asserts that a knowledge and appreciation of this great truth of the high calling is vitally essential to the children of God in order to have the Holy Spirit effectively work further in their lives toward the achievement of this great and precious promise of God. —1Pe 1:3,4

As the first chapter of Ephesians continues, Paul points out a second essential truth necessary for our understanding: *REDEMPTION THROUGH THE RANSOM SACRIFICE OF JESUS*. He writes in verses 7 and 8:

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

The ministry of sacrifice performed by Jesus as a perfect man at his first advent provided the means preordained by God through which the high calling is made possible to us. We have redemption (deliverance) from the fallen condition of inherited sin through faith in his blood (the value of the ransom price), and receiving forgiveness of sins (being justified) we accept the invitation of our Lord to take up our cross and follow him. (Luke 9:23) If we share with him in his suffering, we shall also be partakers of his glory. In making known this great truth, Paul says God has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence (intellectual insight).

No other doctrine of truth has been so carefully and convincingly verified and established in the Word of God as that of our redemption through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. The documented life of Jesus, his dedicated fulfillment of the sacrificial types and prophecies of the Old Testament, and the salient interpretations by the apostles in their writings concerning this outstanding feature of God's plan, have laid for us a proven foundation of knowledge—knowledge which, if added to with patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, will make us neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which in giving diligence, we can make our calling and election sure. (2 Peter 1:5-10) Thus used, this truth becomes a powerful agency by which the Holy Spirit works out the will of God in the justification and sanctification of all who are called with a knowledge of the truth, *God having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.* —Eph 1:9

The third feature of truth mentioned in verses ten and eleven of this interesting sequence of verses in the first chapter of Ephesians speaks of the object of our calling: *THE FUTURE WORK OF RESTITUTION*. It reads,

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance.

It is noteworthy to observe how closely the Scriptures throughout the New Testament relate the preparatory experiences of the Church to their ultimate purpose for the world's salvation. How well this point was expressed by Paul when he stated that God is now writing in the hearts of his people, not with ink, but with his Spirit, his purpose being to make them able ministers of the New Covenant. (2 Corinthians 3:3-6) The New Covenant, to be

mediated by the Christ, will be the means through which all things in earth might be gathered together and eventually brought back into harmony with God. Christ and his Church, possessing a heart appreciation of God's law, will be able to convey its precepts to the resurrected people of earth in such a way that they too will be caught up in its spirit of righteousness. Taking it into their own hearts, they will learn to love its principles and desire to live by them. The Law, written in ages past on tables of stone (the expression of the letter of the Law), was never able to accomplish this crowning achievement. Thus by coming to love God and his law of righteousness, all things *which are in heaven and which are in earth* will be gathered together in him, Christ Jesus. And then Paul adds these inspiring words, *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.*

The Sealing of the Holy Spirit

The three foundation truths of the Gospel—the high calling, the ransom, and restitution—so nicely sequenced in this letter, are compositely referred to in the 13th verse as the Gospel of your salvation. Paul says that this Gospel forms the basis upon which we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, not by hearing it only, but by believing. Believing implies understanding, and as suggested by *Strong's Concordance*, such understanding would form a foundation for faith. Verses 13 and 14 read:

In whom ye also trusted after that ye HEARD the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye BELIEVED, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

In the apostles' day, as also today, seals were used to validate contracts or covenants. Our covenant of sacrifice with God, based on our faith in the high calling, our acceptance of redemption through Jesus, and our desire to suffer with him to share with him in the glory of the kingdom is validated by God with His seal. Paul says that this fiducial seal of God is His Holy Spirit of *TRUTH*. As we see its influence working in our lives to help us toward the fulfillment of our covenant, it becomes to us an *earnest* or pledge from God, which assures us that, if faithful unto death, *we shall enter upon our heritage, when God has redeemed what is his own.*
—Eph 1:14, *New English Bible*

We should not think of the sealing of the Holy Spirit as something which takes place at a certain moment in Christian experience. The

sealing is accomplished, as the apostle explains, by the Holy Spirit of promise, or to state the thought in other words, we are sealed by the promises of God which have been recorded by the Holy Spirit in His Word. These promises belong to us from the time we enter into a covenant of sacrifice with our Heavenly Father, and there should be an ever-increasing appreciation of them throughout our entire life.

The Apostle Paul wrote in He 10:36, *For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.* It is well to remember that all the promises of God given to us are conditional upon our faithfulness in carrying out our part of the covenant. The expression, *after ye have done the will of God*, is evidently a reference to our consecration. This is the first step in doing God's will. Through faith in our Lord Jesus we have access, by consecration, into a wonderful position of favor with God, and standing in this position of favor we can *rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.* (Romans 5:1,2) That is, we have a hope of sharing the divine glory with Jesus, of being made like him, and seeing him as he is.

But there is more to the Christian life than merely rejoicing in this wonderful hope. Before such a hope can become a reality we must be tested. Paul continues in verses three and four, *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope.* The Apostle says that we *glory* in these tribulations. We do this by faith in the promises of God, and are able to use these tribulation experiences as a means of proving our loyalty to our consecration vows. The apostle says further that we have need of patience in order to obtain the promises, hence when tribulations come we should accept them as God's arrangement whereby we might learn patience. The word *experience* in this text should be, according to the Greek, rendered *trustiness*. Patient continuance in faithfulness, even in tribulation, results in being trustworthy. Thus we can be assured of God's approval, and have a real basis for our hope, a hope that maketh not ashamed, dependable and unfailing. Having endured such experiences we can more fully appreciate the fact that we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, and God's Word has brought forth a fruitage in our lives.

Paul said concerning our privilege of suffering with Christ with the hope of reigning with him, that it is a faithful saying. All of God's promises are faithful sayings, and it is by applying them to our lives that we are sealed. They constitute a very important part of our present inheritance.

The Promises of God

At the beginning of our Christian walk we made a consecration to do God's will, but we needed guidance to know what was His will, and God has promised to give it to us. *If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not.* (James 1:5) Then we have the promise, *The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his ways.* (Psalm 25:9) Again, *If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine.* (John 7:17) And the prophet wrote, *Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.* (Isaiah 30:21)

Our enemies are very formidable. In our own strength we would surely go down in defeat before them. But the Holy Spirit of promise has given us these assurances:

Greater is he who is for us, than all who be against us. —Ro 8:31

It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth. —Ro 8:33,34

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. —Psalm 91:1

The Holy Spirit of promise thus testifies that if we are faithful in carrying out the terms of our consecration, God himself shall protect us from all harm which might come to us as New Creatures in Christ, either from the world or from our great adversary, the devil.

By nature, we are weak, unable to do the will of God as we should. But the Holy Spirit of promise has assured us of divine help in this respect. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:17-20 that the mighty power of God which raised Jesus from the dead and highly exalted him is the same power which stands back of us to see us through to victory. The Lord also reminds us of His help when He said to the apostle, *My strength is made perfect in weakness.* (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) So it is with us. It is God's grace, His strength, His power, His wisdom, which are all made available to us, guaranteeing our victory through Christ. If we carry out the terms of our consecration as best we can, He will do the rest; He will accept us through Christ; He will guide us through His Word, and strengthen us by His might in every time of need. And, finally, if we are faithful even unto death, He will exalt us to glory, honor and immortality, and make us a part of His inheritance in the saints.

How beautifully this is expressed in our concluding text:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. —Eph 1:17,18

People Anointed By God-Brother Jozef Klusak, Poland

BELOVED BRETHREN in our Lord Jesus Christ! As we often think about our incapable condition, our thoughts turn to God's Word for confirmation of what we say, what we believe, and where we are going. Now we are going to consider one fragment of the wonderful promises found in the Apostle Paul's words which are written in 2 Corinthians 1:21,22:

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

These words will be the leading thought of our subject, entitled *People Anointed By God*. Before we start considering the present anointing of the Gospel age, we will turn our attention to the Old Testament. By studying those words we will notice that the Law with, its types and figures, teaches that God would raise up a high priest and establish him as the real *Lord's Anointed*.

Anointing in the Bible

In the Jewish nation the ceremony of anointing was not unusual. People anointed themselves with aromatic ointments for sanitary, hygienic, and religious purposes. We have many examples of that ceremony and custom in the holy Scriptures. Mary anointed the Lord Jesus with spikenard oil in Bethany. A woman anointed the Lord in the house of Simon the Pharisee. The dead bodies were anointed. For example, after Jesus' body was taken off the cross, women cared for and anointed his body with herbs.

Jesus recommended that those who desire to fast for religious reasons are not to neglect their outward appearance, which was the generally-accepted Jewish custom in order to demonstrate outwardly their godliness to others. Jesus taught that those undertaking such a fast should anoint their head and wash their face secretly for God.

We have here given several examples to show that anointing was generally practiced by Jews in the time of Jesus. Also we note that kings were anointed to office. The ceremony of anointing a king did not have to be repeated each time when transferring the royal authority. Once established, the authority was passed from father to son in a royal family. However, there were exceptions. We know from the Bible that Saul, David, Solomon, and other kings whose rights were called into question were menaced by conspiring adversaries, so they received a royal anointing. In Israel, prophets brought kings into office by anointing.

According to the Law, people and things ordained for God's service were anointed with holy oil. Generally, anointing represented a particular kind of consecration. Persons or things anointed with holy oil were set aside for God's service and were recognized as holy.

God gave Moses a prescription for manufacturing the holy anointing oil with which the priests and the Tabernacle were anointed. (Exodus 30:22-32) That oil was composed of the choicest perfumed substances. Its manufacture by the common people was prohibited, and only priests could prepare it for religious purposes. The prophet Ezekiel in chapter 23, verse 41, rebukes some people for using similar oil for their own needs.

Holy anointing oil was poured upon the High Priest's head:

Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him. (Exodus 29:7) It is like the precious ointment upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments. —Ps 133:2

Aaron, the High Priest, was a type of our Lord.

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. —Ac 10:38

The Anointing of Jesus

When Jesus was 30 years old, he was a mature man according to the Law of Moses. At this age he could be anointed and devote his sacrificial life to God. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan; from that moment he felt a great change in his personal as well as in his spiritual life. After this event he was able

to have closer fellowship with God, his Father. The holy Scriptures give us information about the Lord's baptism:

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. —Mt 3:16

We do not believe that the expression *the heavens were opened* means that in that instant Jesus could see beyond the literal heavens. Rather, we believe that deep things were revealed to him which he could not understand as a natural man, even though he was perfect. The Holy Spirit acted as a power and influence in the Lord's mind. After receiving it, it may have enlightened him about his pre-human condition. But more importantly, he received the particular ability to understand spiritual things.

Instead of immediately beginning his mission, for which he was already prepared, Jesus went into the wilderness. There he considered prophecies which were instantly understood by him. The Gospel further enlightens us:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. —Lu 4:16-21

We should remember that Jesus quoted only the first verse of Isaiah 61, and that he passed over the last part of the second verse which is *and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn*. Therefore we ask, *Why didn't Jesus completely read the quoted second verse in its entirety?* We answer, *Because the second part did not concern his first mission, he could not include it in his summary, This day is the scripture fulfilled;*" because the time of fulfilling Jesus' complete prophecy was still to come. The prophetic word was fulfilled in Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit. Because of this, he could come to them to preach *tidings of*

joy, which shall be to all people. The time was fulfilled and the proper moment had come for Jesus to:

a) make known the joyful news about the Kingdom of God to all who were humble (brokenhearted), and to all who could accept the word from our insignificant Nazarene.

b) heal those who had various trials and experiences, but who had the hope of the early arrival of the Kingdom of God, which will bring peace, joy, and gladness, and will establish the divine order of all things instead of the present confusion.

c) proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison. What prisoners are mentioned here? Surely not the deprived criminals lacking freedom because of prison walls. This is a symbolic expression about all mankind, which is now subject to the prison of death, the grave.

d) *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord*, which is the time when acceptable sacrifices can be presented—better offerings than the offerings of bullocks and goats. These are the offerings of the Church in the Gospel age. (The head is Christ and the rest of the sacrifice is the members of the symbolic body.)

Let us look at the sacrifice of Jesus that the Apostle Paul writes these words about:

For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. —He 7:26,27

Jesus did not need to offer up daily sacrifices as did the priests after the order of Aaron because, as Saint Paul teaches, he was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*. The Lord's offering includes the redemption of the Church, which is his body, and which is separated from the world of mankind by the heavenly calling.

The Anointing of the Church

Is it a true fact that the Church shares in the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Yes. We know from the Bible that the Church is honored

with this anointing, although the Church's anointing is not identical in its contents with that of Jesus. Christ's anointing was more abundant in store of specific graces and the blessing of God's Holy Spirit. *Therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* (John 16:15; Psalms 45:8)

If members of the Church receive that part of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, does it mean that they are individually anointed? No! Such a thought should not be permitted, since only Jesus was personally and directly God's anointed; only he received the anointing directly from God, his Father. His followers are participants of that calling in the sense that their anointing flows down upon them through Christ.

This anointing is conditional upon their becoming his members and having fellowship and brotherly union with him. God does not deal with the followers of Christ, nor does He anoint somebody individually, because of their own personal value or merit. Instead, it is in *the Beloved* and through Jesus that the anointing oil flows down upon them.

In order to maintain our standing as a member of Christ's body, we must fulfill a fundamental condition, which is given in God's Word: *If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us,* as wrote the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:12. That expression has a specific meaning. The Lord will not acknowledge anybody who is not his faithful follower. Such an one has to renounce his I. He must renounce his individuality and mortify his fleshly nature. He must renounce his own will in order to fulfill the divine will. Then he shall accomplish his new life with Christ in God.

When we achieve the foregoing transformation in faith and spirit, then we can testify with the Apostle Paul's words:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. —Ga 2:20

What proofs do we have, my brethren, or what proof do I have, that we are anointed? The Apostle Paul in Romans 8:16 says: *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* God's Word brings joy and divine peace to those who possess it. For them, that witness is joy in sorrow, light in darkness, consolation in suffering, strength in weakness. If we

experience desires and feelings of our heart and have an assurance that we still trust the Lord, and if we continue to consecrate ourselves in fulfilling the divine will, then we can have conviction and peace of mind which comes from our oneness with God. This conviction about the Lord's grace for us in Christ is a result of our own experience and is based upon the unchanging character of God and His Word. It is a conviction which does not undergo a change, and it is contrary to that which is based upon the quicksand of human feeling or illusion.

In some places the Holy Spirit is defined as the Spirit of Truth. Nobody can have the Holy Spirit and not be aware of God. A person's growth in spiritual things can be only in proportion with his growth in knowledge. If one does not grow in knowledge, he can not grow in the spirit either. That is why it is called the Spirit of Truth.

The Holy Spirit is an influence which gives us a new viewpoint and enables us to look at things from God's point of view. The Holy Spirit is also called the disposition, or the spirit, of a sound mind. If we have the spirit of faithfulness toward God, the Truth, and the brethren, it means we have Christ's disposition.

An important evidence that witnesses about our anointing is a hunger for spiritual things. This is the desire to understand the divine plan. Each new, but true, view gives us fresh inspiration. The four attributes of God's character prove the truth.

It is proper that the Lord will prove or test our work and spiritual development. If we do not show growth, if we are found unfaithful, and if we fail to produce the fruits of the spirit of love, there is a possibility that we who have already become shoots of the vine can be cut off. In this way we are taught how our Father deals with His sons. He scourges, cleans, and prunes wild branches in order to develop fruitful abilities in us. Therefore he says, *Quench not the spirit.*

It is true we have fleshly weaknesses, but it is our duty and privilege to strive against them and change ourselves. We must fill our mind more and more with the Truth and our service to the brethren. If we find a decrease of zeal in this course, then we should know we are in danger of falling back instead of proceeding forward.

We know of some examples where the consecrated lose their first love and become cold. We often meet brethren saying that when

they met the Lord, they experienced blissful and heavenly feelings, but now they do not feel as close to Him as they did in the beginning. When we consider the cause of it, we almost always find that these have started doing something which is against the Holy Spirit. Those who were enlightened with the brighter light of the Truth, after several years of *fighting a good fight*, become discouraged. Many of them become weak in that light, and others cease entirely. Some of them do not go away, but show great spiritual indifference. Most of them are those who say they are in the Truth, but they enter a way similar to that on which all nominal Christianity strides: a way of superficial forms and vainglory.

Those who are on that way have overlooked the main purpose and duty which the Truth imposes upon them. They have overlooked the fact that they were anointed, and now they act as if they were not anointed with the oil. David mentioned such words when Saul died (see 2 Samuel 1:21). They have overlooked developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit. For some, they find themselves in a situation in which it is difficult to orient themselves. Often it happens that those who are on an improper way rely upon human understanding. They feel self-assured and safe, while those who are walking in the right way feel uncertain and are afraid of lacking appropriate understanding. Therefore, those who have consecrated themselves to God with all their hearts, and who desire to serve Him, should remember that entering into a covenant with God is only the beginning of their consecration.

Let Us Preach the Gospel

If we have analyzed ourselves and seen evidence of our anointing, then let us on this basis repeat the words of our Lord as he stood in the synagogue, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me*, and let us be assured that we have a part in that anointing. Let us also listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:15, where he quotes the prophet:

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

First the apostle quotes, *How shall they preach except they be sent?* However, there are many who do not please God who introduce themselves as leaders in God's Church. God's Word says to them,

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. —Ps 50:16,17

The prophet Jeremiah speaks about this matter very expressively in Jeremiah 23:16-21. We are going to read only verse 21: *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.*

The holy Scriptures teach us that those who received the anointing are authorized to preach the gospel. This preaching is to be done partly for the world, but even more it is to attract to the Lord those among the world who could enter into God's elect because they have ears to hear. If the Truth resulted in an enlightening influence upon us, then our hearts were softened in a certain respect and filled with God's love. Because of this we can feel authorized to perform the Lord's work among others and feel confident that our preaching of the gospel will meet with some acknowledgment. But if we keep the divine truth unjustly, if our hearts are not renewed under the influence of the Truth, then regardless of how much we have preached the gospel to others, or how many new members we have brought into the Truth, we do not deserve anything more from God except His displeasure.

Let us remember that the Lord is the director and overseer of His Church, and we are only given the privilege to be co-laborers in His work. It therefore follows that we are not responsible for the results of witnessing.

We, as the Lord's followers, are also to be comforters in the present time for the mourners in Zion. It is a work for which those enlightened by present truth have been specially qualified. Many of us were such mourners in Zion, before that refreshing message came to us.

Let us remember that when our Lord was reading the prophecy in the synagogue, he passed over the words, *the day of vengeance of our God*. That part of the prophecy was not due at that time. Today we understand the prophecy is to be preached completely. Therefore, we make known the words of the prophet Zephaniah in chapter 1:14-17:

The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of the

trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

The time for the promised and predicted change of circumstances on earth has come. Truly the present generation has entered days in which important events and specific signs are among us. We are enlightened by the fulfillment of predicted prophecies; by ancient prophets, who spoke under the influence of God's spirit. People and nations of all the world have been awakened, and watch with a feeling of fear and expectation of what had not been known by past generations since the beginning of man's history. Although that day seemed to tarry, now it is close at hand.

It seems clear that events are rapidly progressing to the alarm of people with worldly power. Whether power of wealth or of political influence, they will cry loudly and will meet a bitter disappointment. The prophet says it will be a day of wasteness, a day of clouds and darkness, a day of uncertainty. It will be an unpleasant day of confusion. That is a description of the conditions the nations are involved in now.

This raises a question: How do you preach peace and good tidings and simultaneously preach a day of vengeance? Yet another prophecy states that the ploughman will overtake the reapers; the morning cometh and the night also. The prophecy states that the acceptable year of the Lord is to be preached. Notice the word *year*. Likewise, a day of vengeance is to be preached. Notice the word *day*. This indicates the trouble is to be short. Everything will be under the direction of the Lord's Anointed, the completed Head and Body.

And for our conclusion we will read the words from 1 John 2:27,28:

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Amen.

Jeremiah's Message and the Second Presence-Brother Michal Kopak, Poland

BELOVED BRETHREN in our Saviour Jesus Christ, peace be unto you. The class in Bialogard (Poland) from which I come sends Christian love to you.

This is a great joy for me. I am really pleased to be amongst you for the third time now. I've had the pleasure of hearing your thoughts on subjects from God's Word, and I am very glad about that. Now I have the privilege of sharing my subject from God's Word in front of such a sincere and large audience. That is why, believe me my dear brethren, I feel fear and a great responsibility before God and before you.

The subject for the hour I have taken from Jeremiah's prophecy: *Jeremiah's Message and the Second Presence*. As a base of our lesson we are going to take a verse from Jeremiah 6:27, *I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way*. Jeremiah received the commission from the Lord to examine the moral conditions of the nation of Israel by a comparison of their real condition with the regulations of the Law.

The Prophet Jeremiah

First let us discuss who Jeremiah was. It will help us to understand and comprehend the importance of the task given to the prophet. Jeremiah came from Anathoth, from a priestly family. He began his mission when he was young. In the beginning he tried to refuse such an honorable yet difficult task. But because of God's firm demand, he undertook the work and continued it for 40 years.

Jeremiah's activity happened to be during the end of the existence of the typical kingdom of Israel, at the time of the reign of the three last kings from David's dynasty: Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. At that time, prevailing political negotiations in the *Near East* were collapsing. The Assyrian nation and its importance was failing. Babylon was growing in strength, conquering dominions in that part of the world, and threatening all of the neighboring nations. That situation is described by Jeremiah's words:

And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the

north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.
—Jer 1:13-14

During such a turbulent period Jeremiah started his mission as a prophet in both Israel and Judah, and he received a commission to preach prophecies concerning the neighboring nations as well. He left us the book that bears his name (the prophecy of Jeremiah, containing 52 chapters) and five chapters of Lamentations (which are a lamenting about Jerusalem). From his book we learn that he was fulfilling a very difficult and thankless mission for himself. On the one hand, he loves his nation and country very much. But being forced by God's word, he tells the people some very annoying, threatening, and prophetic words about the extinction of their nation.

Jeremiah experienced it as a personal drama, complaining to God with these words:

For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil, because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. —Jer 20:8,9

We learn the circumstances about his calling in the first chapter of the book: *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.* (Jeremiah 1:5) That statement, we may be sure, referred to Jeremiah. But with all conviction we can say that in its broader meaning it refers to the Lord Jesus.

We find similar words in Luke 1:31-32, *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.*

A similar thought, but referring to the Church, was expressed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:4, *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.*

In these three Scriptures we find the similarity of one's choosing and one's fulfilling the honorable mission of serving God. Let us consider also a Scripture from Jeremiah 1:10, *See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to*

pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant. That statement also was first fulfilled in Jeremiah's activity. But we think in its broader meaning it refers to the activity of Jesus, and more particularly to The Christ.

As Jeremiah received Baruch as a servant or aide, So the Lord often uses his servants, to whom he gives specific missions. Let us compare Jeremiah's mission to our own. In Jeremiah 1:10 he received power over many nations, first to root out, destroy etc., then to rebuild and plant. In what way could he do those actions? Only by preaching the Lord's Word.

Let us think what a great work God committed to Jeremiah and, at the same time, how limited from a human viewpoint was his accomplishment. In that situation a prophet's activity might seem to be impracticable, but, as we know from the Scriptures, Jeremiah completely fulfilled God's commission. Even though his own nation despised him and his warnings, he still was giving the judgments of God, and God's Word has never failed.

Even though he had fewer possibilities of preaching to adjacent nations, nevertheless, as it comes from his book, it was enough if the Word of God was preached. Results were not important. If those to whom it was directed received it or even only heard it, it became valuable. I think that likewise in our period, the Lord is fulfilling his work through his servants in the same way—through their preaching.

Let us try to compare the prophetic mission of Jeremiah with the mission of our Lord at his first advent to determine if there is a similarity. The Lord began his mission with the words of Luke 4:18,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

These words come from Isaiah's prophecy, chapter 61. But the Lord did not read all the statement. He passed over the words concerning the day of vengeance of our God. If we compare Isaiah 61:2 and Jeremiah 1:10, we will see a great similarity, remembering that the Lord applied Isaiah's prophecy to himself. The Lord divided his activity into two periods—first, a period of joy and grace; second, one of vengeance and wrath. Then will be a

time of comfort. Isaiah gives that thought very nicely in 61:2, *To comfort all that mourn*, to comfort those who are going to be ashamed, to be sad because of the wrath of God—for those the comfort will come. Both prophecies include an announcement of the wrath and the punishment, but they include a promise of comfort and restoration, too.

Summarizing, we can say that the second fulfillment of Jeremiah's mission will be at the time of the second presence of the Lord—the time in which we now live.

Similar Events at the Lord's Second Presence

If this be so, then let us consider the prophet's activity and his mission. In fact, he says much about the wrath and punishment of God, not to destroy the nation, but to renew it through the punishment. God intended to heal the nation by a hard, surgical operation—by cutting out sinful tumors. The same operation was foreseen for all the world, and the Lord was to perform it by himself.

As in Jeremiah's time, a prophet was only a servant of God and not the author of a decision. So also in the period of the second presence: the Lord has been working through his instruments. We know that at the time of the Lord's second presence, Pastor Russell was given a special mission. On that point let us recall our theme Scripture, Jeremiah 6:27, *I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way*. Are not these words associated with the receiving by Brother Russell of a name for our religious movement [Watchtower Bible and Tract Society]? He was its pioneer.

We can also easily notice the likeness on the world's arena both at Jeremiah's time and at Brother Russell's time. As we already mentioned, there were many changes in the world's arena in Jeremiah's time. Did it not happen in the same way during the first period of the second presence of our Lord? If we compare the periods of the activity of both those servants, we will notice that they were even the same, each 40 years long.

One can have different opinions about details, but I think the taking of a name by our movement was not accidental. In fact, even though one should not pay too much attention to a name, I think that in receiving such a name we want to express something.

Let us also notice one more detail. On the front page of the *Watch Tower* was placed a tower and a Scripture: *Watchman, what of the night*. By receiving such signs as a name and a tower, we undertake, as it were, that mission. Jeremiah examined the nation's condition by comparing its real condition with the regulations of the Law. Did not Pastor Russell do the same, examining the Scriptures and comparing them with the world's condition? Did not he arrive at similar conclusions? We are those who continue his work. That is why we ought to know continually how to answer many questions concerning the times in which we live.

The Lord's words in Matthew 5:14, *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid*, impose a special duty for us of brightening our surroundings. If we accepted for ourselves the duties of a *student* or *watchman*, then let us remember the duties of watchmen. A distinct statement about it is made in the book of Ezekiel 3:17-21,

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

These Scriptures give the thought of how great a responsibility is laid upon those who fulfill the role of the watchmen. The success of fulfilling that role does not rely on great accomplishments, but on performing duties conscientiously. Conversion from a faulty way depends only on those who are interested in it. Does not the apostle's warning in James 3:1 correspond with the above-mentioned Scriptures? We read, *My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation*. Our duty as servants is to first warn believers, then also godless people. It does not matter whether they listen to us or deride us.

Let us analyze what Jeremiah noticed when he was fulfilling a servant's work. Jeremiah 9:5-9 says:

And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them,

and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

In these Scriptures we find an exact description of the moral condition of Israel at that time. I think we all share the idea that Israel was the house of God, and we agree also with the fact that at the second presence all Christianity was the house of God. Accordingly, we quote the Apostle Peter's words in 1 Peter 4:17,18:

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Judgment of the Nominal Church

Does not Brother Russell, concerning the above mentioned words and the moral condition of Christianity, quote the words, *Come out from 'Babylon' my people?* In the same way we see our Lord proceeding, as in Jeremiah's times. First the Lord identifies evil and simultaneously calls others to separate themselves from evil.

One commentary says that the Greek word translated *judgment* (*krima*) used by the Apostle Peter means a final decision. The Lord gave the final decision in the Church's matter as well as in the matter of all Christianity and the world. The eternal law of God is that before a man is punished his fault is proved. We find that thought in Jeremiah 23:1,2:

Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.

God firmly and clearly proves the fault of the shepherds in Brother Russell's writings and announces that He will settle accounts with everyone for his activity as a shepherd. In Jeremiah 22:15-17 we also find an appraisal of civil power. We read:

Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was

well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.

Hard reproaches were put on secular and civil power—such an appraisal might mean only an *announcement* of a punishment and exile. And so it happened. The whole book *The Battle Of Armageddon* was devoted to an assessment of the moral condition of the civil powers and abuses connected with it.

In Jeremiah 5:3-5 we find an appraisal of a private citizen:

O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.

These words imply that God was not surprised about the condition of the simple, oppressed man, whom God is ever ready to understand. But God was not satisfied with the condition of potentates. He says about them, *They must know me, my laws*. But in reality they did not.

It is similar to our period: evil multiplies from the top. Thinkers and philosophers have been influencing people's faith. Do we not often hear as an explanation of a lack of faith that if God existed, scientists would first prove it? But such an argument does not give anyone a release from the responsibility for breaking the law of God.

As we read the descriptions in Jeremiah's prophecy, we find just how bad the moral condition of Israel was at that time. We conclude that Israel did not differ very much from pagan nations. The case is similar today in nominal Christendom. During a very short time nations, formerly identifying themselves as Christian, have changed into pagan. A great moral falling of many millions of people, Christians by name only, has happened, together with the development of a technical revolution and a general improvement of the material condition of mankind. It is interesting that in that

change of behavior a great role was played by scientists of many kinds.

While in the 18th and 19th centuries philosophical thought, knowledge, literature, etc., were dominated by Christian philosophy, albeit with much error, a general retreat from religion occurred in the 20th century. Most of mankind followed scientists and philosophers who created new ideas. At that time various philosophical trends started to deny the need for religion and even the existence of God. Atheistic and free-thinking ideas developed even in Christian countries. Belief in the Holy Scriptures as an inspired book was weakened. Culture and the arts escaped into abstraction or became very obscene.

We are talking about the official ideas of the East as well as the West. Scientists of those countries tried to weaken a sense of *The Divine Communication*, which is the Bible. Such an activity caused a general laxity of moral norms. In that time, hitherto accepted authorities collapsed. Their places were taken by different kinds of idols which became the standards of life for a great part of society.

Presently many enlightened people think with anxiety about the reasons for the terrible moral degradation, especially among young people. The words of Jeremiah from Lamentations 1:9 provide an answer: *Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end. (Gdansk Bible)*

When analyzing the reason for the extinction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah recognized that the people had forgotten about their future. This is the same today. People have lost their faith in the future, in a future life. They break eternal, divine, moral norms because they do not believe the Bible's promises are true. If it were true that a man is an accidental being who came into existence from nothing and goes to nothing, why should self-denials and sacrifices be undertaken? Why sufferings?

Unfortunately a great part of today's society lives only for today. They organize their lives for that purpose. They do not find any interest in words about the incoming kingdom of God, the resurrection, or about a better *tomorrow*. The demands of such people concern only the present, about their temporal life. Such a society is hard to direct even by civil authorities, because it is impossible to fulfill requests which concern only the present moment.

In Jeremiah's time, Jews tried to escape God's wrath by looking to Egypt and its gods for help. Now the nations, though Christian in name only, look for escape and oblivion in alcoholism, drugs, and debauchery. They look for a spiritual comfort and sense of life in the beliefs of pagan nations, such as Hinduism, Brahmanism, occultism, fortune-telling, etc., instead of the forgotten Christian thought.

Those who do not leave religion and a church behave as Jeremiah says in chapter 7, verses 9 and 10. We read:

Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

For many Christians in name only, a church and religion are like an insurance policy or psychotherapy. They come to church because they have psychological problems. They look for peace, not to return from their erroneous ways. It does not matter to what church such a person goes. He only befouls it and brings down condemnation on himself. There is a large group of people who say they are believers, but, as they quickly add, not *practicing* believers. Is this not an absurdity? How can one believe and not pray? It is as though I would say, *I want to live, but I do not want to breathe*. Can God be pleased with such a condition of the Christian world? I think the answer can only be *NO!*

Judgment of Individuals

We know most people presently living on the earth are not Christian, even in name. What about them? Are they liable to God's judgment? If so, on the basis of what law? I think we find the answer in the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 2:9, *Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile*. We read a similar thought in Jeremiah 25:29, *For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished; for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts*.

So we see God informs us even about the succession of punishment—first, upon those who have knowledge of God's laws, then upon those who do not know God. We also know God first makes an appraisal or judgments, then punishes. He made a

judgment of the Gentile nations through the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:18-21. We read:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; So that they are without excuse; because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

In these verses the apostle makes an exact analysis of the fault of those who deny or do not know God. He says to every man through his works.

The mind, which is given to every man by God, should cause him to consider the questions, Who am I? Why do I exist? Where am I going? The Apostle Paul in Romans 2:14,15 answers according to what measure those who do not know God or his laws are going to be judged. We read:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

The words of the apostle imply that one will be judged on the basis of his own conscience, although often one's conscience is very effaced. The above-mentioned Scriptures from the Word of God jointly say that Gentile nations also are liable for punishment.

I have often wondered why Christendom developed mostly in the countries of Europe, and particularly among Caucasians. Did the apostles not fulfill the Lord's commission included in Matthew 28:19 where we read, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?*

I have found an answer in historical notes which imply that Christianity was well known in China and in India. Arabic countries before Mohammed were also in large part Christian. But probably Christendom was ill. That is why, when difficulties came,

it died. I think this immensely influenced the development of those countries. We know the history of Christendom in Europe, which before the Reformation experienced a huge crisis. Then it was revived and admonished by God's servants.

In Jeremiah's mission we find such words as, *Then the Lord saith unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.* We also read in Jeremiah 11:14, *Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.*

God is merciful, but sometimes there are such moments when His patience is exhausted. The above-mentioned Scriptures say that God is not going to listen to any prayers, and He forbids His servants to intercede in favor of the nations that are liable for punishment.

I think that in preaching the Gospel we are supposed to introduce God as Love. But we should inform people what the Bible says about a punishment and wrath. If we overlook that truth of God's Word, we are preaching only half the truth.

Wrath, Then Restoration

At the beginning of our consideration we noticed that the mission of Jeremiah was composed of two parts: first, the announcement of wrath, then the announcement of restoration. The prophet was to fulfill such a role in relation to Judea as well as to all neighboring nations. Let us look for the fulfillment of that activity by Jeremiah and also for accomplishment of that by Pastor Russell.

God says through Jeremiah in chapter 30, verse 3,

For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

This promise explains that wrath, punishment, and desolation were not for the purpose of exterminating and scattering the nation once and for all, but for the purpose of its moral restoration. God desired to cause the people to come to their senses through punishment. The promise written by Jeremiah in 31:31 goes even further:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.

Note that the prophet who was fulfilling God's commission, who was predicting the hardest punishment for the Jews, was also the prophet who announced the greatest comfort for that nation. When the Jews are saddened, when they acknowledge their mistake, they will again be in covenant relationship with God.

The prophecy gives an answer about what will happen to the neighboring nations, the Gentiles. We read in Jeremiah 12:14-17:

Thus saith the Lord against all mine evil neighbors, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.

It is truly difficult to find a more exactly presented, wonderful hope for all mankind. How nice that these promises harmonize with the Abrahamaic promise, *In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, but on condition that they will learn the ways of my people.

In a similar way the truth of God's Word was presented by Pastor Russell. We are one of many religious groups who pay attention to the announcement of God's wrath upon a world given over to a bad moral condition. But we are the only ones who preach that while the *great trouble* will happen, its purpose is not to bring the extinction of mankind, but to destroy sin and evil. We inform those who will listen, on the basis of the Word of God, that there shall be a resurrection of the just and the unjust So that they may learn the ways of my people. Just as Brother Russell, as a first *student*, taught about hope for all mankind, first for Israel, let us mention the message to that nation as he preached it in New York in 1910 with the words of Isaiah 40:1,2:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is

accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

When those words were spoken, that nation did not have the fulfillment of the promise yet; they did not even expect it. Before becoming a nation there was to be much unhappiness to be brought on by the Second World War. They still had to suffer much to see the miracle that was completed in 1948 or, more precisely, that began to be fulfilled.

I personally believe that that sermon played a great role in God's plan. It turned the attention of Jews as well as Christians upon the subject of those promises. We live in the time when we say much about the approaching kingdom of God, the resurrection, restitution. Although some often say so-and-so is fulfilled, while others say it is still before us, nevertheless, we know God's Word will not fail—it is going to be fulfilled.

How many times did the Jews protest to Jeremiah that his announcements were not going to be fulfilled? But the time for the fulfillment came, and all saw it. For some it was the fulfillment of God's Word, for others revenge and punishment.

I hope that these thoughts will encourage you to a more exact and deeper study of the similarity of these periods. I think in Jeremiah's prophecy we can find many answers to those questions which cause concern to us in our times.

I cordially wish you the blessings of our merciful God in our efforts to understand divine prophecies. May this lesson serve us in the strengthening of our consecration and service for God and Jesus Christ. May the work be done by us, as students, according to the commission of God.

Thank you for your attention.

Archeology Proves The Bible-Brother Raymond J. Krupa, USA

THIS EVENING we will take an exciting trip back through the centuries. We will do this by considering what has been taking place in the field of biblical archeology.

Archeology is the study of the material remains of man's past. These are the tangible things made by man. Archeology has become a science. After years of study and development, these

scientists have developed accurate means of unearthing and reconstructing the ruins of ancient cities. They have learned how to reconstruct pottery and ceramics. They have learned how to analyze ancient writing forms to decipher lost languages.

Those who have confidence in the Bible are delighted with the rapidly accumulating mass of archeological information regarding the Scriptures. Recent discoveries have vastly enriched our knowledge of biblical life and times.

Archeological discoveries can be divided into two groups:

1. The written documents. These would include the ancient languages and information recorded on stone, metal, clay, parchment and papyrus.
2. The objects or artifacts made by man. These would include buildings of all kinds, fortifications, entire cities, sculptures, household vessels, tools, coins, weapons and personal ornaments.

Archeology has helped us to go back thousands of years, documenting biblical events, defining obscure words, explaining ideas, and pinpointing times and events that were previously difficult to understand.

In the Holy Land of the Middle East, places and towns frequently mentioned in the Bible are being brought back into the light of day. Modern exploration of Palestine began in 1838 and since World War II, biblical archeology has made tremendous strides.

Why Are We Interested in Proving the Truthfulness of the Bible?

The Bible is the textbook of Christianity. It not only presents the history of man's fall into sin and the subsequent penalty of death, but it is also the basis for hope that a promised time of peace on earth will actually become a reality. The Bible contains the message that God has a plan for the salvation of all mankind. The messages of the Bible promise an actual restoration of the earth.

Thanks to the findings of archeologists, much of the Bible is now understood better than before.

Let us start at the beginning of the biblical record.

Critics often claim that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible because they say the art of writing was not

known at the time Moses lived. Archeology has proven that long before the time of Moses, reading and writing were common among the early civilizations.

At first, records were made in soft clay by a stylus. The tablet had then to be baked or dried in the sun. For example, at Mari, an Amorite capital on the Euphrates River, some 20,000 clay documents have been discovered. There is good evidence, we think, that the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, was first written on clay tablets similar to the models shown here. Various inscribed clay tablets were probably used by Moses in his work of compiling the book of Genesis.

As one small example, the Scriptures clearly state that the Ten Commandments were written on stone.

This chart shows the development of cuneiform writing. The art and science of writing began with pictures which were gradually developed into symbols. Picture language was another way of recording many events. An Egyptian tomb painting, found in Benihasan, shows how the Hebrews may have looked and dressed shortly after Abraham's time, which was about 1900 B.C.

It is well documented then, that words, signs and symbols communicated history and instruction from man's earliest days on earth. Therefore we believe that God provided Moses with these necessary skills and materials which enabled him to write the first five books of the Bible. Archeologists have given us this proof of biblical authenticity.

Another criticism, related to the early written word, is that the Bible records names of cities and places that don't exist.

This is an ancient boundary stone. It documents that certain locations had their names changed from time to time. On this stone one city has several names. The names of the cities often changed according to who was ruling the city.

A biblical illustration of this is found in the book of Genesis where the account is given regarding the death of Abraham's wife Sarah. Because the location had its name changed, the writer gives both names. We read from chapter 23 of Genesis, verse 2: *And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba: the same is Hebron, in the land of Canaan.*

Sometimes because cities and other geographic entities have had their names changed, critics have mistakenly assumed that the

Bible accounts are inaccurate. But archeology is proving that locales presently known by one name are indeed the same as described in the Bible under ancient names.

Critics of the Bible have also insisted that many of the accounts regarding Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham are merely allegories, fairy tales, or myths. Archeology proves that this is not so.

Abraham's Life

The life of Abraham, one of the great patriarchs of the Bible, is particularly interesting. Some consider him merely a fine character who loved and served God, which is true. However, he is very special because one of the greatest promises ever made by God was made to Abraham. This promise will affect all who have ever lived.

This biblical promise is recorded in the first book of Moses in Genesis 22:17,18:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

One of the first requests that God made of this man Abraham was to leave his homeland and migrate to the land now called Palestine. This map shows the progressive migration of Abraham and his family from east to west along what is called the Fertile Crescent.

Ur was the capital of ancient Sumer on the Persian Gulf.

Haran is where Abraham received the divine command.

Shechem was Abraham's first stop in Palestine, and Hebron was where God renewed his covenant with the patriarch.

Abraham continued south through the Negev Desert to Egypt and then returned to Hebron. It was at Hebron that he finally died and was buried. Archeological findings regarding the migrations around 2000 B.C. agree with the entry of Abraham into Canaan at that time period.

Ur is named in Genesis 11:28-31 and Genesis 15:7. In this latter text we read: *And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.*

So Ur is shown to be the home of Abraham and the starting point of his long journey, first to Haran and then on to Canaan. Ur was in a general area known as Mesopotamia, meaning *land between the waters*. The ancient city of Babylon was in this region.

Today the sifting sands of time have changed the looks of the land.

A large ziggurat or temple rose above the walled city of Ur. This mighty ziggurat or temple tower dominated the city in the period of her greatness which was at the time of Abraham. The ziggurat was a feature of every Sumerian temple.

Glazed bricks excavated from the shrine of a false god in the ziggurat at Ur now rest in the British Museum. The ziggurat at Babylon, which was in the same geographic area as Ur, is thought to be the biblical Tower of Babel spoken of in Genesis chapter 11, verse 3.

It is reassuring to learn that archeologists are discovering many ancient landmarks mentioned in the Bible, among them the city of Abraham, Ur. Excavations in the sepulchers of Ur produced golden ornaments of great value. Often the archeologists found images that were worshipped.

Found among these valuable artifacts was a shell-fleeced goat peering through a golden tree. It is thought that the Sumerian artisan was probably commemorating the event when Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac.

This significant event is recorded in Genesis, chapter 22. God asked Abraham to offer his son not because God wanted a human sacrifice, but to prove Abraham's faith and to make a picture of God's plan of salvation. Abraham was stopped from sacrificing his son and instead a ram was provided. As you remember the account, this ram was caught in a nearby thicket.

The archeological finding of a *ram caught in the thicket* commemorates in art form that great event. That great test of Abraham's faith showed in picture language that God would provide another sacrifice and actually it would be God's son, Jesus. In a much larger and more significant picture, God would provide a lamb, His son, to be the redeemer of the entire world of mankind.

Abraham's city of Ur and the various Sumerian artifacts are important because they give archeological evidence that the story of Abraham is not a myth, but a true story regarding real people and real places.

Our case doesn't rest here. Other details of the Old Testament are also documented by archeology. As a matter of fact, the door into this world of the Old Testament was thrown open by the realization of archeologists that mounds of earth, called *tells*, contained numerous proofs of biblical history.

The Near East is dotted with tells. These are man-made mounds whose layers were formed over thousands of years by successive construction on top of the ruins of older settlements.

This tell is shown in cross-section as an archeologist might draw it, after he carefully excavated all its levels of occupation. Each historical level or strata gives evidence of different periods. The evidence consists of pottery (mostly broken), masonry of houses, jewelry, coins and other artifacts.

Here we have illustrated in color how various levels of occupation were found by archeologists. The most ancient level of occupation is at the bottom of the tell.

When Professor Wooley excavated the ruins of the ancient city of Ur, he instructed his men to continue digging even below the graves of the kings, which in itself was a very famous archeological discovery.

The diggers finally came to a band of clay. As they continued digging through this clay deposit [almost ten feet thick], they again struck fresh evidence of human habitation. However, the appearance and quality of the pottery had changed noticeably. In the upper strata the jars and bowls obviously had been turned on a potter's wheel. Those found in the strata below the band of clay were made by hand.

That day a telegram from Mesopotamia flashed a most extraordinary message: WE HAVE FOUND THE FLOOD!

Yes, this great layer of mud and clay was believed to be an enormous deposit caused by the great flood recorded in the Bible as the flood in the days of Noah.

The Life of Israel

Now let's turn to another page of biblical history. This page concerns the nation of Israel.

The Israelites travelled from Canaan to Egypt in the days of Jacob and Joseph because of a famine in the land of Canaan. The growing nation of Israel remained in Egypt for 215 years. They spent most of that time as slaves of the Egyptian pharaoh.

Egyptian paintings and reliefs give evidence that Egypt, especially the area of the eastern delta of the Nile, was a favorite refuge for neighboring peoples in times of famine.

We see this region on this map. It starts somewhat east of modern Cairo and runs to the Suez Canal. Most scholars identify the present-day area called Wadi Tumilat, near the Suez Canal, as the land of Goshen, where the sons of Jacob settled.

A relief on the temple wall at Luxor, in upper Egypt, shows captives with Semitic, Hebrew-like features. It is only one example among several such reliefs and paintings found in both upper and lower Egypt. Archeologists believe that this is evidence of Hebrew slaves in Egypt.

Pharaoh Merenptah is considered by some to have been the pharaoh of the actual exodus of the Israelites. He was the successor to Rameses the Second. He was the first Egyptian ruler to record the name Israel. Here we see the word Israel underlined by a white mark toward the bottom of this monument.

When the Israelites left Egypt, they first crossed the Red Sea and then set out over the burning Sinai desert. They spent 40 years wandering in this wilderness. God intended that the Israelites inhabit the land of Palestine which was a fertile, productive land, but their continued disobediences delayed their entry.

Moses was their leader throughout these wanderings, but he knew that he would not live long enough to lead the nation into the promised land. Shortly before his death, Moses assured the people that God would fulfill his promise to them. In a kind of *farewell speech* Moses reminded the people, as recorded in the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy 8:7-9:

For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys

and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of oil olive and honey, a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

Our chief interest here, in an archeological sense, is that among the good things the Hebrews would find in this land would be *stones of iron*, and they would also find copper, mistranslated *brass* in the English King James version.

For years there was a general belief that copper and iron did not even exist in the land given to the children of Israel. However, we now know differently. In 1937, Nelson Glueck of the American School of Oriental Research unearthed what is sometimes referred to as the *Pittsburgh of the tenth century B.C.* In those days, Pittsburgh was the largest metal refining center in the United States. This discovery in Palestine was similarly a large copper and iron refinery built by King Solomon.

It was at E-Zion-Geber that Rabbi Glueck discovered slag heaps, furnace rooms, ruins of miner's huts, a city gate and even iron and copper nails.

Some distance from E-Zion-Geber are the copper mines which supplied Solomon's smelter. It was from these reddish, copper-filled cliffs that hundreds of workers dug the ore. The spectacular formations shown here are known as Solomon's Pillars. Israel today, as in the past, mines copper in this region.

Once again, even though there were disbelievers and those who said the biblical record was false, the earth contained archeological evidence that in time proved the Bible to be accurate.

One of the great discoveries regarding Palestine and the physical record of the Scriptures has to do with Mount Sinai.

In the early history of Israel, just after the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites soon found themselves in the mountainous desert region of the Sinai. When the Israelites came to Mt. Sinai, they camped in the plains before this majestic mountain. It was here that Jehovah God gave the people, through Moses, the Ten Commandments and entered into covenant relationship with them.

Many hundreds of years later, in the third century after Christ, Christian hermits came to Mt. Sinai to escape Roman persecution. They lived in caves, drank from springs and ate dates from palms.

In the sixth century, because of continued attacks from Bedouins, the hermits appealed to Emperor Justinian to build them a monastery for protection. For many years, hermits, aesthetes, and monks lived high in the mountains at Sinai.

In 1844 a German biblical scholar named Constantine Tischendorf decided to make a trip to the monastery in Mt. Sinai in search of biblical manuscripts.

Professor Tischendorf's Fortuitous Discovery

It was no easy task to get there, but the rugged trip through the desert and the mountains was well worth his effort. Tischendorf was searching for ancient manuscripts of the books of the Bible. The older the manuscripts, and the more that could be obtained, the more he could prove the accuracy of the written words of the Bible.

As he walked through the large halls of the monastery on his way to the library, Tischendorf noticed a large waste basket filled with ancient manuscripts. He was amazed to see that these manuscripts in the waste basket were part of the Old Testament in the oldest Greek he had ever examined.

He asked the librarian about these manuscripts. The librarian casually told him that this waste paper was to be burned in the furnace and that two such baskets had already been disposed of. They just hadn't had time to burn this last basket.

Tischendorf managed to obtain and edit several pages of those scrolls, but the monks refused to let him have more of the manuscripts. He returned several years later, but again he met with no success in his attempts to purchase the *wastepaper*.

On this return trip in 1859, the monks did show Tischendorf a very significant manuscript. It was an old manuscript, dating from about 350 years after Christ. It contained part of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament. It was written on beautiful vellums, or sheepskin. Today it is called the codex of Mt. Sinai, or *Codex Sinaiticus*, and it can be seen in the British Museum in London.

Professor Tischendorf's studies of these ancient manuscripts showed the great value of the early copies of the Scripture. Since the various scrolls and manuscripts had all been copied by hand, over the centuries inaccuracies crept into the text. Sometimes words and thoughts were changed, sometimes the copier thought he was improving the meaning and sometimes he was adding his own ideas.

Tischendorf's study was one of the first to reveal these changes, and his corrections thusly made the Scriptures more accurate. Continued findings by archeologists and scholars have more and more increased the clarity of God's Word. Over 13,000 manuscripts now have been found and identified as part of the New Testament alone. Some of the manuscripts are but fragments, but others contain the entire Scriptures.

The removal of the spurious or added sections has made the Bible more harmonious and has given a more consistent version of God's plan. This is a very interesting study in itself, but suffice it to say at this time that we are grateful that most of the medieval additions to the Scriptures have been corrected.

When we speak of the great archeologic discoveries of scrolls and manuscripts, we must mention that great discovery of 1947. A Bedouin shepherd boy, while searching for a goat that had strayed among the stark cliffs of Quamran, accidently found the famous *Dead Sea Scrolls*.

The cave yielded a commentary on the book of Habakkuk, a version of Genesis in Aramaic and the entire book of Isaiah. The style of the Hebrew letters dates the book of Isaiah from about 100 B.C. Scholars have been working on these manuscripts for the past 40 years and the fruits of their labors are just now being published. Again we have modern-day proof of the accuracy of the ancient biblical accounts.

The nation of Israel has built a museum as a showcase for the scrolls. This Shrine of the Book was built to resemble the top of a jar such as was found in the cave which held the scrolls.

Sometimes the great discoveries are found after much laborious work with pick and shovel, sometimes they are found in waste baskets and sometimes by Bedouin shepherds. God has used many ways to bring His truth to light.

The New Testament

Now let us turn our attention to archeology and the New Testament.

Palestine, the land which God promised to Abraham and his posterity, is also the country in which Jesus, the world's redeemer and savior, was born. That great event took place in the city of Bethlehem. It was at that time while shepherds tended their flocks by night that they heard the angels say what is recorded in Luke 2:10,11:

Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ, the Lord.

One of the interesting aspects of this statement is that it says the message is to be to *all people*. This is very similar to the great promise to Abraham that the blessings would include *all the families of the earth*.

It was in this land, in the city of Nazareth, that Jesus grew up as a boy. Mary, the mother of Jesus, would often come to this well to draw water for the family.

When Jesus was 30 years of age, he went to John the Baptist at the River Jordan to be baptized. The next day John, speaking to his own followers, pointed to Jesus and said, *Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.*

The ministry of Jesus brought great comfort to the poor. He healed the sick, opened blind eyes, and made the lame walk. While Jesus performed many miracles, he constantly taught his disciples that in due time he would establish a kingdom on earth that would bless all the world.

While on this Mount of Beatitudes, Jesus' disciples said: *Lord, teach us to pray*. Part of the Lord's prayer includes that wonderful phrase: *May thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth even as it is done in heaven*. To this day we offer that as yet unanswered prayer. But God answers prayer and surely His kingdom shall come.

The ministry of Jesus took him to many places, almost all of which can be identified and located today. He performed his first miracle in Cana of Galilee. He went to Tiberias and to the Mount of

Transfiguration, even to Shechem in Samaria where the Samaritan woman asked for the *water of life*.

On one occasion, while visiting the city of Nain, he brought back to life the son of a widow. He loved to go to Bethany and visit his friends there. Toward the end of his earthly ministry he brought back to life his good friend Lazarus who had been dead for four days.

These happy occasions of receiving loved ones from the condition of death were just little samples of what it will be like when the kingdom for which we pray will be established on earth. At that time, according to John 5:28,29, all those who are in their graves will hear the voice of the Lord and come forth.

Finally the time came for Jesus to be offered on Calvary's cross as the redeemer of the whole world of mankind. Strong archeologic proofs exist concerning the Bible's record of the closing hours of our Lord's life on earth.

Wener Keller, in his book *The Bible As History*, has this to say on page 369:

The descriptions of the trial, sentence, and crucifixion in the four Gospels have been checked with scientific thoroughness by many scholars and have been found to be historically reliable accounts even to the last detail. The chief witnesses for the prosecution against Jesus have been indirectly attested, and the place where sentence was pronounced has been accurately ascertained by excavations. The various incidents in the course of the trial can be verified from contemporary and modern research.

The Gospel of John 19:13 reads: *When Pilot therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement.*

It was from this Pavement that Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified. An archeologist by the name of L. H. Vincent, through years of hard work, found this Pavement. It escaped destruction when Jerusalem began to be destroyed in A. D. 70.

The Romans during our Lord's day made their Palestinian headquarters in Caesarea, along the Mediterranean Sea, north of Jerusalem. In 1961 excavations revealed an amphitheater and other Roman buildings and artifacts.

One of the most meaningful finds unearthed in the debris was a fragment of a Roman inscription that mentions Emperor Tiberius and Pontius Pilate. So far this is the only archeological evidence of the famous procurator who presented Jesus to the people saying, *Behold the man.*

Archeologists believe that this is Calvary. We realize that Jesus did not die because the mob demanded his death, but because it was part of God's plan of salvation. It would have been on this hill that Jesus, the Son of God, tasted death for every man. We read in 1 John 2:2, *And he [Jesus] tasted death for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

In that Scripture we have hope for those of us who now believe and also for those spoken of as the whole world.

Here we see a model of how Jerusalem looked in the days of Jesus. The beautiful temple towered above the city. At the close of our Lord's ministry, referring to the temple, the Master said, as recorded in Matthew 24:2, *See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.*

Jerusalem was completely destroyed in A. D. 73 by Titus, commander of the Roman forces. An arch of triumph was erected in honor of Titus' great victory. It stands in Rome to this day. One of the great trophies of war which Titus took with him to Rome, along with many prisoners, was the golden candlestick from the temple. It is inscribed on Titus' arch of triumph.

Jesus' prophecy regarding the destruction of the temple was fulfilled during the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Only one of the temple's walls escaped destruction. That foundation wall remains today as a symbol of the Jews' ancient heritage. Just as Jesus' prophecy of destruction was certain, equally certain are his prophecies of his coming kingdom and of the coming blessings.

Excavations at Masada

A small group of Jews escaped from the Romans during the siege of Jerusalem and found refuge in a fortress called Masada. Masada was formerly a fortress and palace of King Herod. It was at Masada that 960 men, women and children, for a short time, held back the whole might of the Roman empire. The Jews fortified themselves in this mountaintop fortress and desperately fought off the Romans.

This view from the top of the fortress looks down upon the Roman ruins where the warriors camped.

The mountain protected the Jews, but in the end, the Romans prevailed. They built a huge ramp from the base of the mountain up to the level of the fortress. Then they were in position to storm the stronghold.

The Jews knew that they could not hold out any longer. The day before the Romans made their final attack, when everything was indeed hopeless, the Jews at Masada decided to take their own lives.

In order to avoid the torture of the Romans, each of the Jews made a suicide pact. Every man was to kill his own family and then himself. As agreed each man embraced his wife and children, and then killed them, and then took his own life. Only two women and three children escaped this suicide pact and they lived to tell the story of what happened to the Fortress Masada in A.D. 73.

In 1966 Professor Yigal Yadin, with the help of thousands of volunteers from 27 countries, excavated Masada. Normally such a project would have taken 26 years. But the archeologists were so moved by the history of Masada that the excavation was complete in eleven months.

They found part of Herod's Masada palace with wall paintings that were still visible.

In this storage area they found remnants of food, sandals of women and children, pieces of cloth, cosmetic objects and other artifacts.

But the greatest discovery was tucked away in an insignificant hiding place. The archeologists found the most stirring thing of all: some scrolls of the Bible!

It is impossible to imagine the electrifying experience they felt when, as they slowly and carefully unrolled the first scroll, they read these words from Ezekiel:

Son of man, can these bones live?

It seems impossible for there to have been a more significant Scripture to have first been unrolled by the archeologists. This Scripture asks if the nation of Israel can come back to life. Amid

the Masada ruins where the Israelites seemingly went out of existence, the Scripture asked the question: *Can these bones live?*

We know that this prophecy is referring directly to Israel because in Ezekiel 37:11 the Lord identifies who the dry bones are. The text says, *These bones are the whole house of Israel.*

Yes, for hundreds of years, Israel was like a heap of dry bones. Israel, for all intents and purposes, went out of existence after the destruction of Jerusalem and after the fall of Masada. But the Bible had promised a regathering of Israel. The Bible had promised that God's favor would again bring the Jews back to Palestine.

How beautiful it was that the scroll found at Masada would speak of the great prophecy pertaining to the regathering of the Israelites from the lands where they were scattered since A.D. 70. Yes, the bones will live again.

In our day we have seen that return and rebirth, just as the Bible foretold. Originally as they came from many nations scattered around the world, they brought with them the life styles of each of their countries. But now the new generations are fast growing to maturity. Multiple generations have now been born in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This picture was taken from the excavations at Megiddo. The plains below were where Joshua and Gideon once led the Israelites in battle. Today the fields bear rich fruitage.

Many areas, once arid wastes, are now a lush green. Oranges, bananas and other produce are being exported to many countries.

Credit must go to the industrious Israelites, but the point that is encouraging to us is that prophecy is being fulfilled, and this regathering of Israel to their homeland is one of the great signs that soon God's kingdom will be established on earth.

The Bible's Promises Are Sure

From So many independent sources, from So many different points of view, we have confirmation of the Bible.

But there is little purpose in knowing that the Bible is true unless we also take note of what God is saying to us concerning His plans and purposes for the deliverance and eternal blessing of His human family.

Surely we are all aware that our world is filled with sorrow, distress, and problems that are beyond human solutions. Millions of people in the world have no home. Night after night they sleep in the street. They carry all their earthly possessions, and most times they don't know where their next meal will come from.

The problems of this present world defy human solution. We look to God for His remedy. We look to His word and to His promises.

The Scriptures promise peace on the earth. Daniel the prophet said: *The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.* (Daniel 2:44)

The Scriptures promise health and happiness. John the Revelator said: *God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes . . . neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more.* (Revelation 21:4)

The Scriptures promise that the earth will abide forever, it will never be destroyed. Ecclesiastes says: *The earth abides forever.* (Ecclesiastes 1:4)

The Scriptures promise a world of righteousness. The prophet Isaiah said: *When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* (Isaiah 29:6)

The Scriptures promise a resurrection of the dead. Jesus said: *The hour is coming in which all those in the tombs will hear my voice and come forth.* (John 5:28,29)

The Scriptures promise that the entire world will live under this righteous rule of peace. Isaiah said: *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.* (Isaiah 11:9)

These are the statements of the Bible. But are they believable?

Yes, they are believable. Just as the Bible accurately recorded the ancient cities of Ur and the events of the life and times of Abraham, just as accurately will the promise to Abraham of a blessing of *all the families of the earth* be fulfilled.

Just as the Bible accurately recorded the existence of the Babylonian Empire and the life and times of the prophet Daniel, just as accurately will the promise to Daniel of a time of the end

when knowledge would increase and many would run to and fro be fulfilled.

Just as archeologists proved the biblical record of the great flood in the days of Noah, just as certain as the existence of the cities of Bethlehem and Judea, just as accurately as the pavement stones of Pilate's time and the hill of Calvary, just as accurately will every word of Jesus' promises and teachings be fulfilled.

In the 35th chapter of Isaiah we have the assurance that, when God's kingdom is established, *then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing.* (Isaiah 35:5,6)

And again from the last book of the Bible, in Revelation 21:4,5, we read of that wonderful time:

And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

We have been able to touch only the highlights of how archeology proves the Bible to be true. There is much more evidence and there is more in the Bible about God's plan for man.

We would like to give you a copy of a small booklet, *Archeology Proves the Bible*. It is free and without any obligation. It goes into greater detail concerning the subject we've presented.

Our prayer is that you may have been stimulated to a greater love for our Heavenly Father and that you will continue to study God's Word.

Amen.

Friendship-Brother Timothy Krupa, USA

A friend loveth at all times. (Proverbs 17:17) There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24) Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

DO YOU know what a friend is? You had better know what a friend is. The term *a friend* is one of the language labels given to a

relationship between two individuals. That language label describes how they feel, act, regard, and behave toward each other. As Christians, we can use this language label in two different ways to describe a person's relationship to *present truth*. We can say that someone is a *friend of the truth*. Usually this means this person has a rather casual relationship to the life of sacrifice and most likely is not consecrated to the high calling. But he likes and respects God's plan, So he is a *friend of the truth*. Secondly and more importantly, we can describe someone as a *friend in the truth*. The part of the expression *in the truth* implies they are covenanted to sacrifice and they are running for the prize of the high calling.

This afternoon I would like to speak of our friends *in the truth*.

Friendship in the Church

Who started this expression? Who started to call Christians friends? Who spoke of friendship between members of the Church class? I believe it was initiated by Jesus. In John 15:15 Jesus said:

Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

We see that the disciples and the early Church adopted this terminology by the expression in 3 John 14: *Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee.*

Jesus' followers, those *in the truth*, are called friends. There is a very important reason for this and that is why we will spend some time this afternoon on friends and friendship.

The Greek word *philos* means to be fond of, to cherish. *Philos* is translated *love* in our English Bible. It might have been more accurately translated *friendship* or *friend*. We know that our Heavenly Father places an incredible and ultimate importance on the development of love. It must be part of our New Creature. When all else is completed, it will be our personal attainment of the quality of love that will determine our degree of heavenly reward.

Philos or *friendship* is part of that development of (*agape*) love. One of the ways of increasing your (*agape*) love is to first increase your *friendship*, your *capacity for friendship*, your *expression of friendship*. First be a friend, and that will grow into [*agape*] love.

Among the English-speaking brethren we frequently use the term friends: *The friends in Portland send you their love. It has been wonderful to be with the friends at this convention. We pray for the friends overseas every day.*

Some languages have several different words for different kinds of friends, but in each language we modify the words to define the many, many different kinds of friends that exist, such as close friends, intimate friends, bosom friends, best friends, good friends, devoted friends, faithful friends, trusted friends, inseparable friends, distant friends, casual friends, former friends.

True friendship has requirements. There is a recipe for friendship; it doesn't just happen. It has ingredients, required elements. The spirit mind must be interested in being a friend. We are to be a friend of Jesus; we are to have a friendship with God; and we are to be friends with each other.

Do you know what a friend is? Yes, we had better know what a friend is. And we should work at being better friends.

Scientists tell us that friendship has an actual, physical affect on the mind and body. It has been proven that people without friends get sick more often. Statistics prove that the rate of hospitalization for mental disorders is five to ten times greater for people without friends. People without friends have more cancer. People without friends have more infections. People without friends have increased rates of all illnesses. People without friends have more depression, more lost work time, more accidents. If this is true in the natural, biological world, it must be true in the spiritual world. Translate those statistics to the spiritual life: to be without spiritual friends means increased rates of spiritual sickness, increased rates of spiritual depression, spiritual infections, etc. There is real impact to our lives if we are lacking in friends or if we do not know how to be a friend to others. To explore this topic let us look at three friends of God, all from the book of Genesis.

Abraham

The greatest accolade of friendship was given to a man named Abraham. We are told that this man was a friend of God. (James 2:23) What an incredible relationship, to be called the friend of God. Abraham's life had important elements that made possible such a relationship, such a friendship. Those same elements are required in any relationship if it is going to be a friendship.

Let me suggest a list of seven required elements for friendship. If two individuals have only one or two of these required elements, it is not enough for a *solid friendship*. If they have three or four of the elements, that makes for a *casual friendship*. Five or six make *good friends*. And if you have all seven, and you have them with significance, then you are the *best of friends*!

1. The first requirement for friendship is to *SHARE*. Individuals must share common ideas, activities, interests, beliefs, or preferences.
2. They must *UNDERSTAND* each other. This means they communicate and they even understand each other's peculiarities and eccentricities.
3. They *RESPECT* each other. They consider the other worthy of esteem, of value. They believe there is something good about the other person.
4. They *TRUST*. They believe the other party is honest, not two-faced, not a hypocrite.
5. They *ACCEPT*. This means they don't try to change the other party. They take them for what they are. They are not trying to constantly improve the other. They have tolerance for error.
6. They are *LOYAL*. They look out for each other. They are constant, faithful. They support. They are ready to help. They would never do anything to undermine or hurt.
7. They *TEACH AND LEARN* from each other. Because of the first six elements, they are open and receptive. They improve by their association. They grow, expand, develop.

In some degree these seven elements are in a general priority sequence. You must share and communicate before you can respect. You must respect before you can trust and accept. And you must trust and accept before you can be loyal.

Let us look for these elements in the friendship between Abraham and God. Despite the tremendous gap between Jehovah and Abraham, a gap between the ultimate spirit being and a mortal man, the elements of friendship were present.

What did Abraham *SHARE* with God? Well, they both loved righteousness. They both loved mercy and justice. Their principles

were the same, their interests were the same, their values were the same. They shared a vision of a better day. They shared a standard of righteousness and a separation from evil.

After the foundation of sharing, it was necessary that Abraham and Jehovah *UNDERSTAND* each other. They had to speak the same language of the spirit. They communicated. Messages, words, were understood. The intent was always clear. Message sent was message received. There was no mis-understanding, no mis-translation, no mis-information.

As we think about the promise of blessing, we see that the understanding increased as the friendship increased. In Genesis 17, verse 18, we see that the first level of understanding was at the Eliezer level. Abraham thought his servant would have to be his seed. Then the understanding progressed to the Ishmael level. Abraham thought that the son of Hagar would have to be his seed. Finally the understanding progressed to the Isaac level. The more they understood each other, the better friends they became.

In Genesis 18:22,23 we have an incredible dialog between God and Abraham. This is where Abraham speaks to God. Dare we say he debates with God regarding the destruction of Sodom? Nowhere in literature is there a more eloquent dialog between a mere mortal and the highest ruler of the universe: *If there be 40 righteous, will you spare the city? If there be 20, will you save the city?* We see the elements of friendship building and growing. In Genesis 18:32 Abraham said, *Oh let not the Lord be angry and I will speak but this once more, If there be ten righteous.* Only friends can talk like that!

The third element of friendship is *RESPECT*. Respect means that you believe that the other person is worthy of dealing with, that he has value, that there's something good about the other person. Out of all the people on the earth God chose Abraham because He respected Abraham, He respected his mind and his heart. Abraham respected God So much that he moved his family from his homeland without a question because God asked him to do it.

Element four: they *TRUSTED* each other. When there is trust, there is no keeping of secrets. Friends tell you everything. In Genesis 18:17 God says, *Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?* Abraham trusted God with his son's life (Genesis 22). God trusted Abraham with the most incredible promise of blessing ever made (Genesis 22:16).

Friendship element number five is my favorite. This may be the biggest key to any friendship: acceptance. They *ACCEPTED* each other, again the highest spirit being in the universe and a nomadic, desert sheik. Abraham accepted God as He was. He didn't try to make Him like the heathen gods or try to make Him a multiple god or into a stone god or a sun god. And God did the same. Abraham was a herdsman. God didn't try to make him into a pharaoh. Accept the person for what they are, not what you want them to be. Accept their noble qualities, accept their weaknesses. That's a key to friendship.

They were *LOYAL* to each other (element number six). Abraham was loyal to God all his life. God was loyal to Abraham beyond Abraham's life: loyal to his seed to endless generations. They supported each other. Abraham was God's ambassador, His prophet. Even the heathen recognized that God was with Abraham. God gave Abraham physical, emotional, and miraculous support.

Element seven is *TEACHING AND LEARNING*. Certainly Abraham learned from God, but it is difficult to imagine God learning from a man. Perhaps it wasn't exactly learning, but Abraham was a free moral agent. He was a creative and thinking person. He came up with new ideas. And despite God's foreknowledge, Abraham was not a robot. God watched, accepted, and delighted in Abraham's daily efforts to serve Him.

Because of the presence and growth of these seven elements, something happened between these two. We might call it the final element of friendship. There developed a caring, a feeling, an emotion. They developed an affection for each other. *Philos*. They were friends!

You will notice that friendship is not owning the other person. God didn't own Abraham. Abraham was not a puppet. God shared him with His family, with the angels, even with the world. Abraham didn't own God. It was not an exclusive relationship. Abraham shared God with his family and his worldly acquaintances. There was no exploitation, no continual asking for favors. Again, there was respect for the other person's time and individuality. Abraham and God were *good friends*, they were the *best of friends*.

Jacob

Abraham's grandson was Jacob. Jacob is our second example of friendship. Jacob had a lengthy relationship with God. But Jacob was a totally different personality type than Abraham. Later

writers, Biblical historians, did not give him the label of *friend of God*, but he was, maybe a little different kind of friend. In this alone there is a big lesson.

Being friends doesn't make you identical. One person can have different kinds of friends whose personalities and characteristics greatly differ. They can be tall, young, intellectual, emotional, in the truth many years, or new in the truth. God was still Jacob's friend, even though Jacob was quite different than Abraham.

You remember the details of Jacob's life, how he obtained the birthright from his older brother Esau, how deceit was used to get a further blessing from his father Isaac, how he obtained his wives and how he was tricked by his father-in-law Laban.

Ge 28:12-15 tells us of the dream Jacob had about the ladder, where the Lord spoke and repeated the promised blessing to him. In the 18th verse it tells how Jacob built a memorial. He made a vow to serve the Lord and to give Jehovah ten percent of his annual production.

In Genesis 31:3 the Lord promises Jacob that *I will be with you*. In Genesis 31:24 Jacob's father-in-law was warned by God not to harm Jacob. In Genesis 32:2, angels were sent to Jacob. In verse 24 Jacob wrestled with the angel, and in verse 28 his name was changed to Israel. In verse 30 Jacob said, *I saw God face to face and yet my life was spared*.

In the later chapters of Genesis we have the story of Jacob and his son Joseph. Oh how he loved Joseph, the firstborn of Rachel. You remember the coat of many colors. He loved Joseph as a man loves his only son. Don't think for a moment that God overlooked how Jacob loved his son.

Did you see the elements of friendship with God in Jacob's life? Again they *SHARED* attributes of righteousness. They shared an interest in the family heritage. Jacob's grandfather was God's friend. They shared that all-important promised blessing. They both had a son whom they loved dearly.

They *UNDERSTOOD* and communicated with each other, sometimes in dreams, sometimes in conversation, sometimes through angels.

I didn't see it at first, but God did *RESPECT* Jacob. He saw in him inherent qualities of goodness.

Jacob *TRUSTED* a little more in the arm of flesh than he should have. But the *ACCEPTANCE* by God of this man Jacob was even more incredible because of Jacob's immaturity. Jacob was materialistic, almost deceitful. Yet he was accepted by God.

The *LOYALTY* was unquestioned. Jacob supported God. He was another ambassador. He raised his children to be God-fearing and he was the founder of the nation of Israel. And Jacob *LEARNED* a great deal from this relationship.

All these characteristics and experiences added up to the caring, affection, and emotion of a friendship —*philos* —affection.

In Genesis 46 near the end of Jacob's life he was united with his son Joseph. They were trying to decide if the entire family should move to Egypt. God speaks to Jacob in verse 2:

And God spake unto Israel [remember that Jacob's name had been changed to Israel] in the visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob, fear not to go down into Egypt. I will be with you.

He called him Jacob! That was his former name! That was his name when they first met! Here were two old friends talking to each other. It was like they had their arms around each other. They were saying *good-bye*. This was the last time they spoke to each other, and God called him Jacob.

And Jacob did not forget God either. In Genesis 48:14, as he was dying, he blessed foremost Joseph's younger son. (Traditionally it was the oldest son who was supposed to receive the major blessing.) For Jacob it was his way of saying to God, to his friend, that he never forgot that he was not the firstborn. He was the second-born, and yet God had blessed him greatly.

Did you notice what kind of a friend God is? Jacob was half the man his grandfather was, but God was still his friend. That's a good lesson for us. Abraham was a super-star. Jacob was ordinary in many respects. God was friend to each because He saw, He felt, He experienced enough of the seven elements of friendship So that He truly understood, accepted, respected, and trusted these men.

It is a natural tendency to only want to be friends with super-stars. But we must look at our truth acquaintances, we must scratch beneath the surface, to find the qualities that God requires for friendship. The basis of our friendship as brethren begins with our

individual friendship with God. Jude says to keep ourselves in the love of God. That is strictly up to us. God will not change.

Do we have the required elements to have a friendship with God? What do we share with God? Do we understand and communicate, respect, trust—totally trust—accept every part of His will? Are we always loyal, supportive, eager to learn?

After we are friends with God, we can proceed to be friends with our brethren on a spiritual basis. As we examine our relationships with each other and question each element of the friendship formula, we can perceive why with some brethren we are good friends. In other cases we can see what is limiting us from being closer friends.

There are some brethren to whom we might not be naturally drawn. But if we can perceive their friendship with God, we see a new basis for our friendship. We must examine the list of required friendship-elements in a spiritual sense, not a worldly sense: spiritual sharing, communication, trust, acceptance, loyalty, etc. If we are unable to be friends with our brethren in Christ, then it is likely that this will strain our friendship with God.

We need to really know what a friend is, because there are all kinds of friends: close, intimate, good, best, faithful, trusted, inseparable. But alas there are also fair-weather friends, distant friends, false friends, and former friends. One of the saddest situations is that of *former friends*. People do change, and as each grows or changes in his or her own way, the basis of the seven elements of friendship changes.

We often hear of the situation where someone meets an old friend with whom they went to school many years ago. In their school days they were the best of friends. But now they meet again and they have very little to talk about. They now have little in common, nothing to share. The understanding lessens and therefore the trust decreases. The loyalty and support diminish. If this happens with a worldly contact, then it is a good thing, because James says that friendship with the world is enmity with God. (James 4:4) But the phenomenon of *former friends* can also happen among brethren. Possibly it is only a communication lack, but still the foundation is undermined. Sometimes one of the parties violates the requirements. The trust is broken, there are acts of disloyalty, one refuses to accept the other. These are all ingredients of the condition known as *former friends*.

Adam

One of the greatest friendships, one with incredible potential that degraded into a *former friendship*, was Adam's friendship with God. This is our third example from Genesis (chapters 2 and 3).

Adam was placed in a beautiful garden. There were trees not only for food but pleasant to the eye. He was given a help-mate and allowed to name the animals. These were all acts of God's friendship. Genesis 3:8 implies that they regularly spoke with each other. But Adam's friendship with Eve interfered with his friendship with God, and the relationship between Adam and God changed. The relationship became tarnished. There was a separation. Even so, God still offered acts of friendship after the expulsion. There were the garments of skins, the promise of deliverance, the birth of Seth.

Adam had insufficient ingredients in the friendship formula. He didn't have enough understanding, he didn't trust, he wasn't loyal—so he lost a friend. The tragedy of fighting the thorns and thistles, tilling the cursed ground, didn't compare to the personal agony, the sickening emptiness of having lost communication with God. He didn't realize until it was too late, but Adam lost his *best friend*.

We run the same risk. In a spiritual sense, we have all the same possibilities: inadequate trust, failure to keep a current understanding, lack of communication, lapses into disloyalty. It is possible that we could not share enough, not support enough, not learn enough, to remain good friends with God. God accepts us for what we are. He doesn't ask for perfection, He asks for effort, He asks for improvement, loyalty, support, affection: *philos*. He doesn't expect you to be a genius or a super-star, just a friend! (How can I say *just* a friend when the concept of friendship is So beautiful, So complete?)

In addition to our all-important friendship with God, we are all worthy of friendship among ourselves. This auditorium is filled with friends. I have all kinds of friends here: old friends, life-long friends, family friends, new friends, good friends, best friends. I also have some casual friends, distant friends, and maybe, if I'm not careful, former friends. I know that unless I develop in myself perfect love—*agape* love—I will not be found worthy of the prize of the high calling. But from my fallen condition I just can't jump to the pinnacle of perfect, *agape* love. I don't know how to get there in one giant step. But what I can do, what I'm going to do, is

to be a better friend. And I think that in that way I will, step by step, learn to love.

I know we all share precious things together. I want to understand you better, respect you more, trust you more (regardless of what happened in the past), accept you, support you, and learn from you.

My dear friends, it has been wonderful to share this week with you. It has been a week of *philos*. Let us keep present in our minds not only the possible degrees of friendship we can have with God as illustrated by Abraham, Jacob, and Adam, but also that to be members of Christ's Body we must be friends with each other. Let us put some depth, some feeling into our friendship—express it more, communicate. Let us be more loyal, supportive, trusting, accepting. Let us put some meaning into the word *friend* and the expression *the friends*.

The friends in Portland send you their love and greetings! It is So good to see the friends from Poland! I'm glad to see my friend Marie here. Pray for all the friends.

I hope the friends receive a blessing from these suggestions. Let's be friends. Be a friend of God.

Amen.

The Seventh Day Of Creation-Brother Fritz Berner, Germany

I WOULD like to dwell on some thoughts about the seventh day of creation on which God ceased from His own works, as we are told in Genesis 2:3: *And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work.*

In this account our mind is transported into the earliest history of mankind. In the *preceding* days of creation the earth was prepared with great power and wisdom for an everlasting purpose, to be a place of habitation for man. *He hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.* (Isaiah 45:18) *Then God created man in his own image; male and female created he them.* (Genesis 1:27)

The directions of the Creator concerning the life of the human children, about what they should and should not do, were expressed plainly and clearly. And just as perfect and *very good* as were the people themselves, So also was the Garden of Eden for

them, and the relationship between the Creator and man in particular was completely untroubled and harmonious. *There existed the highest degree of happiness imaginable!*

And God blessed them and said to them: *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over . . . every living thing that moveth upon the earth.* (Genesis 1:28) *And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* (Genesis 2:16,17)

God Rested From All His Works

This phase of the perfect creation was on the threshold of the seventh day of creation in which God rested from all His works. And perhaps we have already asked ourselves, Why did God rest and how did He rest? Was He in need of this rest? This question is understandable from the human standpoint because after a complete and more or less successful working day, *WE* do have a natural need for rest, because through the cycle from day to night and with refreshing sleep the necessary energy for the next day is restored.

Now with God this matter is obviously completely different, even if we can't comprehend it; for the Scriptures clearly say that God *neither slumbers nor sleeps* and that he *fainteth not, neither is weary*. (Psalm 121:4; Isaiah 40:28)

Our human deduction does not lead us to the explanation we are looking for; thus the rest of God must have other characteristics. Now it isn't said that rest means *doing nothing*. In the civilized world the evening leisure and especially the weekend serves the purpose of rest and relaxation. It serves all different personal—as well as family—plans and interests.

At the same time, it would be wrong to say that a retired person doesn't do anything. The term *retirement* does not tell at all if somebody has an activity or not. To what conclusion would we come when we put all the weight on the word *rest*? We have no other choice but to say that, yes, absolute quietness occurs when someone has died or, in a qualified sense, when somebody has fallen into a deep sleep. Job expresses this thought when he says in chapter 3:11-13: *Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me, or why the breasts that I should suck? For now should*

I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: THEN HAD I BEEN AT REST.

The above-mentioned examples may give us a little insight on this subject but no satisfactory answer to our question, for God didn't need to enter into rest for He doesn't get tired. Vacation and free-time problems, as they exist in the modern world, are also out of the question. Also God never sleeps, as the Scriptures teach us. We can draw an extended, supporting thought in John 5:17 where Jesus says: *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* And in Habakkuk 1:5 we find: *Wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe though it be told you.* From this we can conclude that the rest of God on the seventh day of creation must be referring to *SOMETHING SPECIAL*, while His work in other areas went on unchanged.

Sin and Death Enter the Picture

The condition for life for Adam and Eve, told to them on the threshold of the seventh day of creation, was that they must not eat from the forbidden tree. It was up to them—they had free choice—to decide to live or to die. Under the influence of Satan, the Father of Lies, they became disobedient, they invited the curse upon themselves and upon their descendants; and without delay the judgment took its course: *DYING THOU SHALT DIE.* God did not prevent this; He did not interfere. He also did not correct the apparent mishap, but he has since allowed that sin and death defile and damage His glorious creation. He did not lift his mighty arm to stop this course, and did not hinder the great impostor, Satan, in his terrible doings, which in the time of the end have become most hideous. Because of Satan's unhindered activity, the majority of mankind, from the past until the present day, have remained distant from God, cut off from his grace and without hope in this world, or, as we can read in Job 12:25, *They grope in the dark without light and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.*

But a minority, in whose hearts the condemnation weighed heavily and who were seeking forgiveness as the hart pants for fresh waters, directed their minds imploringly toward heaven.

It was back then that people began to call on the name of Yahweh as we can read in Genesis 4:26. It was toward this minority that God bent down. And He gave them hope for the alleviation of their longing. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and*

embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13)

It was first through the spirit of Pentecost that the believers of the later times were made to understand why God did not interfere. The sentence that He passed ruled out any opportunity to show mercy or forgiveness toward Adam and his race unless a ransom would be paid beforehand. God, as the highest judge and creator of the whole universe, could not overthrow His own law because justice is the foundation of His throne. For this reason He did not carry on His wonderful creation work, neither did He take steps Himself toward restitution. But He rested from His works, to direct them in a whole new direction toward their perfection.

Because God, according to John 9:31, does not hear the sinner, His rest must last until the separating evil has been removed, His justice has been satisfied, and restoration has gone into effect, just as it was with Adam: very good. Paul helps us when he says in Acts 17:31, *Because he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.* The judging of the earth through the man Christ, consisting of head and body, will last 1000 years, as we easily learn from Revelation 20 and where it is written: *And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:2)* When the 1000 years are over, Satan will be loosed from his prison. And what will he do? One wouldn't believe it, were it not written so. That is, he will once again go out just as with Adam, this time to the whole world filled with people, to tempt the nations. Accordingly, after this final test, he will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, which corresponds to the second and everlasting death.

For all eternity, then, the spiritual as well as the earthly atmosphere will be cleansed and immune to sin. The past 6000 and the future 1000 years of God's rest lead us to the end of the seventh day of creation and also to the end of the 1000-year rulership of Christ. (Volume VI, page 53) And just as clear is 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 where Paul says:

Then the end [the end of God's rest] when he [Jesus] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his

feet. But when he saith, all thing are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him, that God may be all in all.

And who doesn't think of the sublime words of Revelation 21:3,4:

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things [THAT IS, THE SEVENTH DAY OF CREATION] are passed away.

Having been relatively easy to find out why God did rest and for how long, it would be left for us to explain what the *SIGNS* of God's rest are. And therefore we once again go back to Habakkuk 1:5 where we hear the prophet say: *I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe though it be told you.* True, in retrospect, and in the light of truth, we find a thing is not as difficult to believe as it was in Habakkuk's time because the main characteristics of this mentioned work have already taken place during the past 6000 years, and only the wonderful crowning in the Millennium and in the final testing lies before us, in which the glory of the Lord will fill the whole earth.

A Ransom: God's Primary Purpose

The central problem of God's works of which Habakkuk spoke was providing a ransom for Adam. And it is surely uplifting to determine that this central work was arranged before the foundation of the world and that it even takes first place in the plan of God. Peter says in 1 Peter 1:18-20:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of the lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

The coming of the Lord as the Lamb of God took place at the time foreordained by the Father, according to Galatians 4:4. And this special time was 4000 years after the damage had been done in the Garden of Eden. We are justified in asking what took place during

the long time which elapsed in providing the ransom which *we have recognized as the centerpiece of God's work*. I would like to say that all of God's works governing the earth and mankind had a direct purpose of pointing toward and leading to the main work, a ransom price for Adam.

Hadn't there already been a beam of hope of redemption or deliverance for all men of pious heart in that dark promise given after Adam's fall, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? Abraham was certainly of the minority whose heart was touched by hope, even though he lived in Ur of the Chaldees, today's Iraq, and was surrounded by people who worshipped stone and wood. *Not knowing whither he went* (Hebrews 11:8), he was obedient to God's call, to move out to a promised land which was more than 1000 kilometers away. *1000 kilometers is about 600 miles*. During the journey, as well as in the land of Canaan, he remained under the influence of the Holy Spirit and even sacrificed, according to God's will, his promised son Isaac on Mount Moriah, where Solomon later built the temple in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 3:1)

Recognizing the direct action of God, we can see a straight line that leans us directly to the Lamb of God who is Jesus Christ, who completed his sacrifice outside the walls of Jerusalem at Calvary. According to He 13:12 he suffered without the gate, bearing his humiliation and became, therefore, the cornerstone of the spiritual temple of the living God.

No wonder that Jehovah God cemented this important preparatory arrangement, the covenant with Abraham, with an oath. Genesis 22:15-18:

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time and said, By myself have I sworn . . . for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Melchizedek: A Type of Christ

It also was Abraham who rescued his nephew Lot in a campaign against the enemy kings while in his land. And when he came back from the battle, Melchizedek, priest of God and king of Salem,

came with bread and wine toward him and blessed Abraham. And Abraham gave Melchizedek *tithes of all*. Again Jerusalem, then called Salem, is the focal point of this event of great importance. Four hundred years later David refers to this incident and gives a prophecy regarding the *GLORIFIED CHRIST* when he says in Psalm 110:4: *The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK*. We may consider this Psalm a pillar of divine prophecy because it is the only one that identifies Melchizedek exactly as a type of the glorified Christ in the Millennium, where he will rule as king and priest and as mediator of the New Covenant. Paul, the Hebrew of Hebrews, was the chosen tool. In his letter to the Hebrews he showed them their change from the Law Covenant to the New Covenant, as prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34; for this change presented a truly difficult hurdle to the Jewish Christians.

From the two short Scriptures which tell of the meeting between Melchizedek and Abraham, and together with David's words in the Psalms, Paul enlarges his line of reasoning about the New Covenant in the seventh chapter of Hebrews. And this we may very well call *strong meat* of the Word. Thus the overruling of Abraham's whole life, especially in this period, was a *DIVINE WORK*, showing the way to Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. *IT WAS A WORK WITHIN THE REST OF GOD*, on the seventh day of creation, of which the prophet Habakkuk spoke.

The Law Covenant

Another important work during this time of preparation for Christ was the giving of the Law which came 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant. Although God knew that fallen man would not be able to keep the perfect law to life, nevertheless He gave it in order to teach the meaningful lesson that the blood of neither bulls nor goats could take away sins, and furthermore that an imperfect man could not keep the divine law. So the Law Covenant was added to the Abrahamic Covenant and it lasted until Christ came who, according to Romans 10:4, is the end of the law.

The extraordinary number of works of God which were accomplished during the course of the Old Covenant in the 1600 years can't be and won't be enumerated here. But we know that the Tabernacle with the Most Holy and with the Ark of the Covenant, where the blood of the bullock and goat were sprinkled over the golden Mercy Seat, that those all were typical pictures of the *SACRIFICED CHRIST*. And I would like to refer to the words of

the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:24: *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.* In other words the work of God in the form of the Law Covenant was a direct measure showing the way toward the principal work, the ransom for Adam.

When we look back at those 6000 past years, then, in addition to the above-mentioned works of God, we can see the filling of the earth with the right amount of people and their experiences and lessons with the consequences of Satan's evil principles. We easily recognize that in God's administration of time, many traits are put together in an ideal way. And afterwards we and the entire human family will know as we have been known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Let's summarize the features of God's work on the seventh day of creation which we have considered and let us place them opposite the questions asked:

1. God rested because justice did not allow him to be the restorer of fallen man. His holiness can not associate with sinners.
2. His love and his mercy had to stand back until a ransom for Adam had been obtained.
3. Jesus Christ, firstborn of all creation and child of the Father, was appointed for this greatest and most important commission before the foundation of the world. But his mission first came 4000 years after the fall.
4. During this long time God demonstrated through the typical pictures of the tabernacle the sacrificing Christ in the Gospel Age. And through Abraham and Melchizedek he symbolized the glorified Christ in the Millennium.

Preparing the Bride of Christ

With the first coming of our Lord and the sacrifice of his life as a ransom for Adam, nothing more stood in the way of the restitution of all things, and Jesus could have immediately begun his work. This opinion was prominent among the people of Israel as well as among the apostles at that time. But God had in the time following performed a work which did not point toward the ransom, as the other works did, but a work that went beyond this. It was the preparation of the Bride of Christ. The ransom was the foundation for this new work because the Bride that the Father was going to give to his beloved Son was from the loins of Adam and therefore sinful. But in this condition the Bride was of no use for the

designed purpose. This class also needed to be made just. This work of God was foretold in Isaiah 61:10: *For he [God] hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.* So our justification is *GOD'S WORK*, through the righteous blood of Christ, for *it is God that justifieth.* (Romans 8:33) And we read in Ephesians 2:10 where Paul says, *FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained.*

It should be mentioned that we aren't actually just, but we are only reckoned just by the faith which brought about our consecration. This work which followed the providing of the ransom was at first concealed as a mystery. It was the mystery which had been hidden in the ages before but has now been revealed to the saints. The mystery: *Christ in you the hope of glory.* (Colossians 1:27) Peter says that angels tried to look into it. And it is hidden to the world still today and is not recognized by them.

It is interesting that this work of the Bride of Christ also had been provided for in the plan of God before the foundation of the world So that it might be to the praise of his glory when it will be revealed completely. (Ephesians 1:12)

The Rest of God on the seventh day of creation is cited by Paul for still another special reason for the Bride of Christ, when he uses the trust of the Father to His Son as a typical picture. Our trust and our faith in Jesus should likewise be as strong as the trust of the Father to His beloved Son. Paul says in He 4:10: *For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.* Believers who believe as God does have complete trust in the ability and readiness of Christ to work out all things for us.

This *RESTING* in faith must free us from every fear. Our human imperfection must not lead us to the conclusion that makes us say, *The Lord has no use for me.* Trials and suffering must not rob us of the *REST OF GOD.* *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15) To remain in the *REST OF GOD* —this is a gift of blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord. And how instructive is the word of the prophet in Isaiah 30:15: *In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*

Amen.

Ye Are Not Your Own-Brother D. Daniel, India

GRACE AND peace be unto you my dear brethren. All the family of faith in India greet all of you in His most Holy name. I thank Almighty Jehovah God and everyone of you gathered here for sharing the Divine blessings.

Our study is on the text in 1 Corinthians 6:19,20: *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Paul writes these words not to the world, but to a special class, dedicated to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ. Members of this class are expected to do the will of God and not their own will. As consecrated members of Christ's body, we all belong to that special class, and thus these marvellous words apply to us as members of this separated and selected class even today.

If we (as that special class), according to Paul's words, are *not our own*, to whom then do we belong? And from when? If we belong to someone else, how are we expected to serve him? Answers to these questions should give us a fitting understanding to what Paul meant when he said to the Corinthians, *Ye are not your own.*

Our Old Life Contrasted with Our New Life

In the past, before our consecration, we were doing as the Gentiles according to what our flesh and mind desired. We were serving someone else. Paul, when writing to the congregation at Ephesus (chapter 2, verses 11-12) says:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands. At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

Yes, until the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel concerning Messiah was fulfilled, fleshly Israel were the favored ones of God and not the Gentiles. They were favored until the Italian centurian Cornelius was called.

In Ephesians chapter 2:2,3 we read:

Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

How excellently St. Paul explains the deepest thought in those verses, that **WE DID WHAT OUR FLESH AND MIND DESIRED**. We were of our own then, not knowing the gospel and the exceeding great and precious promises made, and we were wholly under the influence of the prince of the power of the air. We did what we thought best, which our heart and mind liked, but which are not the desires of God.

Our Heavenly Father, Jehovah God, out of His pure mercy and love, redeemed us by paying a very heavy price through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Paul, when explaining this precious redemption, writes in our study text, *Ye are bought for a price*. By the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross the door was opened for the Gentiles. Our most loving Heavenly Father thus purchased us by the most precious blood of Christ.

Paul, when writing to the congregation at Ephesus (chapter 2, verse 13) says: *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*. So the purchase price paid was the inestimable, priceless and matchless blood of Christ. After the price was paid and after the purchase transaction was completed, Paul says that *Ye are not your own, that your body is the temple of God who is in you*.

Having been purchased with a price paid, these will no longer belong to the prince of the power of the air; So they can no longer do what their flesh and mind desire. Then how should these now live?

Saint Paul writes to the Roman Christian Ecclesia (Romans 6:6):

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Continuing further in verses 11 through 13: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof, neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin;

but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Thus we are not to be yoked henceforth with the world and its desires. Whether we live or die we are the Lord's who paid a price for us.

Once we were doing whatever our heart or mind desired, but now we are expected to serve the desires of Him who bought us. As Jesus rightly said, *One cannot serve two masters*. He also said, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*. These purchased ones have to serve God in all holiness and purity. They are called the temple of God because the living God dwells in them.

An entirely new life commences when one consecrates to the Living God, Jehovah, through our Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ. From then on, he is no more his own. He becomes a New Creature and a babe is born in him, unseen by the world. Paul calls him the inward man. In his second epistle to Corinth (chapter 4, verse 16) we read: *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

We understand our fleshly body ultimately has to die one day or other, but Paul seems to emphasize a delphic thought when he said *though the outward man perish*. Before, we were of the world and doing whatever our heart and mind desired. After a price was paid and we were bought, we were no longer children of this world. Saint John, in his first epistle (chapter 2, verses 15,16), advises:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world.

So the outward man (the fleshly, worldly desires of any kind) must die, giving way for the spiritual inward man to grow truly and freely in grace. Keeping this in mind, Saint Paul when writing to the Roman Christian Ecclesia (Romans 6:6) says: *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*. We crucified the old man of vain fleshly desires when we dedicated ourselves in full sacrifice, full consecration to the divine will. Naturally, the old man was nailed to the cross.

The Apostle James calls adulterers those who are purchased by the blood of Christ but who still cling to the friendships of this world

and its desires. In James 4:4 he rebukes: *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* These are called adulterers because they try to serve Mammon too, and keep in constant touch with the old man who is still alive.

Since we are not our own after being purchased, we are not expected to do as we please by following our own will and pleasure by loving the world. We have to do the will of Him who paid the price. So fleshly, worldly desires must die instantaneously just as darkness disappears when the rays of light appear.

Growth of the New Creature

Now the new creature, as a born babe, should not remain a babe all the time. Saint Paul cautions that this inward man, as he calls him, should grow in grace day by day in spirit. When he wrote to the assembly that gathered at Ephesus (chapter four, verses 14,15) he said: *That we henceforth—note the word we, because Paul wanted to include himself also—be no more children . . . but, speaking the truth in love may grow up into him, in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*

By saying *in all things*, Paul emphasizes how Christ was exalted by his unconditional and implicit obedience in all things God wanted. By this Jehovah God hath put all things under his feet and made him head of all things. So also, those who are born as new creatures are expected to grow in him in all things by walking in his footsteps. Further, while writing to the Corinthians, Paul said: *In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.* (1 Corinthians 14:20)

New babes need milk as their only food because they cannot digest meal or meat. Peter in his first epistle (chapter 2, verse 2) says: *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, THAT YE MAY GROW THEREBY.*

The new birth does not guarantee life everlasting unless the babe grows in spirit to manhood and yields good fruit according to his age.

First, we are to understand that there is every possibility that this inward man (as Paul calls him), born at baptism, can die if not properly cared for and nourished nutritiously daily. Second, he can fully grow in spirit and grace in all things and give out fruits in different proportions such as 30 or 60 or even 100 if properly

nourished with meat in due season and taken care of daily according to his age. Third, he can remain a babe all the time with improper growth by only drinking milk all the time.

Paul admonishes in He 5:12-14:

For the time you ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God and are become such as have need of milk and not the strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.

Yes, the daily food has to be gradually and steadily increased according to the age of the inward man from baptism onward. Those knowing only the first principles of the oracles of God are whom Paul describes as babes using milk and unable to digest meat. By the age of ten or fifteen a person ought to have attained full maturity, with the ability to digest strong food and to bring forth dainty sweet fruits of righteousness in plenty.

Now let every one of us ask ourselves some questions: Is my inward man alive? If so, how much has he grown? Am I rightly feeding him daily according to his requirements? As a computer gives out the answer, So will one's own conscience readily give out the answer.

So what should we do to ensure proper growth of this babe born in us at our consecration? The answer is quite simple. Let us just think for a moment what we would do for a child at home. We are anxious to see that the child grows faster and better according to his age. We want him to get a good education in the best of schools. In time, we want him to be able to earn a living for his own family. For this we look after him carefully day by day, and increase the diet according to the needs of his age. We try to see that he is healthy always. When he falls sick, it hinders his growth and even endangers his life. Can we take such illness casually or neglect to tend to him for some time? No, never! We immediately rush to consult a physician. We spend any amount of time, money and effort to see that the child is not only saved, but that he is revived and is recovered completely to normalcy. So we show how anxious we are to see that the child grows to manhood in good and perfect health.

In like manner should be the parental care for the inward man born within every consecrated Christian. Its growth is invisible to the

world, but visible to him and to the congregation to which he is associated. Every effort must be taken at the proper time to feed him daily with the heavenly manna, and not just once a week by attending weekly prayer meetings. The feeding must be increased day by day till he has attained maturity and is able to finish his sacrifice of laying down his life doing the work of the Master.

When the inward man is found to be sick and his growth affected, no effort can be spared, but immediate remedial measures must be taken to revive him. The elders of the congregation too have a part in nursing such sick brethren, spending any amount of time and effort on their behalf.

It is everyone's responsibility to see that the babe is very much alive and active and growing to maturity. He should not be kept idle or lukewarm, but *hot*, very much alive. In the warning to the angel of the Church of Laodicea, John cautions: *Because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* These will be losing the prize. At the end of every day each of us must ask the question of himself: *Have I fed the inward man today?* If the computer gives the answer NO, feed him immediately before you retire to bed.

Protecting the New Creature

Most important of all, apart from feeding, the inward man must be protected from outside influences. He must watch that he be not robbed by his enemy. Peter in his first epistle (chapter 5, verse 4) cautions us to be sober and vigilant against the devil who walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

For the protection of his inward man *ONE'S WILL* is the protective wall that can keep the enemy away. Solomon the wise wrote in his Proverbs (chapter 25, verse 28): *He that hath no rule [i.e., no control] over his own spirit [the will power] is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*

What a wonderful expression is this thought on self-control. In those days cities were protected by walls all around; even Jerusalem had her twelve gates. Jehovah God removed the walls when the people disobeyed. So later it was a city of ruins because of invasions by outsiders. Such a thing was foretold by Jehovah God through Isaiah (chapter 5, verse 1) as: *My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.* The first thing He did to protect the vines was to fence it. He expected good fruits, but it gave wild, sour fruits. Then in verse 5 He says: *I will tell you what I will do to*

my vineyard. I will take the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.

We see that the wall was protection from outside influence given to a city (i.e., to the people). So should the inward man be protected by *THE WALL OF THE WILL*. Without our permission our will cannot be enslaved. Our body may be enslaved, but our will defends and protects us. Every moment, we are to be wide awake and alert to fight the good spiritual fight to save the inward man from being destroyed until we finish our course.

Paul had to fight the good fight of faith and was finally able to say: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course and thus kept the faith.*

Let us remember all warnings, admonitions and wise counsels of God through Paul and try to live up to the mark of obtaining the promised blessings of eternal life. We are not our own, but belong to Him who bought us outright. Let us be a jewel of Him who So wishes.

May the spirit of God guide us to live up to His name.

Welcome Address-Brother Adolphe Debski, France

BELOVED brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ our Lord, dear young people and dear friends of the Truth. I salute you in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: *May the peace of God be with you.* I bid you welcome to this Fourth International Convention on behalf of the Organizing Committee and all who have worked in the preparation of this convention.

First of all it is fitting to lift our hearts and our thoughts toward God, our Heavenly Father, to thank Him for having brought us here safely, for according to Psalm 121 is He not the one who preserves our going out and our coming in; is He not the one who keeps us from all evil? From Him cometh our help.

That is why it becomes us to unite our voices to express to Him our happiness, our joy, and our gratitude, and to praise Him with one heart, one soul, one mind. Let us quote verses 1, 2, 3, 8, and 9 of Psalm 107, which particularly fits this occasion:

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the

east, and from the west, from the north, and from the sea . . . Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men; for he satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

As in Kufstein, Obsteig, and Willingen, we are here now for one week in the peaceful setting of the Dutch countryside, well separated from the world in this Conference Center called Deuteronomy *Bron*.

Let us remember that from time to time Jesus also loved to retire apart in a desert place with his disciples, to give them a little rest, and undoubtedly to speak to them of the marvels of the Kingdom of God (Mark 6:31).

God Is *The Source*

In the Dutch language Deuteronomy *Bron* signifies *the Source*. Dear brethren, in this desert place, withdrawn from the world, we have come to the Source, for we have come to the feet of God, the all-powerful Creator. Indeed, is not God the source of all life, the source of all joy, of all grace, of all happiness and peace? Assuredly He is! From Him proceeds every excellent grace and every perfect gift, as indicated by the epistle of James, chapter 1, verse 7.

He is the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation. (2 Corinthians 1:3) But let us not forget that God imparts all these graces through Christ, His well-beloved Son. It is indeed through Christ and in Christ that we are accorded all the divine blessings recorded in the letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1 verses 1-14:

—those [blessings] of redemption, of pardon from sin, of our adoption as sons;

—that of understanding the *mystery* of God relative to the call of the Church and to joint-heirship with Christ;

—that of understanding the Plan and Word of God;

—that of the sealing by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, dearly beloved, let us consider that it is the Lord himself who, as he did in times past with the apostles, has brought us here to the Source, to the feet of the Almighty, in this place

withdrawn from the world, to refresh us spiritually and to instruct us in all that concerns the Kingdom of Heaven.

And is it not proper for us to expect this—to be comforted, spiritually refreshed, and instructed by the Lord? We have faith that the Lord will answer our expectation. In fact, He has already answered it. In the course of the past months, by His spokesmen, He has prepared appropriate dishes, and we have come to eat them and to delight in them, like the eagles in the allegory of Matthew 24:28: *For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* The carcass, a wholesome carcass, in other words meat, for eagles is their food, for eagles feed on living or dead animals. And here this meat represents the spiritual food due to the present time. And we are the eagles, beloved in the Lord.

As eagles, with keen eyesight and dwelling in the heights, swoop down upon their prey, seen from a great distance, and devour it, So we also who dwell in heavenly places in Christ have descended upon Deuteronomy Bron, knowing that there there will be meat in due season for us, necessary for our growth in Christ. And now at this time we are ready to enjoy this feast, are we not? This picture of eagles descending from everywhere in the skies, in view of a feast of meat, has never been So well realized as in our time, dearly beloved. For never in the course of centuries past have the people of God had the possibility of assembling So rapidly and So frequently from wherever on the globe they live and to wherever on the globe may have determined as the place to meet. Distances today no longer matter.

The increase of knowledge [or progress], offering rapid means of communication, has made possible these repeated conventions that we organize on a national scale, or even international, as the case today. This particularity in the history of the Church is significant. It constitutes a sign! It is one of the signs testifying that the Lord has returned, that he is present, not *in thought* only, as he has been since his ascension and all during the Christian age, but more than this, that he is personally present as he was present after his resurrection during the 40 days which preceded his ascension; to be precise, he is present as a *thief in the night* (Revelation 16:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:2) before revealing himself to the world.

It is also a sign attesting that we are living in the time of the harvest of the Gospel age, in the time of the *end of the age* of the present evil world, which must be dissolved, disintegrated, to make place for the promised Kingdom.

In the course of this harvest, the Lord and Master, who is girded, has set a table for his servants, and he is serving them (Luke 12:37). He serves them this food in due season prepared by means of the Wise and Faithful Servant mentioned in Matthew 24:45-47. We have called Pastor Charles Taze Russell that Servant. And in his service, he [the Master] makes use of a group of mouth-pieces such as those whom we will have the privilege to hear during this week.

The meetings of brethren should be equally profitable for developing the spirit of praise and adoration of the Almighty. Our hearts should be full of gratitude toward Him. Our desire to praise Him and to glorify Him must continue growing. In this regard, in addition to verses of Psalm 107 already mentioned, we quote Psalm 135, verses 1 to 3:

Praise ye the name of the Lord, praise him, all ye servants of the Lord. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.

Again, quoting Psalm 95, verses 1 to 7:

O come, let us sing [with joy] unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the heights of the hills are his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Ours Is A Common Destiny

This Fourth International Convention, like its predecessors, may be considered as an illustration of the Great International Convention that will take place when the Church is complete and stands before the Lord. That will be the Great International and General Convention, for it will gather together all the faithful from every country and from all the Gospel age. Then all will be united to the Lord for eternity! They will share his glory and his honor, and will work with him forever and ever in the heavenly realm! Together they will definitively form the Body of Christ, the Bride of the Lamb! Together they will constitute the spiritual temple of God. That is our common destiny, beloved brethren!

Let this vision engrave in our hearts a holy reverence for God. May it increase our faith and our love, stimulate our zeal, and develop in us a deep humility. Yet a little while, yet a little suffering, yet a few trials, yet a few difficulties, and the glory will fill that spiritual temple of God that we will form beyond the veil—if, of course, we remain faithful unto death.

Let us call to mind, at this point, the *Manna* comment for September 26:

Let us, as day after day rolls by, remember our three-fold relationship to this Temple: (1) We are still in process of preparation as living stones. (2) as members of the Royal Priesthood carrying the Ark we are marching from the Tabernacle into the Temple condition; some of our number have already entered in [Brother Russell is undoubtedly referring to the first resurrection in progress] and some are still on the way. (3) As the Lord's people the time has come for us to know, to sing with the spirit and understanding, the new song of divine mercy, justice, love and truth. Let us be faithful in each of these respects, fulfilling our parts, and ere long our course will be ended and the glory of the Lord will fill the Temple.

Let us repeat the last thought expressed in this quotation: *Ere long our course will be ended and the glory of the Lord will fill the Temple.* What comfort is evoked by this declaration! We have this hope that we will then be before the Lord, united for eternity with him and with all the overcomers of centuries past, and cooperating with him, at first in the work of the regeneration of the entire human family, then in all that which God has in store as work for the complete Christ, Head and Body, in the celestial expanse, of which our eyes have not seen but the smallest part when we turn our gaze to the heavens.

It is there, dearly beloved, the destiny which God offers us in His Word. There is our common destiny. How many thoughts this suggests to us. And Oh how powerfully it speaks to our understanding, and to our heart.

For to common destiny corresponds common action, not only future but also present, namely the mutual edification in the most holy faith and the announcement of the Good News of great joy to all who have ears to hear, this implies understanding, harmony, peace and cooperation among the People of God.

To common destiny correspond common faith, the faith given to the Saints once and for all, that begets an absolute confidence in God and in His Word, and the certainty that all things, whether they appear to be good or evil, agreeable or disagreeable, will ultimately work to our greatest good.

To common destiny correspond common joys, the joys in the Lord, and common sufferings, the sufferings for Christ, for Righteousness, for the Truth.

To common destiny correspond one common call, the High Calling in Christ Jesus, one common baptism, the baptism into the death of Christ, and one common consecration, a consecration that urges us to be spent with joy in the service of God, the Truth, and the brethren.

To a common destiny correspond common thoughts and a common understanding, the understanding we have in common of the Plan and the Word of God, made possible thanks to the promised Holy Spirit whose role is to guide us *into all truth*, according to the words of our Lord, recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 16, verse 13.

On this point, let us thank the Lord for having given us the understanding of the diverse aspects of the Plan of God, conceived for the blessing of mankind, and the deep truths contained in the Word of God belonging to the present time. And let us recognize, humbly, that these truths have been transmitted to us by the agency of the Wise and Faithful Servant, mentioned in Matthew 24:45-47, which we have already cited.

In summary, let us say that to a common destiny corresponds the communion and unity of the People of God, a unity willed by God and so magnificently illustrated by the human body, for which the Lord prayed (John 17:20,21), and in view of which the apostles exhort us in their epistles—that it belongs to us to realize and maintain.

Let these seven days of brotherly communion that are beginning cause us to bear in mind this common destiny to which God through Christ has invited us. Let us also put these days to profit to develop in us, as we have already said, the spirit of praise and adoration of the Almighty by our songs, our words, and our thoughts, for it is fitting that we render to Him this sacrifice, to Him who is the Author of our being, the Creator and Keeper of the Universe, the Source of all grace and of all blessing.

Let us say equally, that it is the Lord himself who has led us here to this secluded place to open to us the windows of heaven to fortify, refresh, and edify us spiritually by His spokesmen. And let us pray that the Holy Spirit may abound among us.

In our prayers and in our thoughts, let us not forget our dear brethren scattered over the face of the globe. Let us pray that they be granted grace to persevere in the steps of the Master in all circumstances.

We conclude with a final recommendation: In these buildings and in this room put at our disposition for one week, let us be alert to conduct ourselves correctly, to damage nothing, to do all things decently and in order, to leave a good witness behind us. Let us have respect for the scheduled times on the program. In a word, let ours be the words of the Apostle Paul addressed to Timothy and found in the first epistle, chapter 4, verse 12: *Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in thought.*

Amen.

Five Important Questions-Brother George Duhaime, USA

IF WE WERE to take a poll of the brethren here, to go around the room and ask the brethren to identify their favorite chapter in the whole Bible, I'm sure that many would identify the 8th chapter of the book of Romans. It's understandable that it would be so because the Apostle Paul in writing this 8th chapter of the book of Romans included some of the most precious promises that we as Bible Students have come to appreciate.

Let's just take a few moments to read some of these verses. [Verse 1] *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* [Verse 6] *To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* [Verse 14] *For as many [of us] as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* [Verse 16] *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.* [Verse 18] *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* [Verse 28] *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.*

What many might not be aware of is the fact that the Apostle Paul ends this 8th chapter of the book of Romans with five very important questions. These questions were important not only for the Church at Rome, but they are important for you and for me and for all of those who are striving to walk in the narrow way of sacrifice, because the answers to these questions demonstrate to us the sufficiency of God's commitment to us. We would like to take a look at these questions one at a time. Before we do though, we would like to stress that in these next few minutes we will be dealing primarily with the topic of God's commitment to us. We will not be dealing with the equally important topic of the necessity of our commitment to God.

1: What shall we then say to these things?

The first question is found in verse 31: *What shall we then say to these things?* Immediately what comes to our mind is the question, what are the *these things* about which the Apostle Paul is speaking? What shall we say to what things? In order to find the answer to that question we need to realize that the entire 8th chapter of the book of Romans is the ending of the Apostle Paul's outline of the elements of spiritual development which he presents to us in chapters 1 through 7. And So we have to first learn what are the *these things* about which he is speaking.

So let's take a brief look at these first seven chapters of the book of Romans and see in what manner they represent the Apostle Paul's systematic outline of the Christian faith. We'll find in our examination that these first seven chapters contain all the basic doctrines that are necessary for one to attain unto the condition of spirit begettal. And in fact these first seven chapters of Romans would make an excellent baptismal discourse.

So let's look first at these items which the Apostle Paul has identified for us in the first seven chapters. There are four main issues with which the Apostle Paul deals. The first issue is dealt with in chapters 1 through 3. The first thing that the Apostle Paul strives to do in looking at these chapters is to demonstrate to us the guilt of man, the condemnation that we all share in Adam because we are his descendants, born in sin and shapen in iniquity. He goes through much detail to show that all mankind is guilty before God. And even though there have been different amounts of light, different degrees of revelation made available to different groups of individuals throughout the ages, there has always been enough knowledge about God available to mankind to make him

accountable to his creator. All mankind is unified in this one thing, that he has not lived up to the light that he has had.

The Gentiles, those who are pictured on plane *R*, had the testimony of creation made available to them. It was presented to them through the creative works of God, through the beauties of nature, and through the residue of that original law written in the heart of their father Adam. They could have known that God was the creator, yet they rejected that light and chose rather to worship the created rather than the Creator.

The Jews, represented on plane *P*, shared not only the testimony of creation and the inherited conscience which the Gentiles had as members of the human family, but they also had the Law of God given to them through Moses, their mediator, and instruction through the prophets who spoke forth the messages of the Heavenly Father.

And So there was this one thing that brought both the Jew and the Gentile together. They were all guilty before God. The Gentiles rejected the testimony of creation and of their consciences, and the Jews rejected not only the testimony of creation and their own consciences, but also the law of God. They were all guilty before God, condemned in Adam, without hope and without excuse. The recognition of this fact, brethren, is step number one in our spiritual development. Before anyone can proceed in their relationship with the Heavenly Father it is first necessary that they recognize that they are sinners, that they are condemned in Adam, and that they can do nothing just in and of themselves. This is the first question which is asked of those candidates who come forth for immersion at our baptismal discourses. They are asked, *Do you recognize that you are a sinner, condemned in Adam?*

Step number two: In Chapters 3 through 5 the Apostle Paul outlines for us the grace of God, the redemption that we receive through the second Adam, Jesus. This concept is in total contrast to the line of reasoning that he was using to demonstrate the guilt of mankind. The grace of God which is manifested in the gift of Jesus demonstrates the harmony of God's justice and love. Let's look at chapter 3, verse 26: *To declare, I say at this time, his righteousness that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* This is the genius of the divine plan. It's a plan whereby God can maintain a consistency of His attributes, a plan wherein He does not have to go against the foundation of His throne which is justice in order to demonstrate His love on behalf of mankind. By the provision of Jesus, a just man, to die for the world of

mankind as condemned in Adam, He is able to be just and still the justifier of those who come to Him believing in Jesus. So then God's grace moved on behalf of fallen man to bring forgiveness and salvation and hope and life through Jesus' death. Whereas man was once guilty and condemned before the Heavenly Father, he was now forgiven. Whereas he was once without God and without Christ, he was now united as a son of God and as a brother to our Lord Jesus. Whereas he was once without hope, he is now the heir of the promises of salvation. Whereas he was once without excuse before the Heavenly Father, he is now justified in His sight. This is step number two in our spiritual development.

We have all heard it many times before and we have the temptation sometimes to take it lightly when we hear it So often, but if you can, for a moment, put yourself into the shoes of these brethren in Rome who were hearing this for the first time: They were guilty before God but God provided His Son to redeem them and to bring them out of this condition of guilt to the condition of acceptance as sons. God had done for them what they did not deserve, He gave to them what they could never earn. It bears the repeating of the Apostle Paul's question: What shall we then say to these things? What can we say except praise to God for the gift of His Son. This, brethren, is step number two in our spiritual development. This is the next question that is asked of those who come forward for immersion: *Have you accepted Jesus as the one who is able to justify you before the Heavenly Father, as the ransom, the one who died on behalf of Adam?*

The third step which the apostle outlines is dealt with in chapters 6 and 7. In these chapters he presents our opportunity to sacrifice. He lays before us the opportunity that we have to be dead with Christ that we might, if found faithful, live and reign with him. He makes it clear that, as believers, we should not just stop at the point of justification. We should not accept this gift of redemption that God has given to us and just stay there. In chapter 6, verse 1, he asks: *Shall we continue in sin that grace [that is, the grace of God outlined in step number two] may abound? God forbid.* The reason for the Heavenly Father providing this gift of grace, this justification we receive through Jesus, is So that we can have the opportunity to be dead with Christ, So that we can be acceptable as joint sacrificers with him. The Apostle Paul presents to us this invitation to be dead with Christ that we might live with him. He says that we who are buried with him in the baptism of sacrificial death will be raised in the likeness of his resurrection.

Sin no longer has dominion over us in the sense that we are not to continue in our sins, seeking the grace of God to continue providing forgiveness for these. We are to take this grace of God in order to be dealt with as acceptable sacrifices, that if we be dead with Christ, then we shall live with him.

What shall we then say to these things except thanks to God for the opportunity we have of laying down our lives, our wills, in sacrifice, acceptable through the merit of Jesus. This is step number three in our spiritual development, the offering of ourselves in sacrifice, based upon our acceptableness due to our faith in the ransom. It is the third question asked of our candidates for immersion: *Have you made a complete, unreserved consecration to the Lord?*

The fourth point that the apostle brings out is dealt with in chapter 8. There he talks about our inheritance as sons. He talks about God's watchcare over and deliverance of us in the narrow way of sacrifice, and the Heavenly Father's desire that we should all realize the fullness of sanctification So that we can proceed along the narrow way to the point of acceptableness.

He tells us that all things work together for good to God's elect, that nothing can come into our lives that will not work out ultimately for God's good. Not only will these things that God allows to come into our lives work out ultimately for God's good, but they will also work out ultimately for our good if our own wills are attuned to the will of God. We want to learn day by day to discern the good that God intends in the circumstances that we don't always understand. There are many times in our lives when we question what good does God have in mind in allowing this particular event to come into my life. We want to trust immediately that the Lord has intended good in all of these affairs of our lives, and it's up to us to discern the good that God intends in these circumstances that we don't always understand. This is step number four in our spiritual development. We need to learn to trust Him where we cannot trace Him.

Thus Paul concludes his systematic exposition of these eight chapters, and he asks us this first important question: *What shall we then say to these things?* Brethren, it would do each of us well if periodically we would reread these eight chapters and ask ourselves this question: What shall we then say to these things? What shall we say to the fact that we were condemned in Adam and that God gave His son to redeem us? Not only did He give His son to redeem us and to provide for our justification, but He gave

us the opportunity to use our justified life rights as a sacrifice acceptable to Him in the Beloved. And not only that, but He provided So that every element of our life would be So overruled that it would work out for the good of the Heavenly Father and for our good if our wills are attuned to His. What shall we then say to these things?

2: If God be for us, who can be against us?

This first question prompts the second question which is found in verse 31: *If God be for us, who can be against us?* If we understand that the Lord has made these provisions for us, that He has given His son, that He has accepted us as sacrificers, if God is for us, well then who can be against us?

There is a sub-question which is implied within this second question. Is God really for me? Can I really be sure that God is for me? How can I know that God is for me, especially at those times when I'm tempted to feel that He really isn't? The answer is given in the next verse, verse 32: *He that spared not His own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things.* Brethren, we can know that God is for us for a very simple reason: He provided Jesus for our redemption. If He gave Jesus for us, then we can be sure that He will provide whatever else is necessary for us to complete our walk in the narrow way. He may not provide everything that is necessary for us from the standpoint of our human desires and expectations, but He has promised and He has demonstrated that by the act of providing our Lord Jesus for our justification, our deliverance, He that spared not His own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things? He will, in addition to the gift of His Son, provide all things that are spiritually necessary for us to complete the development upon which we have entered.

If He had provided the ransom sacrifice and then just left us on our own to make a mess of things, it would have undermined the benefit of Jesus' sacrifice. Therefore, every time that we are tempted to wonder, *Is God really for me? Is God really concerned about my spiritual growth?* —the first thing we should do is to look to the cross of Christ and realize that He will, in addition to the provision of His Son, provide whatever else is spiritually necessary to complete the work begun in us. It's up to us, brethren, to lay hold of these additional provisions and to put them into effect in our consecrated walk. He will with him also freely give us all things necessary for us to complete our course.

Let's look at Philippians, chapter 1, verse 6: *Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* He began this good work in us first by providing His Son Jesus, secondly by giving us the opportunity to lay hold upon his ransom merit, and thirdly by begetting us of the Holy Spirit. We can have the same confidence that the Apostle Paul has that He which began a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Not far from my home in Connecticut there is a large bridge. This bridge is built over a large highway. It's not just a single-level bridge. This bridge is constructed to accommodate three levels of traffic, each going in different directions. It's a marvelous engineering feat which you can see from a great distance as you approach it. You can't help but be impressed by the degree of detailed engineering and the construction of this bridge. But there is one major problem with this bridge. Even though it's a magnificent structure with twelve lanes of traffic, and cloverleafs, and three levels one on top of another, there are no roads connected to it. It stands there, looking ridiculous because it's just a bridge standing alone with no roads attached to it. It was built originally intending to have the roads built to it at a later date. But there were problems with environmental concerns. There were shifts in the population. So the projected road usage figures indicated that perhaps it was not worth the additional expense to put the roads through. There were changes in the tax structure So that the appropriations necessary to complete the roads were not available. So there it stands, in the middle of no-where, a testimony, a monument to man's inability to plan and complete what he has in mind.

Wouldn't it have been awful if God had provided Jesus for our redemption and hadn't made provisions to finish the Job of our complete sanctification? It would have been just as this bridge that was built, a magnificent structure, never used for its intended purpose. It would have been viewed as a mark on the character of our God. We don't have to look too deeply into the Scriptures to identify a group who demonstrated just such a lack of confidence and respect for our heavenly Father. We have only to look at the attitude expressed by the nation of Israel who, after having been delivered from Egyptian bondage through the miraculous intervention of God, had the audacity to assume that God had forgotten them and left them in the wilderness to die. Brethren, this is exactly the attitude that we are expressing when we question whether or not the Lord is concerned with our spiritual

development, when we wonder whether or not the Lord has a sufficiency of commitment to us.

If the Lord is really for me, if He is committed to see to it that I develop to the full stature as a member of the Bride of Christ, if God is for me, who can be against me? If God is indeed for me, it matters not who or what is against me. This can be a very encouraging concept for the New Creature. We don't always have as much encouragement for the flesh, but we know that as far as the New Creature is concerned, if God is for us, who can be against us? Have you ever asked yourself that question? If God is for me, what can conceivably be against me? Brethren, the only conceivable thing that can avail against us is something that is greater than the God who is for us. If you can visualize something that is greater than the God who is for you, then you do indeed have cause to worry. Otherwise you have no cause to worry.

We'd like to read a quotation from *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume Six, page 183:

Do we not see that, having determined on the selection of a certain class for cooperation in this plan, he is favoring us in that he has revealed to us the terms and conditions—justifying and calling us with this heavenly calling? This means that God is for us—that he wishes us to be of this elect class; that he has made every arrangement necessary whereby we may attain a position in it. Do we sometimes feel that, although the Lord is for us, Satan and sin and our own weaknesses through heredity are all against us, seeking to ensnare and stumble us? Let us reflect that, the Almighty God being on our side, none of these oppositions need cause us fear or trepidation for he is abundantly able to carry us through them all. Let us look back and note his favor toward us while we were yet sinners, in providing the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Let us reflect that if he would do all this for us as sinners, he would do much more for us now that we have become his children—now that we have heard his voice, that we have accepted his Son, that we are trusting in him and have been justified through his merit—now that we have heard the call to the divine nature and have made a consecration, laying our little all upon the altar—surely, much more would God favor us and do for us now, although we cannot think how he could do more than was represented in the gift of his Son. We may be sure that he who changes not still loves us, is still for us, and will use his power to cause all things to operate for our highest spiritual welfare and for our ultimate attainment of a place in the New Creation, if we abide in him in faith, in love, and in heart-obedience—however weak and

imperfect may be our best efforts at controlling the flesh. Let us be assured that in giving us his Son and in thus opening the way for us to attain to his call to the New Creation, the Lord has made provision in Christ for every necessity of ours which could possibly arise. In him he has freely given us all things.

3: Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

Let's look at the third question. It's found in verse 33: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* This question is prompted by the one we just examined: If God be for us, who can be against us? We know that God is for us and that He has provided His Son for our redemption, but what if someone comes into the picture and starts to lay charges against us, attempts to separate us from the heavenly Father's love? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Notice that in the next phrase the *it is* is italicized. It might therefore be rightfully omitted. We can read the verse: *Who shall lay anything [or bring charges against] God's elect? Shall God who justifies them?* Picture a courtroom scene, brethren. You're in the defendant's seat, you're the one on trial. God is the judge. We're waiting now for the prosecution to come forth and make an opening statement of charges against you. There is silence because there's no one there to bring charges against you, to present a prosecution. The only one who could accuse you is the heavenly Father and He has no intention of accusing you because He has already demonstrated His intention by justifying you with the gift of His Son.

Psalms 103, verse 12: *As far as the east is from the west So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.* Who can accuse me? No one, because God has provided His son that I might be righteous in His sight. Again the Apostle Paul in these questions is demonstrating to us the sufficiency of God's commitment to us.

4: Who is he that condemneth?

Question number four is brought on by the third question: *Who is he that condemneth?* Literally it means, *Who can pass sentence upon me?* It might reasonably be concluded that because Jesus died on our behalf and he now owns the human race, that he could have purchased us in order to pass sentence upon us. Let's continue reading this passage, again omitting the italicized *it is*: *Who can pass sentence upon us? Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is at God's right hand, who also intercedes on our behalf?* Is Christ going to do this? Is Christ going to pass sentence upon us? Under God's arrangement for us, no one will pass

sentence upon us. The Scriptures are clear that Jesus has no intention to do so because: 1) He died for us. He provided the ransom price necessary to redeem us from the sentence of death. 2) He is risen again. We are told in Romans, chapter 4, verse 25, that he is raised for our justification in order to justify us, not to pass sentence upon us. 3) He is at God's right hand, as we read in Hebrews, chapter 8, verse 1, as our High Priest. And 4) He is interceding on our behalf as our advocate, as indicated in 1 John 2:1. Who can pass sentence upon us? Christ who died? Who is risen again? Who is at God's right hand interceding on our behalf? No, there is no one, brethren, passing sentence upon us, and no one will be condemning us, because we have received the gift of God's dear Son.

Let's look at *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume Six, page 184:

Does any one suggest that perhaps the Law would condemn us in spite of God? Let us reflect that it is God who condemned us under his Law; and that it is the same God himself who as the great Judge condemned us, who now has pronounced our justification—who has pronounced us 'Justified freely from all things from which the Law could not justify us'—through his grace, through Christ Jesus our Lord. In the face of this fact 'who could lay anything to the charge of God's elect'—whom he has thus favored? Who could condemn us on account of unintentional weaknesses or frailties? We would answer such: It is Christ who died; yea, who has risen again and is ascended on high as our representative, and who has imputed on our behalf the sufficiency of his merit, covering all of our blemishes.

5: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

The fifth question, which again is prompted by the previous questions: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* It could be reasonably asked, *Certainly we have the commitment of the heavenly Father and of Jesus, that they will not condemn or sentence us, but what happens if something comes in to separate us from the love of Christ, or what happens if we receive an indication in our daily life that perhaps we have been separated, that God no longer loves us?* Shall tribulation, shall distress, shall persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword separate us from the love of Christ?

If we look closely at these things, brethren, they are all external elements. These are external elements, though, which for the most part are not pertinent to us today, although they were very pertinent

to the brethren in Rome. We are not exposed to persecution in the same manner that the Roman Church was, or famine or nakedness or the sword. We might reasonably though, living in the societies in which we live, translate these problem areas into problem areas which present themselves to us today. Shall trials separate us from the love of God, or stress at our places of employment or in our homes, or family difficulties, or illness, or financial setbacks, or ecclesia disputes, or even our successes and our human lusts? Shall any of these separate us from the love of Christ? No, brethren, these things are to be expected, as it's written in Psalm 44, verse 22: *For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* We are accounted as sacrifice which is holy and acceptable unto God, and this is described as being our reasonable service.

The Apostle Paul tells us in verse 37: *Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* These trials cannot possibly separate us from the love of Christ for the simple reason that it is the love of Christ that has allowed these things to come into our lives. There is a direct relationship between our trials and our closeness to God. We are told that we should rejoice when we fall into diverse temptations, that we should think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which should come upon us as though some strange thing happened. In fact, it would be strange if we did not have trials after entering into the narrow way of sacrifice. Who can separate us from the love of God? No one, and nothing except our own wills. No, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Brethren, in all of these points we want to keep in mind that we are not here attempting to deal with our responsibility to the Lord. We are striving only to review the answers to these questions in order to show the sufficiency of God's commitment to us. In this listing of items which could not separate us from the love of Christ, there was one thing that was omitted, and that is self, because self-will can and would separate us from the love of Christ if we were not successful in keeping it under.

The Apostle Paul concludes these questions with a statement of conviction in verses 38 and 39: *I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Nothing can get in the way of God's commitment to us. He outlines these items in pairs: the first pair is neither life nor death. Nothing can separate us, no human

experience, because certainly all human experience would be divided either into life or death. Then he says, no angels, principalities, nor powers. There is no power or authority in heaven or earth that can separate us from the love of God, neither things present nor things to come—nothing in time or eternity, nothing now or in the future can separate us from the love of God. And no extremes in the physical or emotional realm—either height nor depth. Whether it's flying in airplanes or going through tunnels—whether it's the height of exhilaration or the depth of despair, no extreme in the physical or emotional realm is able to separate us from the love of God. Then, just to cover any other possible things that we might dream about that might separate us from the love of God, whether it be men from outer space or monsters or whatever, he says: *No other created thing*. None of these things are able to separate us from the love of God.

Let's look at *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume Six, page 184:

Is it still urged that something may intervene to separate us from God's love or from Christ and his love and mercy; and that thus we may be left to ourselves and make shipwreck of our faith and future as respects the New Creation? We reply: On the contrary, Christ has great love for us, else he would not have redeemed us. His every dealing has been loving and we should not allow anything to separate us from that love. If tribulations come, we should permit them only to drive us nearer the Lord as the one who alone can succor us. If distress or persecution or famine or destitution or any peril should come upon us—should we on account of fear on these cease our love for the Lord, renounce his name and his cause and follow no longer in his footsteps, choosing rather some easier course in life? Nay, it is by these very experiences that we are to be developed as conquerors. How could we be marked as victors if there were nothing to overcome—if the whole way were smooth and without an unfavorable grade? We have been made recipients of God's mercies and blessings; and now he tests us, to see to what extent we are worthy to abide in his love and in his favors. He is willing that we should abide in them, and has made every necessary provision, and yet he will not coerce our wills. I am persuaded, I have confidence, that we are determined to permit nothing to separate us from the love of God manifested in Christ—neither fear of death nor love of life; and that none of God's other creatures will intercept or turn aside God's favor from us—neither angels nor principalities nor powers at present created or ever to be created. In all these things we are more than victors merely—we are adopted as sons of God on the divine plane, through him who loved us."

Thus we have these five important questions. What shall we then say to these things? What shall we say to the fact that God has provided His son to redeem us from the guilt that we share in Adam? That He has given us the opportunity to take our justified standing and to enter into the narrow way of sacrifice and that He is making provision for every need, seeing to it that we come to the point of full sanctification? What shall we then say to these things: If God be for us, who can be against us? God has indeed demonstrated His being on our part by the provision of His Son Jesus, and He has demonstrated in His word and in His actions that He will with him provide all things that are necessary for our full sanctification. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God who justified us? Who is he that condemneth? Jesus the one who bought us, who died on our behalf and was raised for our justification, who is at God's right hand intervening on our behalf? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Brethren, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ save our own will. The Apostle Paul has demonstrated forcibly the sufficiency of God's commitment to us. It remains now for each one of us to demonstrate the sufficiency of our commitment to God.

It is our prayer for all of us here that we will firmly lay hold upon the things which the Lord has provided that we will rejoice in them and show our faithfulness to the Lord by faithfully living out our consecration vows. And may the Lord add His blessing.

The Kingdom Preached by Jesus-Brother Bertoldo Fonsaca, Brazil

MY BELOVED friends, sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

I find myself among you at this International Convention of Bible Students, and I am very happy that, by God's grace at this moment, I have the opportunity to convey to you something of the Christian good wishes that we've learned in the Gospel, as well as some words of Jesus Christ, the apostles and prophets.

The Kingdom was the Main Preaching of Jesus

The Old Testament abounds in promises and prophecies in which the Kingdom of God and his King, the Messiah, figure as the center. The hope of every Israelite (Luke 3:15) was that as a people, God would exalt their nation under Messiah. When the

Lord came to them, they were expecting, hoping, that it was in his capacity as King, to establish the promised Kingdom of God on the earth.

John, the forerunner and herald of our Lord, began his ministry with the announcement, *Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.* (Matthew 3:2) The Lord began his ministry with exactly the same message (Matthew 4:17), and the apostles were sent to preach the same message (Matthew 10:7; Luke 9:2). Not only was the Kingdom the theme with which the Lord began his ministry, but in reality it was the main focus of all his preaching (Luke 8:1; 4:43; 19:11); he mentioned other subjects only in connection with, or explaining, this one topic. The majority of his parables either illustrated the Kingdom from different points of view, and in different phases, or served to point out complete consecration to God as essential in order to take part in the Kingdom—and thus served to correct an error on the part of the Jews, who believed themselves sure of obtaining the Kingdom because they were natural children of Abraham, and consequently natural heirs to the promises.

Our Lord, in his talks with his disciples, strengthened and encouraged their hopes in a coming Kingdom, telling them, *I, then, appoint you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* (Luke 22:29,30) He also told them, *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* (Luke 12:32) And when, instead of being crowned and enthroned, He whom they recognized as king was crucified, the disciples suffered a bitter disappointment, because they had hoped *that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*, liberating them from the Roman yoke, and making Israel the Kingdom of God in power and great glory. But the sacrifice of Christ was necessary before the Kingdom could be established. —Luke 24:21,25,26

God was able to give Jesus the dominion of earth without his having redeemed man because *the Most High has the dominion of the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom He will.* (Daniel 4:32) However, God had a higher design than could have been effected by means of that plan. A kingdom under such conditions would have brought blessings that, however good they might be, would have been merely temporary, since mankind was condemned to death. In order to make permanent the blessings of his Kingdom, the race first would have to be resurrected from the dead and thus

be legally liberated from the condemnation that had fallen upon all because of Adam.

In explaining the prophecies to his disciples, Jesus revived in them the hope of a coming kingdom. In the beginning, the disciples, as well as the entire Jewish nation, cherished an imperfect conception of the Kingdom of God in supposing it to be exclusively earthly, in the same way that now many err in the opposite sense in supposing the Kingdom will be exclusively heavenly. Many of the parables and dark sayings of our Lord were said with the intention of correcting, in due time, these false ideas. Notwithstanding, he always presented the idea of a Kingdom, a government that would be established in the earth to reign among men. Not only did he inspire in them the hope that they would participate in the Kingdom, but he also taught them to pray for its establishment. *Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done here ON EARTH, as it is done in heaven.* Millions have offered these words in their prayers, but have not realized their significance.

The Kingdom which he preached, and to which he invited his disciples to be joint-heirs, was invisible, and they were not to entertain the hope of seeing it. He answered the Pharisees saying, *The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here, lo there, for behold, the Kingdom of God is among you.* (Luke 17:20,21) He indicated that when it came it would simply be present, and would be everywhere powerful, but that it would not be visible anywhere. Thus he gave the Pharisees an idea of the spiritual Kingdom which he preached, but they were not prepared, and therefore they did not receive it.

There was some truth in the Jews' hopes concerning the promised Kingdom, a part of which, as we shall see, will be realized when the time comes for it; notwithstanding, here the Lord referred only to the spiritual phase of the Kingdom, which will be invisible. And as this phase of the Kingdom will be the first to be established, his presence will not be discernible, and for some time it will go unnoticed.

The privilege of being heirs of this spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God was the only offer he made then, and during the Gospel Age which began at that time, it has been the only hope of our *heavenly calling.* (Ephesians 4:4) Therefore, Jesus referred exclusively to that phase. Luke 16:16 — "The Law and the prophets were until John; since then the Kingdom of God is preached." Those who will form the spiritual phase of the Kingdom are those who have *part in the first resurrection; on them*

the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:6) The Apostle Paul affirms that these will be raised from the dead at the coming of the Lord Jesus; and those who are alive and remain will be changed. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51,52) Jesus said, *I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.* John the Revelator gave the exact number of this class, 144,000. (Revelation 7:14) The call and selection of this class takes place during the Gospel Age, which began at the baptism of Christ, and has continued for almost 2,000 years—a very long period of time to select So few from So great a multitude of people, but the Lord said, *Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* (Luke 12:32) In Matthew 18:20 he also said, *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.* Hence we can deduce that the quantity is not important, but the quality certainly is.

Christ's Second Presence

The Kingdom will be established during the presence of Christ. The Bible was not written in Spanish, nor in English, etc., but principally in Hebrew in the Old Testament, and Greek in the New Testament. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, verses 3, 27, 37, and 39, the incorrect translation of the Greek word *parousia* (which should be translated *presence*, but is translated *coming*) has caused So much trouble in reference to the fulfillment of Christ's presence. The meaning of the *parousia* is more precise than that contained in the word *coming*. It does not signify that he is on the way or has promised to return, but that he has already come and is present. *Parousia* is translated *presence* in Philippians 2:12.

Today the evidence of the presence of Christ is all around us, and yet the world does not perceive it. The realization that we are in the Day of the Lord, and that very shortly all his saints will meet him in the transformation of the resurrection, exercises a stimulating and encouraging influence on Bible Students, separating them from the world and its aims and ambitions, and fixing their eyes on the Crown of Life that the Lord has prepared for those who love him above all things.

How can we arrive at the realization or the conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ is present? Our Lord provided the most marvelous illustrations of the manner in which he will reveal his presence, when he said, *For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and shineth even unto the west, So shall also the coming of the Son of*

man be. (Matthew 24:27) Evidently the majority of the translations of this verse are in error in the use of the word *lightning* in the literal sense, or to the letter, when it is more precise to understand the *light of the sun*, because lightning does not come forth from the east and shine toward the west. The light of the lightning often comes from other directions as well and rarely runs across the whole sky. In the illustration given by our Lord we must understand it as the *light of the sun*—the only reasonable translation—which always and unchangeably appears in the east and shines to the west. The Greek word *astrape* used here was incorrectly translated in this text as well as in Luke 17:24.

But we see what a marvelous picture the rising of the sun is and how well it illustrates to some of us the dawning light of the truth and the blessings in the day of his presence. In this figure the Lord draws the overcomers near to himself, saying in Matthew 13:43, *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.* And the prophet, using the same figure, writes, *The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.* (Malachi 4:2) The dawning is gradual, but finally in clear and complete splendor it will banish the darkness of evil, ignorance, superstition and sin. In John 14:19 Jesus says, *And the world shall see me no more; but you shall see me.* Only believers are able to see the presence of the Lord by means of the *Studies in the Scriptures*.

As the light of the morning sun when the day is beginning gradually separates the dark clouds, impelling, pushing one against the other until the daylight is at its full, in this way the presence of Christ may be accomplished, gradually pushing away the obscurity—the power of evil—one evil against the other, until they are completely destroyed, giving place to the new order, where Christ will be visible not as a man, but as the light of the sun.

Now let us analyze the saying in Matthew 24:30.

Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man [this is evidence of the presence of Christ in his return to the earth] in heaven [symbolic spiritual heaven]; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn [there will be a general lamentation on account of the tribulation], and they shall see the Son of man coming [with the eyes of their understanding] in the clouds of heaven [which signify the time of trouble] with power and great glory [and righteousness].

The prophet Daniel gives an illustration of the time of trouble in chapter 12, verse 1, saying, *At that time shall Michael stand up*

[who is Christ], the great prince . . . and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation until that same time [the time of trouble began in 1914 with World War I and it will end right before the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth]. [verse 4] Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. The science of knowledge has grown grandly in these last years, the inventions of the past and present centuries, produced one after the other, have been greatly improved—trains, ships, automobiles, jets; and people running to and fro. And, due to modern communication methods, we are even able to see special travel—the landing on the moon and interplanetary travel. Great Bible Societies were founded between 1803 and 1817. The reality, too, that the Plan of God has been able to be understood, demonstrates that we are living in the last times. Brother Russell said, *If knowledge had increased before, the trouble would have begun sooner.* In verse 13 the Lord said to Daniel, *Thou, go thy way, until the end of days come.* Here we can deduce that the prophet Daniel will be resurrected in the end of the last days.

The Great Time of Trouble

In Matthew 24:20,21 Jesus gives an illustration of the trouble, saying, *For there shall be trouble So great such as has not been since the world began, until now, nor ever shall be.* This trouble or world-wide crisis began with the outbreak of the first world war, which marked the end of the Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24), and ends at the Battle of Armageddon. After World War I, man—governments and states—united and formed the League of Nations with the noble objective of bringing peace to the nations. But the League of Nations failed in its peaceful intent and went out of existence in the Second World War, after which men founded the Society of Nations (or the U.N.) —the Organization of the United Nations—with the same objective of bringing peace among the nations and, as never before, the people have placed confidence in it. Still, the U.N.'s peace forces have failed wherever they have intervened in the fields of battle. Today we can see this scenario in Lebanon and in the war between Iran and Iraq, where for several years the forces of peace have done nothing. Why is it that the League of Nations and the U.N. have failed? Because they do not have the true peace, neither does the title *peacemaker* belong to them. The title of Peace rests on the shoulders of the *Prince of Peace [who is Christ]. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.* (Isaiah 9:6,7)

At the end of the Second World War the combatants returned to their countries since on the 8th of May, 1945, the war ended in

Europe. At that time people said wars had always existed, would always exist, and things would always continue to be the same. Meanwhile the war, while abandoned on European soil, continued in the Pacific. And then in Japan something terrible came about—as it is written, *When they say, 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction shall come upon them.* Suddenly, on the 6th and 8th of August, 1945, heavy bomber aircraft dropped the atomic bomb on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then the End of the World, which had seemed a thing of fantasy, became a fatal, mournful possibility. The frightful loss of property and life caused the inhabitants of the world profound anxiety, because of the fear that man finally stumbled into something he could not control and which could result in the end of the human race. Jesus said, *Men's hearts shall fail them for fear, looking on the things that shall come upon the earth.* (Luke 21:26) As it happened in the days of Noah before the flood, and as it happened in the days of Lot, *thus shall the day of the Son of Man manifest itself.* (Luke 17:26-30) This chaotic situation predicted in the Bible, we see has happened in the world today. Moral values have fallen, wars, revolutions, earthquakes, violence, robberies, assaults, crimes, terrorism and assassinations. *And if those days were not shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elects sake, those days shall be shortened.* (Matthew 24:22) The prophet Micah, in chapter 4, verse 3, says that instruments of war shall be transformed into useful instruments of agriculture, and war will not be learned any more. We can be sure that thus will it be in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ—the Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace!

The Blossoming Fig Tree

The parable told by Jesus in Luke 21:29-31 is being accomplished in the days in which we live, and must be analyzed carefully.

He told them also a parable, Behold the fig tree, and all the trees. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

All the trees signify the nations of the earth, and the shooting forth signifies the independence of the nations. Today we can already see that so many nations, such as never before in the history of the world, are becoming independent. The *fig tree*, which signifies earthly Israel, began to shoot forth leaves in 1874 in the rise of the Zionist movement, with the objective of establishing a homeland for the Jews. And in 1948 the fig tree blossomed. The flower

symbolizes the independence of Israel which came about at that date. Shortly the fig tree will give the fruit which will be the earthly phase of the Messianic Kingdom, with Jerusalem the capital of the world and the Ancient Worthies—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel—the princes of that government. (Isaiah 32:1)

Many nations shall come, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his truths; for out of Zion [the spiritual phase, the Church, the 144,000—those that have part in the first resurrection] shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem [the earthly phase—the Divine message by the princes].

In that time the prophecy of Daniel 2:44 will be fulfilled, which says, *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed, neither shall the Kingdom be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.* In the Kingdom the resurrection of the dead will take place, and the restoration to perfection of all that was lost in Eden, yes, the resurrection of all things, foretold in Acts 3:21. All those who will demonstrate obedience will obtain eternal life, and the incorrigible will be destroyed in the second death. —Re 21:8

The Blessings Are Sure

The creeds have taught erroneously that the curse, the wages of Adam's sin, will be eternal torment in an eternal fiery furnace or in purgatory; nevertheless, the Word of God does not confirm this unjust, merciless plan. But rather it says clearly that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. (Romans 6:23) The Bible contains an indisputable proof that the soul is mortal, in Ezekiel 18:4,20 which says, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* In Genesis 2:17 it is stated, *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.* From the moment the first man fell in death until the present day, countless millions have descended into the tombs; but we have the comforting word of Jesus that, after this sad condition, *the hour shall come when all who are in their graves shall hear his voice . . . and come forth.* (John 5:28,29) Jesus said, *I am the resurrection and the life.* The resurrection of Jesus was an assurance given to all by which they can have confidence that God will raise the dead. (Acts 17:31) The Apostle Paul said that *Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all.* (1 Timothy 2:6)

Someone will say, *Christ died a long time ago now. Why then do sin and death reign and destroy So many millions of people?* In Volume Six, pages 335 and 336 in the original language published, the author of the *Studies in the Scriptures*, Charles Taze Russell, gives a satisfactory explanation, that God, having established His plan, determined the appropriate time for the carrying out of each phase of it. Thus God postponed sending the sacrifice for 4,000 years; and He also is postponing sending the blessing guaranteed by said sacrifice, which will be the final result—which God surely will send in due time. The objective of the postponement, as explained in the Scriptures, is dual:

The first objective is to allow time for the human race to sufficiently populate the earth. In the present passage of time the human race is receiving a sufficient dose of suffering, and considerable instruction, convincing them of the cruelty of sin, and of death even more.

For the second objective, God has postponed the general blessing of the world in order that, during this Gospel Age, there might be selected from among mankind the followers of Christ, which is a little flock, the class of the elect—which are those who remain faithful unto death. (Revelation 2:10)

Beloved brethren, let us be prepared, willing, to receive this one, our Great Savior, High Priest, Great Physician and King of kings.

We must remember not only to continue in Christ and be covered with the robe of his merit, but also to cultivate in our hearts the fruits of his spirit; and let us remember that patience and resoluteness are great assistance to that end. From this solemn moment forward, from this moment of sober-mindedness, let us resolve to do our best to enter more and more in the steps of the Master, and to let the light of his truth reflect itself more and more in our lives. Let us do our best every day So that the world in which we live will become better and more joyful; and as much as possible let us resolve to worship and praise God in our body and spirit, which are His.

Amen.

**Ways to Resist the Devil's Wiles-Brother Hercules
Gonos, Greece**

Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. — Ephesians 6:11

PROVIDING examples in the presentation of a subject is often more beneficial than even an excellent literary presentation of the same ideas. So we will today present our thoughts using examples.

The Old and the New Testaments contain a great many parables and examples taken from real life. Brother Russell's writings frequently contain similar illustrations taken from his own personal experiences and from presentations made by ministers in the churches of his day.

The superiority of teaching through examples is generally accepted. It is seen in many places in the book of Acts. It is why regular testimony meetings are so important. It is one thing to listen to a presentation of some feature of truth and quite another to combine that feature with someone's experience that made him sad or glad, alone or with others.

We will use examples from our own personal development of our life in Christ beginning at a very young age up to the age of *the perfect man in Christ*. We trust there will be something of particular interest for the spiritual benefit of all ages represented here.

Going Forth to Conquer

In Revelation, beginning with the opening of the first seal in chapter 6, verse 2, we read: *And a crown was given unto him and he went forth conquering and to conquer*. These seals describe the course of the true Church during the Gospel Age, a course that ends with a pale horse upon which sat Death.

In addition to applying to the entire Church, the same sequence of events happens to each individual member of the Church. Each goes forth with a crown, *conquering and to conquer*. Just like the collective Church, an individual at the start of his new life in the spirit faces many troubles from the world, the flesh, and the devil in proportion to his enthusiasm for the truth.

For those newly come unto Christ, the first intimidation takes the form of hindering his growth in knowledge or of taking a vow of consecration to enter the good fight of faith. The enemy says: *You are not worthy of such an exceeding honor. You do not have the natural strength or qualifications to face the hardships and*

dangers of the narrow way. Notice your imperfections, your humble origins, your sinful past, and all your general abilities. Will these guarantee your success in a hard fight against strong enemies to become an overcoming saint?

The Lord, however, as a great eagle who feeds and protects her young, says to these babes: *Be strong and of good courage. Lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth . . . and eat it up.* (Matthew 28:20; Revelation 10:8,9)

If the young person considers himself to be good ground and receives these encouraging words of the Lord that speak to his mind through the Scriptures, he devours the book which immediately becomes as sweet as honey in his mouth. In this way he receives his first appreciation of the divine word because *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, and wisdom is the principal thing.* (Proverbs 1:7; 4:7)

Solomon also says, *When wisdom entereth into thine heart and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.* (Proverbs 2:10,11) Thus with such spiritual supplies, with *the sincere milk of the word*, we go forth to begin the good fight of the faith, *conquering and to conquer.*

So we would say to those who have approached Christ, *Receive the Lord's words, and hide His commandments with thee . . . for the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous.* (Proverbs 2:1,6,7) The principal thing for you is knowledge. Eat the Bible and the books which give you a helping hand that the Lord has prepared for you through his Faithful and Wise Servant before you go out to the big battles in the world.

The Devil would like to throw you without armor into spiritual battles against your enemies. This is an old method of the Devil, but one that has been modernized for our day. The Devil may suggest that you stand in the streets with books in your hands from morning until night, or that you move constantly from house to house, preaching that which you have not yet learned. If you do this, there will be no time for physical and spiritual strength to provide spiritual edification.

Today is not the time for the world to find its eternal salvation, nor should your principal work be for others. You must concentrate on

the edification of your own self. Even in his old age Paul said, *I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* (1 Corinthians 9:27)

So if you as a babe in Christ do some preaching or great biblical work and then claim, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* you may receive the answer, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* (Matthew 7:22,23)

So the young in Christ are to first put on the whole armor of God as mentioned in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, So that with it *thine eyes look right on, ponder the path of thy feet, turn not to the right hand nor to the left. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* (Proverbs 4:25-27; 14:12)

Even though the Ephesians had great faith and love for the saints, they did not seem to know the hope of God's calling. Paul wrote to them:

I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:16-20)

Therefore our greatest task is to come unto the knowledge of *what is the hope of God's calling* for us.

Follow After Righteousness

As we grow in wisdom and stature in Christ, such knowledge is pleasant to our souls. Our self-denial and self-sacrifice increases toward the truth, as does our love for the house of our heavenly Father. As it was said of the Lord, *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* (John 2:17) During this time the devil's hatred toward us increases and his wiles change to become more dangerous for us. Here are some of them.

The devil will probably say unto you: *Be a little restrained in your devotion to the Lord, in your sacrifices, in your work of the truth and toward your brethren. Do not abandon yourself to such a*

degree, nor abandon those in your family. Do not abandon your earthly obligations and modern comforts. He may immediately bring to your thoughts examples of other brethren who do not seem to do what you do. He might say: Don't you see? You're the only one who fights to such extremes. You are the foolish one.

Here is where you must stop, think, and then refuse to accept this wicked suggestion. It may be that your brother has more zeal and is more of a sacrificer than you are. This may not be so apparent to you because he is following this commandment of the Lord very strictly: *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.* (Matthew 6:3) Don't forget that the two mites of the widow counted for more than the contributions of the rich. (Mark 12:41,42) So do not in your heart become a judge of your brother. Remember that each one must *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.* (Philippians 2:12)

If you behave with wisdom and prudence, you will receive increasing love from those of your brethren who are pure in heart. You will also receive increasing hatred from the devil and his instrumentalities.

Some of the more fitting instruments in the hands of the devil will be those brethren who have wandered away from Present Truth or whose love has cooled. They are not, of course, conscious of being enemies, but become enemies through their misguided course. Because they think their new course is righteous, they will fight against your course thinking that, in this way, their work benefits you, others, and the truth.

What must your position be in this case? Should you come out of the *Holy* and fight them? Should you become timid and stop your zeal in the good fight of faith? Here's Paul's answer to Timothy: *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.* (1 Timothy 6:11,12)

Office of a Bishop

Perhaps the most fiery dart of the devil is one he uses upon all who name the name of Christ, from the very newest in the way to one who is finishing his course. It is the great sin committed by the devil himself: Pride.

If the devil cannot stop your zeal for your sacrificial way of life and your love for the truth and the brethren, he will change his approach. He will try to injure you with a spirit of pride using the dart of great swelling words.

In such times he may tell you: *You are admirable. You have managed amazing progress even though you haven't been in the truth as long as other brethren. It is time that you desire the office of a bishop.* And then he will quote the appropriate verse by Paul: *If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.* (1 Timothy 3:1)

This Scripture is of course true. But stop to think about the remaining words of Paul in this letter, all the other words in the Bible concerning this matter, and what we read in the sixth volume of *Studies in the Scriptures* about the organization, order, and discipline of the New Creation. Don't make your decisions based only on your heart. We will now cite two examples to show what could happen.

Example One: Brother A with more years in the truth than you may be a much honored elder among the Lord's people. He may say to you, *Here, in our city, the class needs a good speaker or servant. I believe you should be the one to offer your services.* Should you hesitate because you are not authorized for that service, it is probable that he will say: *I have been an elder for many years and am able to judge that you are the appropriate person and you must serve. Do not hesitate any longer. Take these responsibilities in the Church and the Lord will be with you.* Examples of this kind took place after the death of Brother Russell in the apostate of present truth classes, but it is also possible this might occur in good classes as well.

Let us carefully consider this point So we might distinguish the point of the enemy's trap. Although Brother A may be a very faithful elder and chosen by the Church in their elections, does he have the right to appoint other servants and send them off for the upbuilding of the Lord's Church?

The Bible's answer is clearly No. No one has the right to make such an appointment. It is only the ecclesia's right to anoint someone for such service. It is only the ecclesia that has the right to judge a candidate's qualifications, character, and talents. The Lord acknowledges only the ecclesia's right to make such an appointment.

If you should accept the appointment of Brother A, you have been trapped and sooner or later you will become aware of the harmful result—unless you become aware of your mistake and are humble enough to correct it by asking for the ecclesia’s ordination.

Therefore be careful not to suffer as the man of God in Bethel suffered, who, instead of staying firm in observing God’s order to *eat no bread nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest*, obeyed rather the prophet’s invitation when he said to him:

I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. (1 Kings 13:18) After this the man of God obeyed the old prophet and deviated from the right way and ate and drank. *And when he was gone a lion met him by the way and slew him.* The lesson is that if we also obey the voice of some elder brother which opposes that of God’s word which we know, if we deviate from the present truth, a lion will kill us. *Because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Peter 5:8)

The Sixth Volume analyzes this matter well.

Nor should any brother assume public duties in the church as leader, representative, etc., without an election—even though assured that there is no question respecting his acceptability. The scriptural method of ordaining elders in all the churches is by congregational election—by stretching forth the hand in a vote. And he continues:

None should be assumed to be a believer and to be fully consecrated; both by word and act he should have given unmistakable evidences of both his faith and consecration long before being chosen an elder.

To insist on such an election before serving is to follow scriptural order; it fortifies the elder, and additionally reminds the Ecclesia of its duties and responsibilities.

These are Brother Russell’s words in Volume Six, pages 279 and 280.

Example Two: Committee B (not one person) consisting of good elders properly appointed in the scriptural manner, may be

appointed for limited or general work, and may propose the selection of someone else for public duties in one ecclesia or in many ecclesias (e.g., as a pilgrim).

As in the first example, and though there is a committee of elders and not just one, the scriptural word is that it is the ecclesia that has the right to appoint an invited brother, even though the ecclesia consists of only two or three members. Although the committee may have good recommendations about the one it wishes to select, it must ask the ecclesia's permission. And the invited brother, likewise, must be sure to secure the ecclesia's permission before accepting the committee's proposal.

The improper selection of brethren to serve others began to take place in the present truth movement when a great number of people claiming to be brethren established their own organization, called Jehovah's Witnesses. In this organization ordination has been abolished within local ecclesias. All appointment has been made by the central organization as representatives of *higher powers*.

We rejoice that this error does not seem to be present in healthy congregations who continue to recognize the order and discipline in the New Creation as described in the sixth volume of *Scripture Studies*. For if the suggestion of a single elder is improper, how much worse would the mistake be if it were made by a collection or committee of elders.

In addition to this very poisonous dart of pride, the devil has many equally deadly darts. Here are a few examples.

Be Not Weary in Well Doing

You might find yourself in a very difficult situation similar to one experienced by your brother at a time when you were very useful to him, showing great generosity without thought of repayment. At such a moment Satan will bring this thought to you: *Do you see how foolish you were? You dispersed your goods while your brethren cared only for themselves and their families.*

At such a moment you must stop and think. Remember the words of the Lord: *When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* (Luke 14:13,14)

In your situation, two explanations are possible. First, the brother who received your charity may not have known of your situation. Second, the Lord may have acted to make the brother unaware of your situation so that you might be tried on this point. If you are able to avoid this trap, you may be assured that the Lord will make you *ruler over many things*, so you will have more than enough to show mercy toward others and to abound.

Therefore, as Paul says to the Galatians: *Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.* (Galatians 6:9) For the Lord also *hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honor.* (Psalm 112:9)

Even though you might be careful to follow the Lord's instruction to *let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*, your own sacrifices might become known to other brethren. This is because *likewise also, the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.* (1 Timothy 5:25) In such circumstances if there is a problem in a brother's heart, he may think wicked thoughts instead of appreciating your sacrifices. He may attribute your actions to a bad motive of your heart, forgetting Paul's advice, *charity thinketh no evil.* (1 Corinthians 13:5) (See also the Manna text and comment of February 13.) It is even possible he will spread rumors and say to others:

Look, Brother So and So is rich and spends much on the work and his brethren so he may subjugate them to honor him, so they will agree with him in different matters, so they will vote for him as an elder. What terrible thoughts and words! Such must be forgetting that *there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth, more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.* (Proverbs 11:24)

If you are in such a circumstance, you must stop and look at the trap. See that you do not render evil for evil unto your brethren by claiming a right to use similar methods. There are holy and scriptural ways to handle this matter. The Lord is also able to expose any unfair defamation and the one who slanders another. His word is light and will not keep others in darkness unable to distinguish truth from error.

So you must act in wisdom and pray for your brother. He may see his mistake and abandon his evil actions. You, on the other hand, will have won a spiritual victory and the Lord will give you further honor in his service.

Whomsoever Ye Shall Approve

If you are responsible for managing the financial matters of the ecclesia, be sure to request a regular auditing of all your actions. Do not regard the auditing procedure as unnecessary because it will protect you from many wicked darts of the enemy. Auditing will also satisfy the spirit of the ecclesia's delegation of these responsibilities to you.

Recall the wise act of Paul when the offering from Corinth was to be dispersed to the poor of Jerusalem. He said to the Corinthians: *Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.* (1 Corinthians 16:3,4) Paul did not say, *I am an apostle, don't you trust me?* But on the contrary, he said, *Whomsoever ye shall approve.*

In spite of all your proper care, there may come a time when you will be accused of improper financial or ethical judgment. Or you may be accused by someone who should have known your character well enough to refrain from false accusations.

Do not forget what the Lord has said: *For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (Luke 23:31) Are we superior to the Lord? Do not therefore be surprised by the many different traps of Satan. He is the inventor of all wickedness. Stand firm in your calmness and stay in the scriptural and holy way.

As you develop your activities in the field of the gospel, there may be times when you will be regarded as trespassing on the activity field of others, activities they regard as their exclusive privilege. Should this happen, you may remind your brother that a special anointing is only required for services rendered to the Church, not for the declaration of the gospel to the world. And after rendering this explanation, continue with your work to proclaim the gospel.

If there should come a time when a brother you love deeply acts wrongly toward you using an unjust cause as a pretext, remember the prophecies and words of the Lord: *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* (Matthew 24:12,13) So do not allow anything to cool your heart even at the end of your course if you wish to be among the overcomers.

Evil Speaking

Be aware, however, of another sly and destructive trap which the devil uses on those of all ages. That is the suggestion of someone to be bound to a promise of secrecy about something which is critical of another brother though introduced with flattering words for you. The one sharing this secret with you, though he acts unscripturally, will think he is doing a work of salvation.

So if even a very good and honored brother says to you, I regard you as trustworthy because you, like me, are my equal, are in accord and of one mind with me. I will therefore tell you something that only you and I and no one else will know. Brother A does this or that. He must not therefore continue to possess the privileges that the ecclesia has given him.

If you should accept this proposal of secrecy about this matter, you are trapped. It is entirely possible that the one bringing you this information will also bring the same suggestion to others. Thus with such a wide dissemination Brother A will have been destroyed in the hearts of everyone, though each one will think that only he possesses the secret, being the only one worthy of the confidence of the accuser.

Apart from this destruction, however, all who possess the *secret* will suffer continually with the dilemma of whether or not Brother A is really a transgressor or not. So what is the result? It is a trap of great evil!

You must remember that you have given an oath to the Lord and should not give an oath to anyone else, an oath or non-scriptural promise that really entraps you. To avoid the trap, say to the one who brings this *secret*: *I will keep my liberty in Christ. If you tell me of this matter, I will act according to the Lord's commandment.* You may continue by saying,

With such a declaration from me, you may, if you find it appropriate, tell me of the matter and I will proceed to do that which is the Lord's will. For it is probable that the one who is committing sin must, according to the law of the New Creation, present his explanations before the two of us, and perhaps even before the ecclesia. It is not right for us—and certainly not with the absence of the individual—to hold any accusing thoughts toward him. The Lord condemns such an act. You might also add:

If we keep an accusation about this brother a secret, we are bound with an oath or promise. The Lord, however, will reveal this secret

in his own way and will 'set a plumbline between us' regarding what we have built. He will 'unveil us and will not pass by us.' (Amos 7:7,8) You might also remind him about David and his killing of Uriah.

Although David was a man after God's own heart, he took all possible precautions to hide his violation of Bathsheba. He flattered Uriah, made him drunk So that he could succeed in his plans, but after none of these could cover his own sinful act, he finally committed the detestable act of murdering Uriah.

But this act of David greatly displeased the Lord. So the Lord sent Nathan to David who gave him the parable of the rich man who had exceeding many flocks and herds and the poor man who had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished. This parable rebuked David and revealed all his unjust acts. (2 Samuel 11:27; 12:1-6) So you who have So many rich gifts and privileges by the grace of the Lord should be careful to never take away the *little ewe lamb* from your poor brother, for in such a case your action will displease the Lord and he will greatly rebuke you.

We see that David really loved the Lord's will, So after he was rebuked he was humbled and begged the Lord's forgiveness in the presence of Nathan. That is why Nathan said to him, *The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.*

So if you adopt the proper course in this potential trap of the adversary, you will accomplish many good things. First, you will save yourself rather than becoming a collaborator in evil. Second, you will save your brother who, after being rebuked, may beg forgiveness if he is as humble as David. Third, you will reinstate Brother A from the killing that he has So far received. Fourth, you will protect other brethren from the stumbling blocks and defilement in this sin. Fifth, the Lord's name will be glorified.

Take Heed, Lest We Fall

Now we come to the final stage of the one who has grown up into Christ, a stage most hated by the enemies of the New Creation. The more dignity one possesses in his work within the Church of Christ, the more exposed he is to many dangers. We will cite three examples.

Example one concerns self-confidence. An old brother might say in his heart, *Since I have held such and such a position for So many years, all my thoughts and actions must be right. Consequently I do not really need to ask for the ecclesia's affirmation on many different matters, nor the affirmation of my elders' committee, even though it really should be done. Neither do I need to listen to the proposals and ideas of others, especially when they are younger than I am.*

A second example in such a man as this is the idea that he is irreplaceable, an idea that has become rooted in his heart. He comes to think he is irreplaceable for the duties the Lord has given him and that he is therefore responsible for them forever. He therefore does not accept the idea of being replaced or the promotion of another to the same duties, and certainly not the idea of being demoted. He forgets that the Lord may say, *Give this man place.* (Luke 14:9)

Let us not forget that, *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* (1 Corinthians 10:12) Wisdom does not depend only on years, but more on the precise observance of the Lord's orders, as the Psalmist says, *I understand more than the ancients because I keep thy precepts.* (Psalm 119:100)

A third example: Brother B, an elder and one honored for his work in Christ and a member of a council or committee, brings before others an accusation concerning another who was appointed to a service saying: *Brother A says this or that, or does this or that. These things are opposed to present truth. I suggest that he be stopped from doing the service for which he serves.*

It would be a great mistake if the council or committee condemns Brother A only on the grounds of this testimony without calling on him for an explanation. No one must be judged and sentenced unless the right procedure is followed. This is clearly taught in the Bible and in the sixth volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*. It is not necessary that I repeat the citations here.

It is very clear that in the last years of one's walk in Christ Paul's advice to the Ephesians is still valid: *Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore . . . ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.* (Ephesians 6:13,16)

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. —Ec 12:13,14

Amen.

I Am My Beloved's, and My Beloved Is Mine—Brother Jerome Gruhn, France

Dearly beloved in the Lord! Our subject for consideration takes us to the Song of Songs, chapter 6, verse 3, where we read: *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.*

The Song of Songs is one of the most controversial books of Biblical literature, hence one might ask oneself these questions: Why was this love poem inserted into the Old Testament? Who wrote it? How did it come to be introduced and gain a place in the holy Scriptures?

Its structure is difficult to determine with its repetitions of verse, themes and images, and with its songs of love. Some discern a coordination of the whole of the poem with a certain order in the poetic unity. They suggest different interpretations. As for us, we try to interpret it in an allegorical sense concerning Christ and his Church.

The Song of Songs describes human love as an end in itself in the work of God. Therefore it is referred to in marriage ceremonies to show that the true role of love consists in the uniting of two beings that the all-powerful God created, using the language of covenants that this union represents.

The love of Christ for his Church is the model of all love, as we will ascertain throughout this discussion. The objective of this poem is thus to demonstrate the intimacy of and harmony in the communion of the church with Christ, and this higher form of communion is a spiritual one.

The Shulamite

In this poem one finds the two words *Solomon* and *Shulamite*. Song of Solomon 6:13: *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite?>* Both come from the Hebrew *shalom* which means *peace*, and which describes a state of serenity, happiness, and

contentment in everything. It might also be interpreted as *prosperous* or *perfected*. The Shulamite is being considered as *perfected*. This meant that she was worthy of becoming the companion of the *perfect* one.

I, the Shulamite, have found at the side of Solomon a haven of *peace* [*shalom*]. She represents the TRUE CHURCH. She has pledged her fidelity and her submission to Solomon.

This, then, is the Church herself who makes known to others her spiritual condition, possessions, communion, and bond with Christ. It is a question of the union with Christ, who already lives, which will result from the future joining with him.

It is then quite fitting that ancient Jewish experts attributed the book *of songs* to Solomon himself. The introduction of this book is very significant since it is entitled *the most beautiful So* — "The song of songs which is Solomon's" (as poet and writer).

In chapter 6, verse 3, it is the Shulamite who says, *I am my Beloved's*. This is an expression of her genuine and profound love which is answered by her beloved.

Oh how sincere and profound is the love of Solomon for this Shulamite and, in turn, hers for her Beloved. She manifests this love openly by saying, *I am my Beloved's*. She expresses thus the depth of her soul, full of gratitude, and which alone can perceive those who are moved by a boundless love.

Another picture describing this love and illustrating the conditions of the heavenly calling is given to us by the Lord in Psalm 45. We read from verse 10: *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*

This concerns here all whom God calls during the Gospel Age. They are called from among the midst of corrupt humanity, invited to renounce all, in order to receive their reward from their heavenly Bridegroom. However, in order not to jeopardize this calling, they must conform themselves to the requirements of the Bridegroom, renounce everything, and be obedient. Let us give an attentive ear to the voice of God, who would like us to heed His call, because He is ready to accept us just as we are, in order to shape us in His image and likeness.

The King greatly desires thy beauty, O beloved Shulamite; he would like to make you his ideal bride. Let us give ourselves to Him! Could we receive a better or grander proposal? This is a unique proposal given to us during this Gospel Age. Are we ready to accept this unique offer that will end at the close of the Gospel Age? This is therefore an exceptional opportunity that has been given us during this age, to respond to the call of God.

The bride, in prostrating herself, makes a vow of obedience, accepts her Lord and her King as her absolute master, and pursues the favors of the bridegroom by her behavior. She will be able to say, *I am my Beloved's*.

The members of the Church particularly delight to carry out their vow of consecration through their faithfulness. These individually promise to conduct themselves properly in life as children of God (1 Peter 2:12) and to have a good conscience before God (1 Peter 3:21). This is their sole pleasure. They strive to keep their guard and resist the many and varied temptations that are scattered across the course of their life. They make resolutions and strive to keep them, through the promised grace to help from the Bridegroom. They strive daily to carry out the sacrifice of their earthly interests.

Forget thy father's house, we were told in Psalm 45. Let us mortify the lusts, aspirations, hopes, and earthly inclinations and with confidence place ourselves at the disposition of our good, heavenly Father; for it is our subordination to Him that will result in glory and honor. All our efforts shown, all our sacrifices offered for the sake of pleasing the Bridegroom, will receive a reward.

Could we find a more beautiful and grander proposal than that in Psalm 45, which invites us to leave all, abandon everything, sacrifice the carnal pleasures here and accept these marvelous promises to be united with Christ! These promises are sure, but to obtain them, each one of us must bring personal proof of his faith by developing the requisite Christian character.

To the perfect beauty of the King corresponds that of the Bride. Verses 13 and 14 tell us: *The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework*. Here gold symbolizes the divine nature, to which is linked a far superior glory to that of angels, principalities, and powers. It represents the spiritual, glorious body that will be received by the members of the Bride, whose spiritual disposition will be like the Bridegroom.

Here then briefly is the essential thought of Psalm 45 which shows what the elect can aspire to, those who are victorious in this Gospel Age. The Bridegroom is faithful, all promises will be kept. He will grant to each the appropriate reward.

The Superior Position of Love

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians confirms this thought by his words, that we now read, in chapter 5, verses 25 to 27:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Love is here given a place of superiority. The love of Christ is manifested for his Church by his sacrificing himself for her and finally giving his perfect life to bring her to a pure and holy life. This is why he set her apart, consecrated, purified, and washed her. In the Orient, a bride-to-be is bathed and adorned before the marriage ceremony. The Apostle Paul here alludes to this custom. The Church is likewise washed and purified by the Lord who will eventually set her in front of him, glorious through her holiness, a pure bride, resplendent in all her moral and spiritual beauty.

God So loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. [Joh 3:16] We know this Scripture well, we even sing it. God loved us while we were yet sinners. He gave his only begotten Son as our Saviour to lead us to grace divine, to bestow heavenly blessings upon us.

It is truly a very real source of comfort to know that God is a God of love. What a great comfort to have the privilege of knowing God as He truly is, a God full of love and compassion, one who desires to save us, and who can save everyone who has faith in Him. His profound grace manifests itself toward all those who display a complete adherence to his word, as far as they are able, in order to obtain eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Above all, love is what drove us to have a spirit of sacrifice, to joyfully dedicate our life for the brethren. We can keep ourselves in this love by obeying the principles of righteousness and by an increasing love for these same principles. We acquire thus the

nobleness of character which energizes love and gratitude, and which promptly and wisely listens to the instructions of the Master.

If this law of love is absent from our hearts, we are not acceptable and will not be accepted by the Son of God as his co-inheritors. We must possess the spirit of sacrifice for the Lord, a spirit of mercy, meekness, gentleness, kindness, benevolence, in a word: love. Love is in fact the fulfillment of the law. *I am my Beloved's.*

What are the elements that must shape the holy disposition of character that we are to possess and without which we will neither inherit the Kingdom of Christ nor belong to the Beloved? The Scriptures tell us what we must put off from ourselves. They are all the negative things that cloud our lives. The members of the Royal Priesthood are battling against spots such as malice, guile, envy, and slander. It is certain that each of us possesses at least one of these weaknesses.

How scrupulously must each one seek to eliminate these defects, to examine every act, word, and thought in his life and even every motivation, So each will become more and more acceptable to God. How scrupulously must each one try to clothe himself with the positive things which are, among others, humility, meekness, longsuffering, fortitude, brotherly love, benevolence. We should possess these character traits to the greatest degree possible. We can and must develop them with God's help.

The Lord is seeking individuals gifted with strong wills and solid characters, who are determined to do the will of God, and only His will. This is why our experiences lead us to employ more and more of ourselves in the service of God, to consecrate more and more of our time in the service of the Lord, to live in conformity to our covenant with God.

We must seek first the interests of the Lord and his Kingdom; it must take first place in all that we do. All this enables us to understand the importance of possessing a solid character with a prompt and immovable will to serve God. Only a small number are able to say, *I am my Beloved's.* This relation, this union with the Lord, implies in itself repentance and justification by faith, which we receive through the merit of Jesus Christ.

It behooves us now to respect our covenant, the contract that binds us, until the end of our life. Are we able to appreciate the real value of this privilege? The answer can only be in the affirmative, the

pleasure to have known God and to be accepted by Him being So great! These benefits greatly surpass our comprehension of the mercies and the kindnesses of God. If we remain faithful, if our heart is entirely God's, we are able to say with confidence and assurance, *And my Beloved is mine.*

The Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3, verses 21 to 23, confirms for us that those who have Christ can with confidence, using the Scriptures as a basis, be certain on this point: *For all things are yours . . . things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.*

Joint-heirship With Christ

We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The Church participates in everything that our heavenly Father possesses. Everything has been created for those who belong to Him—because we are Christ's and Christ is God's. Through the precious blood of our Lord, our sins have been graciously pardoned and we already enjoy divine protection and assistance, blessings, joys, and peace that strengthen our hearts. Let us appreciate all these privileges as we look to the prize of future glory.

Let no man glory in men, says the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:21. These words allude to man's pretentious pride, to one who trusts in his own worth and forgets he owes all to God—all that he is and has.

On the other hand, to be Christ's, following the instructions of the Master is an indispensable need of the true Christian because he belongs to God through Christ, who is in the image of God and the splendor of His glory. The same closeness of communion, unity, and love that exists between the Heavenly Father and His Son is established by our Lord between God and His children, which we are, by means of the love of God, the sacrifice of His Son, and the redemption thus accomplished.

To become His children we must assume certain obligations. We must renounce our own will and accept the will of Jesus. We must place our all on the altar, otherwise we will neither be accepted nor presented to the Father, nor begotten by the Holy Spirit, nor named a son of God and treated as such.

These are the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in his coming Kingdom. If we don't fulfill these conditions, we will not be able to enjoy the privileges

accorded to the sons of God in the present life, and not have the privilege of prayer, friendship, brotherly fellowship, and divine instruction. All who truly follow the instructions in the Scriptures are able to joyously say, *And my Beloved is mine.*

Let us not forget that each of us will receive his reward according to his faithfulness, according to his activity and the structure he has constructed. This structure is important for each of us. It is the formation of Christian character based on the image of Christ which is essential for each one of us.

In general we recognize the value of a resolute and determined character. Those who have no goal, no ideal in life, are poor people. On the contrary, those who are active, energetic, enterprising, who do have an ideal and strive to reach it, frequently experience, as they grow older, a different outlook on things, as well as a new way of doing things. They realize that their ideal is not satisfactory. This is, moreover, the experience of each human being. But the goals and hopes the Scriptures offer the true Christian are much higher than human hopes and goals, and are of far superior value.

We grasp, as a result of God's mercy and love, that Jesus Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that it is only by him that we can attain the communion and love of God, and understand His unspeakable gift, life eternal on the spiritual plane, that only the called, the new creatures in Christ, can obtain. The called are begotten anew and form the Royal Priesthood, a holy nation, the peculiar people, as described by the Apostle Peter in his first epistle, chapter 2, verses 9 and 10.

Those who are called enter into a contract, a covenant with God, by giving up all their human rights and privileges to obtain the blessings and privileges reserved for spiritual beings, which they will fully possess at their change in the resurrection. Because we have been filled by the spirit of God, we now see only Jesus Christ. We see his victory, his glorious exaltation to honor and the power he will exercise in the heavenly Kingdom that will be set up shortly to rule over all the earth.

All new creatures seek to become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. This is the thought of Romans 8, verse 17: *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if So be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together.*

The Scriptures show us the requirements of true Christians: Possess the fruits of the spirit as enumerated by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22. These fruits must be developed within us, increasing daily and progressively in order to become new creatures in Christ. They manifest themselves in the appearance of faith, hope, meekness, long suffering, forbearance, gentleness, and love. They represent the development of character under the aegis of God; those who work to develop this character attain to the glorious condition expressed by the Apostle Peter in his second epistle, chapter 1, verses 8 to 11, which we now read:

For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

These fruits of the spirit constitute the embroidery of gold on the clothing worn by the Church. She is brought to the King in raiment of needlework, as we read in Psalm 45. Christ is with us by his promises, by the assurance that he gives us and that we appreciate throughout our Christian life.

Our Developmental Experiences

Do we not read in Psalm 23, verse 4: *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.*

The promises of the Lord are sure. The experiences that are necessary for my development so that I may correctly learn the essential lessons to enable me to draw close to the brethren in Christ, are given to me by this text of Scripture: *Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

God takes care of us. As long as our hopes, desires, and aspirations are fixed on spiritual things, we will not need to worry ourselves with present misfortunes and others to come. For God is with us and He gives us His blessings. He watches over us so that we do not fall. Those who trust in God will be able to say with certitude: *When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.*

The *rod* represents the spiritual tests and practice exercises necessary for our development. The *staff* is a symbol of our hope and the promises that are given to us. Both were designed for our ultimate good.

Actually the Church is on trial for life or death. Christ imputes his merit to us and covers our weaknesses and our shortcomings. The test of each of us lasts until he is either unequivocally rewarded or punished; each act will influence the decision that will eventually be made at the end of this test. Consequently it is necessary for those who aspire to the prize of the high calling to fortify themselves so that they may confront the harder battles of these last days and the greater tests of faith and patience that can suddenly bear down upon us without warning.

The only preparation that can be made to resist under such circumstances consists of a constant vigilance and the whole armor of God that we must put on; for our enemy never sleeps and tries by temptation to turn us to some easier way. He is determined and at all times strives by whatever means and sometimes by all means at once to discourage us.

By these experiences we frequently learn lessons we could never have learned solely from the word of God. These lessons must be deeply lodged in our hearts and, as a result, furnish us with lasting benefits. All who remain thus faithful and have within themselves a deep conviction of belonging to the Lord are able to say with assurance, *I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine.*

In Matthew, chapter 28, verse 20, we read: *And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* These words are the solemn promise of Jesus to be with us at all times, particularly now during his second presence, helping us by his power and by his spirit. For us this is another proof of his greatness, his glory, his dignity, and his royalty. It is also an assurance that he will exalt us to perfection at the time of our resurrection in his kingdom.

This is a great privilege for you, for me, for all of us, to realize the reliability and cogency of the promises contained in the word of God, as we read in 2 Peter, chapter 1, verses 3 and 4:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be

partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The Bridegroom is faithful. The promises are sure. He will guide the Church into his palace, into the very center of it, and introduce her in the midst of rejoicing and delight: *Everyone will celebrate you eternally and in perpetuity.* This is the wedding ceremony with its joy and cheerfulness.

This is why the sufferings of the present time cannot be compared to the future glory to be gained by all the overcomers, those who now submit voluntarily to the trials that are brought upon them, enduring sufferings and learning lessons of self-denial and humility. These will be the ones to participate in the Kingdom of Christ—in its joy, glory, and splendor.

May we all share in the happiness of this participation.

Amen.

Of One Heart and Mind-Brother Brent Hislop, Canada

ON THE NIGHT of our Lord's earthly life he gathered his small band of apostles together, and following the meal he spoke his last words to these, his closest apostles.

After three and a half years of teaching the apostles by precept and example, what last words would you imagine Jesus to leave them with, what truths of such importance that they would be Jesus' parting words? Well, Jesus' last discourse is recorded in John 13:31 through John 17, spoken only for the faithful few, for it began only when Judas had left the upper room.

He spoke to them of many things, but he opened his last discourse giving them a new commandment to love one another, and closed it in prayer that we might be one. Of all the truths related by Jesus on that night, perhaps none were more significant than what he illustrated in washing their feet and what he conveyed to them by precept and prayer, of love and oneness.

What an ideal the Master has left us to strive for. An ideal that is So difficult and yet So important. Important, because we need one another for support and mutual growth. Difficult, because the body is So diverse.

At this convention we have many different countries, languages, cultures and backgrounds represented. Here the language barrier is the most obvious difficulty, but far easier to surmount than the differences that beset the body as a whole—the differences of character, the differences of thinking and temperament. We're not all naturally compatible and it takes a great effort to strive for our ideal of love and oneness, given our differences and given our imperfections. It's hard for imperfect beings to live up to a perfect standard. After the flesh there are contentions, strifes, evil speaking, and the like. And all of this must be striven against if we would reach after our ideal in Christian fellowship.

The Purpose of Our Fellowship

In 1 Peter 3:8, the Apostle Peter expresses beautifully the purpose of our fellowship. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having fellow feeling [the Greek means to enter into, to share one another's sorrows and joys], loving as brethren, tender-hearted and humble-minded towards one another.* The Greek word rendered *finally* means the ultimate purpose or goal. Peter is telling us that the ultimate purpose of Christian fellowship is to be, in essence, of one heart and of one mind.

Early in our Christian walk it was difficult to grasp how brethren could be so differently minded on their consecrations. Many were the illusions on just what being of one mind meant. But we came to see that likeness in thinking and temperament is not the goal, but rather that much-used and little-(practically)-understood phrase of *unity with diversity*. And though it seems a contradiction in terms, it's none the less true that oneness of mind is an impossibility without an appreciation and understanding of our differences of thinking and temperament. Rather than being frustrated by these differences, we must work with them and grow by them. To do this we must be good students of both human nature and the ways of the new creature. We are exhorted to this in the Scriptures. He 10:24, *Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.* The thought of considering one another doesn't mean a passive reflection upon all the nice features of our brethren's characters. The Greek word rendered *consider* means *to observe fully*. Paul is trying to convey to us the importance of carefully observing our brethren's character make-ups, in their strengths and in their weaknesses.

What a challenge this is to our maturity. Are we able to see our brethren's weaknesses and not judge harshly, but with a compassion and understanding we would wish for ourselves?

Very often when we see brethren's weaknesses and failings it's all too easy to judge harshly and either reprove our brethren or even draw back a measure of our fellowship with them. Both of these may be right and proper in their place, but our Lord has shown us a more excellent way.

Our Lord's Example

The scene is set on that last night of our Lord's life. In the upper room there arose dissension amongst the disciples as to who should be the greatest. How this must have pained our Lord to listen to. He himself at this time of trial had such great needs of comfort and encouragement and this is what he found. And yet unto the end he loved his own. Not by a mere verbal reproof but by an act singularly profound in its simplicity, he determined to teach them and all that love him, a nobler lesson. He arose from the meal and washed their feet.

Consider, brethren, that in the act of washing the disciples' feet Jesus looked beyond their unrighteousness, and appealed to their inherent love of righteousness. By so illustrating the ideal, he tapped their love of righteousness and drew them from their unrighteous conduct. In essence Jesus' act said to the disciples: *I believe in your love of righteousness even though your actions betray it.* What a lesson for us in our relationship with our brethren.

We need one another's confidence. Our failings and the trials of the way are difficult enough to cope with without a lack of understanding and compassion from the brethren.

We need one another's confidence because we have a tremendous influence on one another, whether we appreciate it or not. It's perfectly natural to be influenced by others, even at times to act somewhat the way others make us feel. Some accept us warmly and openly, and we feel more comfortable and less guarded with them. And yet with others we may perceive a measure of rejection, dislike or disapproval, and with these we can feel intimidated, less at ease and more guarded in our fellowship.

How do we make our brethren feel around us? Do we accept one another warmly and openly, or are we critically demanding of one another, measuring brethren by what they are not rather than what they are?

Surely if Christian fellowship means anything at all, it means more than merely putting up with each other. It means an acceptance and understanding of our brethren for what they are and encouraging them to be all they can be, encouraging them to the greatest possible growth in the fruits and graces of the spirit.

A lovely ideal, but impossible, unless we build upon the scriptural foundation. James 3:18 reading from the RSV [Revised Standard Version]: *The harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those that make peace.* A climate of peace between us, true peace, not based on false conceptions or the peace of indifference, will foster the development of a rich fruitage or harvest of righteousness.

And So it is brethren, that we don't always need adversity to develop by. That we can develop even amid strife amongst us is of the power of God, but that we can develop amid peace amongst us is the will of God.

But we cannot share something we do not possess. There can be little real peace between us, little real absence of conflict unless we are at peace within ourselves. For our attitudes towards others are largely based on our self-composure or lack of it. How often harshness, touchiness towards one another is borne of personal frustrations with ourselves for failures and foolishness. But how often personal composure allows us a stability not to be easily irritated or frustrated by others.

Our degree of composure indicates our level of growth in Christlikeness. And without thorough Christlikeness and its peace, its composure, we'll not reach our ideal, our ultimate purpose in Christian fellowship.

There are many challenges to our efforts to reach our ideal, but few that can handicap our fellowship as can fears and insecurities, a lack of self-composure; for fears and insecurities hold us back in fellowship. How many of us at this convention have been inhibited from the depth of fellowship we long for because of fears of being misunderstood, unappreciated, rejected, or whatever. Some see us as rather weak and foolish, others see us as strong and wise. We are neither exclusively, but a combination of these and many more elements. Be what we are and reach out for what we would be, and we need not feel intimidated or threatened by others.

Fears and insecurities handicap our fellowship because it is simply the way it is that we are less at ease and less able to have meaningful fellowship with the insecure, the ill composed.

Moreover, if we are not experiencing the peace, the composure in our lives, such as to allay our fears and insecurities, we can get so caught up in our own problems that we'll scarcely be able to show more than superficial and plastic interest in one another. Or conversely, insecurity can lead us to be ever striving for approval from others, rather than from the Lord.

Our composure must not be subject to other's approval or disapproval, but centered in and resulting from our relationship with the Lord. So, the sum of all this is simply that the closer we are to the Lord and the more fully we are experiencing His peace, the greater will be our capability of reaching towards our ideal in fellowship.

Doctrinal Differences

There is another challenge that confronts us today, one hardly unique to our day, but one that threatens us with devastating strife and divisiveness if not handled well. We are speaking of doctrinal controversies.

In the doctrinal conflicts today, peace between brethren is sometimes a rare commodity. But whatever our position let's not allow a contentious spirit to disrupt fellowship and our personal equilibrium. Even amid the raging controversy of the Law in the early Church, which was a life and death matter, Paul says in Galatians 5:1-4, Paul could say to Titus in Titus 3:9, Avoid foolish questions and genealogies and contentions and strivings about the Law: for they are unprofitable and vain. The Greek word for contentions means quarreling, wrangling. The Greek word for strivings means a battle. Paul was saying avoid the battling over the Law, don't get caught up in the contentious spirit because it is unprofitable and vain, useless and empty.

Paul wasn't encouraging an *anything goes* attitude, nor do we. His actions toward the leaders of the Judaizers in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 demonstrate this. Thus, coupling Paul's words with his actions we come up with that time-tested maxim: We must contend for the faith without being contentious.

These were the words of Paul on a vitally important subject. What about us today in the Bible Student world? There is bitter contentiousness over much less important matters. How useless and empty. Something has gone wrong somewhere.

And yet in saying this we intend in no way to diminish the value of the harvest message. We are great supporters of Pastor Russell's writings. And we believe strongly, brethren, in the importance of personal study, particularly in the six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*. It is not good enough to be spoon-fed by our elders. It is not good enough to think we know the truth without proper research. Truth sanctifies and study edifies. We are stewards of the Lord's truth and as such we are responsible.

And yet another challenge to our reaching after our ideal, one that is really more threatening than all others, the in-grained selfishness of our depraved human natures. Selfishness threatens us with an exaggerated self-esteem and it threatens us with a lack of appreciation and concern for others. But rather we are told to esteem one another better than ourselves. Philippians 2:3,4: *Let nothing be done as self-seeking or vanity, but in humility of mind let each esteem one another better than themselves. Look not every man only on his own interests, but also the interests of one another.*

The natural tendency of man's selfishness is to magnify his own supposed strengths while magnifying other's failings. But Paul calls us to see our brethren's strengths in contrast to our weaknesses, to appreciate the qualities in others that are superior to our own. This will help us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to and will help us not to look for the failings in others to feed our egos—not to knock others down to build ourselves up, as do some who only feel their self-worth as they see themselves superior to others. Have you ever found yourself thinking, brethren, that you're doing well in the narrow way because you see yourself doing better than some other brethren?

Selfishness is very often the root cause of our contentions and discord. James speaks of the effect of selfishness in the strangest of terms, and I would like you to turn to James 3:16,17 and follow along. To capture the impact of James' thoughts, we're translating these verses more nearly to the Greek than does the King James. *Where there is jealousy and self-seeking, there is confusion* is what the King James says. Properly rendered it should be, *Where there is jealousy and self-seeking, there is ANARCHY and every evil work.*

Self-seeking can lead to a spirit of anarchy, every man for himself, brethren pulling apart rather than pulling together. But rather, James tells us to seek the wisdom which is from above: first pure, then peaceable, reasonable or forbearing, compliant—not

determined to have our own way in everything—and full of compassion and good fruits, without doubting—believing and showing confidence in one another—and unfeigned or without pretense.

Imagine such a fellowship, brethren, nothing done in selfishness but humbly esteeming one another's strengths and looking out for one another's interests. It almost seems like a pipe dream at times, doesn't it?

Our Need For Each Other

We need one another, no man is an island unto himself, no man's spiritual growth is independent of others, no man's spiritual vision all-embracing. Real Christian strength and maturity lies not alone in the strength of conviction in our ideas, in our views, but includes an *APPRECIATION* of other's views, an *APPRECIATION* of our differences in temperament and thinking. We have no claim to infallibility in our thinking and we need not feel threatened by others' differing perspectives, for they can add new dimensions to our thinking, or offer the necessary checks and balances to our excesses.

We need one another, we need to look out for one another's interests, but with great care, because it's all too easy to see simplistic solutions to others' problems, when we can scarcely cope with our own at times. Our views can never be the dictates, the guidelines of our brethren's lives, and if ever we are too assertive it can be quite offensive and damaging. Proverbs 18:19 warns us in this vein, that *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions separate them like the bars of a castle.*

Oh, and how many times have we seen it, brethren, that underlying currents of tension and discord have ruined the potential of brethren's fellowship. That the potential should go unrealized is most tragic, there is so much we can gain from one another and so much we can share with one another.

We need one another, brethren, and you know there are few more precious gifts in life than to need and to be needed. A writer long ago said of the human family, *We are all in the same boat, in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty.* I like that, and I think those sentiments have a very special application to the Christian family. *We are all in the same boat, in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty.*

Today we don't have the persecutions to drive us together. But if we can perceive something of the trials endured and the crosses borne by our brethren, we'll have a greater sense of fellow-feeling, a greater sense of the shared adversity and struggles of this Christian way and that we do indeed owe each other a terrible loyalty. This speaks of a oneness far beyond a mere friendship. The wise man tells us something of this in Proverbs 17:17, *At all times the true friend shows himself loving, and as a brother is he born for adversity*. A true friend manifests his love at all times, but he proves himself a brother by manifesting that love amid adversity. Mutually shared adversities have a way of making our differences pale into insignificance; they have a way of getting us back to basics.

Ours can be a very lonely walk; we need one another's comfort and encouragement. How often have we failed to see our brethren's needs, how often have we been overly demanding of one another? It's little wonder that at times we have felt more comfortable with less demanding worldly folks.

The Scriptures speak of both the reality and the ideal of fellowship. Paul speaks of the reality when he says in Ephesians 4:2 that we should forbear, or put up with one another in love. There are times when we must simply put up with one another—in love.

But this shouldn't diminish our efforts to reach our ideals. Indeed, in 1 Corinthians 13:4 Paul says love is forbearing, but more, forbearing and kind, or the proper thought is *constructive*. True love forbears where it must, but more, seeks to be constructive where it can, to build bridges between the gulfs that separate us.

We need incentive in our fellowship to strive to reach our ideal because it's too easy to have a social fellowship or an intellectual exchange. It must be these but it must be much, much more than these alone. There can be good incentive in working together. Not works for works' sake alone. But activities and projects can have a way of building unity, that is, if we approach them maturely, not trying to get our own way in everything. But rather, mutually shared goals in activities can have a way of putting our differences in perspective as we learn to work together, how to give and take, where to bend for the sake of achieving a common goal.

Few things can give us a greater incentive in fellowship than sharing our hearts and minds, sharing our struggles and sharing our joys—sharing, sharing in trust and understanding; sharing more

than a mere superficial fellowship. And isn't it true that much of our fellowship is superficial?

How hardly can we reach after our ideal of oneness of heart and mind unless we *SHARE* our hearts and minds. Sharing those things of the heart that will lift us far above a mere social or intellectual fellowship. Important elements in our fellowship, no question, but too often it's little more than this.

There can be no illusions, brethren, no place for putting up false fronts, no place for foolish games with one another, no place for self-seeking, no place for a superficial fellowship, no place for harshness, indifference, intolerance, or anything of the like.

Ours is an ideal not merely of a oneness of purpose, but a oneness of understanding, compassion, and more, a oneness of love. Not that type of love given merely to receive love, or merely given as a response to another's love, but a love borne of a heart So overflowing with the love of the Lord that it must find expression in the words of our lips and the deeds of our lives.

Jesus asked us to love one another as he loved us. What an ideal to reach after, an ideal as profound in its import as it is difficult in its realization. Are you willing to reach beyond a social or intellectual fellowship? An ideal So important it would be the central theme of Jesus' last words to his disciples.

Jesus said in John 17:11, *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one.*

Yes, Finally, brethren, be ye all of one mind, having fellow-feeling, loving the brethren, humble-minded and tender-hearted.

And may the Lord bless our efforts to reach after this ideal.

Personal Possessions-Brother Donald Holliday, England

HOW DO WE feel about personal possessions? Each one of us has a list of personal possessions. That list may be quite long, or it may seem small. I have noticed some lists of personal possessions of patients entering my place of work, a *home for incurables* —all they have in the world, listed in just a few lines. But many of us have a long list, our home and all the comforts it contains, and

many other things. It seems amazing that once we entered this world with nothing.

Go! Sell all that you have, and give the money away, then come, and follow Me. Master, Everything? Everything. If we owned very little in this life and had few needs, easily met—well we guess that might not be too difficult. But here was a man with many possessions. How hard he had worked for them, how much they meant to him, how hard the Master's requirements, how great to that man the cost.

Suppose the Lord here and now asks that very thing of us. How many of us will follow him on those terms? How many of us will find ourselves following that man as he turns away, sorrowful? Personal possessions get to be special to us, part of us, part of our life. When a man dies he leaves all behind. To leave all behind at any time before that event, well, it means he has to act dead. It is natural to cling to our possessions. Maybe if the natural mind had its way we would awake in the Lord's presence still clinging to some treasures of this earthly life. Wouldn't that be embarrassing? We just would not know what to do with it or where to put it. If the Lord asks me, *What special treasured possessions would you like to take with you?* —I wonder what my reply would be.

Possessions We Take With Us

You may have guessed by now we intend to talk about that very matter, the things very special to us, personal, personal possessions that we have now, and that we look forward to taking with us as we pass, Lord willing, through that veil. Our text is Malachi 3:17, *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.* We have the word *jewels* in our English Authorized version. It would be interesting to know what you have in your Polish, German, Dutch, Greek, and French versions. The Hebrew word appears eight times in the Bible. The first occurrence is Exodus 19:5 where the Lord speaks to Israel: *Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me.*

Three further places in Deuteronomy use the expression in the same way, all to Israel (7:6; 14:2; 26:18); So does Psalm 135:4. Ecclesiastes 2:8 speaks of the *peculiar treasure of kings*. In 1 Chronicles 29:3 it is used of the departing David who, out of his own personal possessions, contributes to the structure and the beautifying of the Temple of God to be erected after his death, *because I have set my affection to the house of my God.* There David illustrates beautifully the way in which the Lord's people

carry over with them into glory the most treasured things that they possess, the *silver* and their *gold* — "silver" of truth in the inward parts and *gold* of the divine likeness of character in all its reflected glory. The Hebrew word, then, refers to personal possessions, private treasures, if you like, but notably things that are personally owned, and that with great delight.

Without using the word in question, the Song of Songs embraces the thought in 6:3. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.* He is my personal possession. I am His personal possession. A similar thought is also expressed elsewhere concerning God and His people, and the whole concept of this special relationship is transported into the age of the Church in Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 2:9.

So what makes them So special to the Lord? One outstanding reply must be that He is So special to them. What makes Him So special to them? Because He makes it So wonderfully apparent that they are special to Him. It seems that as soon as we try to explain this bond, this special tie, this precious relationship, we get caught up in this never-ending circle, something eternal. But it had a beginning. *We love Him because He first loved us.*

The text in Malachi has always been meaningful to the Lord's people from the time it was uttered. It has, nevertheless, a very special significance to us today for more than one reason. Firstly, because we believe that at this very moment of time our dear heavenly Father is actually engaged in the gathering to Himself of those who are His. How can we help but share something of those high and holy emotions of God, the joy which right now this hour is filling the heavens as He embraces His own, and sets them as jewels in that crown of His eternal glory. We love our Father So much, our hearts thrill as they reach out to Him in this time of such deep satisfaction of His dear heart's desires. Zion, So choice to the Lord! Home and rest to the longings of a heart full of divine love! Oh yes, brethren, our hearts are tuned, like those harps of our brethren in glory, and we cannot help but join in the song they now sing around that throne.

Yet there is another aspect which brings the words of Malachi even closer to home to us living So late in the harvest period. His message was given to Israel at a corresponding point of time after they had first left Babylon in the day of Cyrus. It revealed the needs of the Lord's people at that similar late stage of their gathering to Him. We believe it is therefore worthy of our deep attention today. Cyrus was a type of Christ. He was predicted in

prophecy as the Lord's Messiah (*anointed*) and shepherd [Isa 44:28 through 45:3].

We are today 114 years on from 1874, the time of our Lord's coming. We cannot know precisely the exact date of Malachi's message, but it is generally believed because of its content to have been given just before Nehemiah returned to finish the reforms in Zion. Numerous sources give that date as about 420 BC. That was 116 years on from the proclamation of Cyrus, the call out of Babylon for faithful Jews. If this is correct, it will be seen that the message of Malachi was given at a time similar to our own today, after more than a century of long process of gathering the Lord's people to Himself. The passage of time now enables us to look back and to discern a remarkable comparison between those years of that period subsequent to the coming of Cyrus and the years that have now elapsed since the coming of Christ.

It would take many talks to itemize these comparisons and to draw the lessons we feel are therein intended for this our own day. The charts we have prepared merely hint at some of the directions your own minds may wish to pursue should this subject appeal to you. To us it seems So wonderful that the Lord has anticipated and provided for the needs of this late hour of the work of gathering His people to Himself. He has said So much to confirm faith and deepen trust, yet at the same time to cause those deep searchings of the soul essential to our making ready for So high and holy a calling.

There are two notable observations in the message of Jesus to the church at Laodicea. He speaks of their complacency and their spiritual apathy. These same reflections are prominent in the message of the Lord through Malachi. What strikes us even more keenly is the fact that Malachi's words were not addressed to people in Babylon, they were not directed to a system *weighed in the balance, and found wanting*, and thenceforth passing through its long process of going down to eventual destruction. These words were addressed to the people of Zion who had come out of Babylon, the people that the Lord was purifying through the long and somewhat trying sequence of events that had followed those earlier days of high hopes and eager expectations.

Daniel had been given a vision in which a giant measuring line had been stretched linking together those days of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah and Malachi to cleanse the Sanctuary of God and the similar work of cleansing the spiritual Sanctuary in our day. Through both periods, one perhaps typical of the other, He is as a

refiner's fire. The Lord knew when His people first left Babylon that many tests and experiences were yet required to purify them unto Himself. At first the gathering was physical. They moved from one place to another, found a different community for fellowship. There were high moments when they thought they were gathered unto Him, just as there are spiritual highs in our own experience, but the passage and test of time was to reveal the breaches that were yet to be built and bridged to make them truly His.

The Test of Time

How often the Lord uses time to test and develop the faith of His people. It is not easy to maintain the sense of urgency as one decade follows another and the hopes of earlier years remain still not realized. What is easy is the slow, almost imperceptible change of attitudes that time may produce, the acceptance of the standards of our own brethren around us, perhaps confusing them with the Lord's standards. What is easy is the introduction of that little tiny root of compromise, that will enable us to be reasonably comfortable in the flesh while we await the realization of our higher hopes.

Such trends were demonstrated in the days of Malachi, and it was against the background of complacency and spiritual apathy that he speaks to those known to the Lord for their deep attitude of heart towards Him. He was their personal possession. They were His personal possession. The passage of time could only deepen and strengthen that bond. They knew Him, and He knew them for His own. The Lord knew what kind of response would arise from His message. In a remarkable way He anticipates in the very same words the reaction of complacency, and the response of hearts sensitive to His every word. *Wherein have we* done this or that? This question of the hearers is repeated many times. From the spiritually complacent they are the response of hurt pride, for these are quite satisfied with their position before God. It does not even occur to them it may be lacking. *Thou knowest not.* (Revelation 3:17).

That very same question, however, is the response of hearts that desire truth to sanctify their inmost parts. *Wherein have I, Lord, fallen short of Thy highest standards in this matter?* This is a use of the same words, but with what different spirit! Introspective and self-examining, they recognize that the Lord knows our heart much better than we can know ourselves, and they yearn for that full submission of everything within them, every thought, to the

obedience of Christ. Theirs is the attitude of the words of Psalm 139:23,24: *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.*

Such an attitude acknowledges that whatever stage has been reached of relationship and fellowship with the Lord there remain still greater heights yet to scale. They are content with whatever the Lord brings into their experience and the circumstances that surround their lives, but they will not be satisfied until that work of God within them is complete to His eternal glory and praise.

Mal 1:2, *Wherein hast thou loved us?* We may question sometimes in our hearts what evidences we have in this or that experience of the Lord's love for us. The movement of Nehemiah's day was as full of reversals and ups and downs as the Truth movement of our own day. When someone tried to build up, someone else, another agent, pulled it down. What was the point? Where was the whole movement going? What evidences are there of the Lord's love for His people today? The answer of Revelation 3:19, the words of Jesus for our day, tell that every experience has been needful. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.* What matters is our response and reaction to all the circumstances around us among the brethren and in our own individual lives. The Lord watches for that response. We are not going to put everything right in the truth movement, any more than we could smooth out our lives that they were never disturbed or ruffled by any kind of trial. Everything that happens, the upsets at meetings as well as the blessings of spiritual fellowship, all is permitted and overruled for our sakes, and to one glorious end—if we are rightly exercised thereby.

Jacob vs. Esau

The introspective hearts of His saints address this question to their own individual lives. *Wherein do you love me, Lord? In what way?* The Lord's reply, so full of meaning for his people, says it all. His love for Jacob, and His hatred for Esau. Sharing the same womb, these two struggled within Rebecca (a type of the Church), one representing all that is opposed to the divine will and ways, and the other that new mind that supplants the flesh, takes from it the birthright, and prevails to become prince with God. Paul said in Galatians 5:17, *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these two are contrary the one to the other.* It is the new mind of the new creature that is loved by the

Lord. All that is of my old nature, all that is of the flesh, the carnal mind, He hates, and So do I, Lord.

The evidences of that love lie in every experience and circumstance that serves to bring home to me the utter helplessness and hopelessness of the flesh. The struggle is needful for my development, or the Lord would have aborted Esau long ago. When the flesh rises in the meetings, when the carnal mind takes over the whole truth movement so that the Lord's saints have to again run for their spiritual lives, whenever it enters into the meditations of individual hearts, the Lord's saints know that this is the challenge to which that Spirit of God within us must rise. When it has done its work and that new mind is grown to the full measure of the stature of Christ, then will the Lord dispose of the flesh. Its end is sure. Only that which is of Him can endure before Him.

Mal 1:6. *Wherein have we despised thy name?* The Lord is using words that may startle in order to draw attention to the sliding away of His people's devotions. *A son honoureth his father . . . if then I be a father, where is mine honour?* He speaks not to the people of the world but to the priests, those who offer sacrifice at the altar of God. An element of ritual had entered into the day-by-day offerings. Every day fresh offerings had to be made. The procedure of one day was repeated on the next, and with the endless repetitions came familiarity, and the early fresh enthusiasm of the sacrifice began to lose its edge and gradually recede, to be taken over by ceremony and form.

Form is the outward appearance. It is, if it stands alone, totally unacceptable at the holy altar of God. In Malachi 1:11 the Lord reminds us that even the world will offer a pure offering with incense. All will worship in spirit and truth. Nothing less than this can now be acceptable of His own during this age. The words of verse 10 are most searching. Are there any days in my offering that I kindle the altar fire for nought? Do I ever find myself praying ineffectually with words of vain repetition? Do days pass without deep devoted committal of my all? Is there something missing in my offering? He who sees in secret, does He find the meditations of my heart acceptable to Him? Every day the offering needs to be examined. It must be whole, nothing missing. Every day it must be washed and prepared and worthy of His table.

Mal 1:7. *Wherein have we polluted thee?* The word for polluted is *gaal*, very close to the word meaning *to buy back, redeem*, and used of the kinsman redeemer. Yet here it is used in the sense of

buying back, at the price of compromise, something which belongs to the Lord. This is sacrifice in reverse. This is the buying back of consecrated time for some unworthy cause. If I desire so earnestly to be amongst those that reverence His name, then everything I am and have is His, totally His, for I am His personal possession. My Father's name is a name of love, love that gives the dearest and the best. How long for my Father that walk to Mount Moriah! Yet He counted not the cost. This is the love of God that He has shed abroad into my heart. A compelling love that meets my God in sacrifice, and finds its fulfillment in consummation.

Mal 2:17. *Wherein have we wearied Him?* The chapter shows that it is not in our slowness of learning, for the Father is very understanding of how long it takes for the knowledge of Him to grow within His child. His weariness lies in our thinking that we have arrived, when our conduct reveals that we have hardly yet begun. Chapter two has been speaking of the very high standards of the priests of the Lord. Like the angels of heaven, they are the messengers of God. Verse 7 says that, and the three verses 5 to 7 sum up those standards as exemplified in that worthy leader of the priesthood, Levi. That was, of course, the Aaronic priesthood.

For us the great exemplifier is *Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* (Hebrews 6:20) He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Verses 5 to 7 of Malachi 2 so beautifully describe those high and holy standards depicted by Jesus our Lord. We must leave you to meditate upon these yourselves, and to reflect how high they are, and how easy to let them slip.

Verses 10 and 11 introduce the theme of illicit unions and illicit separations among the Lord's people. Then as now the people of the land were prosperous compared to the Lord's people. Their comforts and comparative luxuries were very attractive. Before long the first deflection took place. One of the Lord's people, one whose parents had forsaken Babylon and asked the way to Zion, put away his own true partner in life and married a woman of the world. Soon others were to follow. How great a responsibility is the influence of our own conduct and course upon other people.

We note well the words of verse 11, for they hint at the possible counterpart in our day. *Judah hath profaned [de-consecrated] the holiness [some translate this sanctuary] of the Lord which He loves, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.* Brethren, I know that even to flirt with the ways of the world, to play with the little foxes, or regard them as harmless cute little ways of the flesh,

even to look upon with desire the allurements of this world, is to begin a course which ends in spiritual death, unless sooner or later I get off that downward path. The holy is the condition of total absorption in the things of God. Every spiritual sense and longing is satisfied in God. The gods of this world cannot with their earthly goods and monetary pleasures compete. They cannot offer the hope of glory, the riches of His goodness, the deep sustaining sense of peace of a heart that is stayed upon the Lord.

Do we today find any evidence of worldliness in the truth movement? Do we see any signs of illicit unions with the spirit of this world? Do we detect at the same time divisions and separations between the brethren, not caused by the spirit of God but caused by personalities, by ways of the flesh? Verse 10, *Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created . . . this New Creation?* How deeply this causes me to search my heart over the matter of my relationship with the consecrated people of God! I lack the Lord's ability to search the hearts of others. I have a full-time Job searching my own heart. This makes the matter perhaps one of the most demanding and proving experiences of our day.

In the times of Nehemiah a distinction was ultimately made between those who were Israelites indeed, and those who could not prove their lineage. It seems that the same test is now upon us, dear brethren. I must prove my lineage, prove that I am an Israelite indeed, a true child of God. Should it come, I must accept the separation which the Lord has designed the test to reveal, the distinction between those that are His and those that are not. May I not fail that test by a wrong or alien spirit in my heart toward one true member of the body of Christ.

Verse 13 expresses the matter in a way so touching, and these are the words of the Lord. He speaks of the altar of God being covered with tears. Are these not the sentiments of Christ? *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* (Matthew 5:23,24) Lord, let me not weary Thee by an inconsistent life, the putting of evil for good, the despising of those for whom Thou hast given me the honor to lay down my life.

We Are God's Personal Possession

We have not time to deal adequately with so searching a subject, nor look at the ways that I might be cost-cutting in those little tithes the Lord requires of me, in matters of corn and wine and oil.

How ready He is to bless, how ready to reward the diligent seeking after Him, the thirst for deeper spirituality, the simple, unquestioning belief that all that my heart can long for, He IS. Those remaining *Wherein?* heart-searchers are in Malachi 3:8, 13,14.

But we cannot leave out verse 7 of chapter 3. *Come back to me, and I will come back to you.* Is not that So beautiful, brethren? Is it not just like my Father? Oh Lord, Dear Father, wherein shall I come back to Thee? To know, dear brethren, that in those troublous times of the building up of Zion of Malachi's day, in these no less searching experiences of their counterpart in our own day, there is a people known to the Lord whose hearts are perfect towards Him. Who are they? He knows—He who seeth not as man seeth—He who reads hearts, desires, longings—He who sets His mark on those who sigh and cry.

In the days of Nehemiah, chapters 9 and 10, the spirit of the Lord's message stirred the hearts and a list, a scroll, a book was written and sealed of those who feared His name. In Malachi 3:16 the Lord tells us that He too has such a book. If I have set my seal, the Lord will set His seal. What seal is that? Oh, the most meaningful seal that has ever been set—"The Lord knoweth them that are His." He is their personal possession. They are His personal possession.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned. —Song of Songs 8:6,7

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. —2Ti 2:19-21

Amen and Amen.

The Importance of Love-Brother Jean Liberda, France

DEARLY BELOVED brethren in Christ. Let me greet you with the words of the Lord: *Peace be unto you*. It is a great joy for me to find myself once more among you. I am touched to see before me such a great audience, and to see again So many brethren that I know, and others that I have not yet met.

I rejoice over this moment to be here, and yet I fear, because I must express spiritual thoughts before you, attempt to gladden, encourage, exhort in the right manner while seeking righteousness, faith, love, and peace with all of you who call upon the Lord from a pure heart, as the Apostle Paul declares in 2 Timothy 2:22. I also fear I may inadequately present these exhortations, saddening someone, be as it were misunderstood. That is why I must apologize in advance asking you, dear brethren, to account it to my imperfection.

It seemed good, with your permission, to present a subject that I have entitled: *The Importance of Love*, a theme which is and which must be timely for Christians. The Apostle John, in his first epistle (4:8) writes: *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*. Yet that was our state before we knew the Truth: we knew not God.

The Apostle Paul tells us in his epistle to the Ephesians (2:1-5):

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. And he adds: By grace ye are saved.

Let us read verses 12 and 13 in this same chapter:

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

In reading these words of the apostle we understand this is true: we can mentally see the difference between what we were, when we neither knew God nor how and for whom to manifest our love.

Today the Lord teaches us, for we are in his school. Every day we have the opportunity to show our love to God, to our Lord, to our brethren and to our friends. This is not always easy, but the Lord has promised to help us; and we know that He that is for us is much more powerful than he which is against us, as we read in Romans 8:31. And So we enthusiastically say again and again that God is Love.

God Does Not Select the World's Best

Nevertheless, is there not a considerable doubt remaining concerning God's acceptance into the spiritual family of the poor and wretched members, the unlearned, those brought out of the mire of this world, and all because they have believed in God, in Jesus Christ?

For our reassurance, the Apostle Paul tells us in his first epistle to the Corinthians (1:26-29):

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

Which is why, in the face of such proof of love from God, we render thanks on our knees to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, as the apostle explains in Colossians 1:12-15. A bit further the apostle adds in verse 21: *And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death.*

Yes, Jesus, by his death, has reconciled us to God. He knew how to attract the crowds, how to console saddened hearts, sympathize

with all who are afflicted, and encourage. In the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 11, verses 28 and 29, Jesus says:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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.

This reminds me how frequently it is mentioned that the chief ones were often surprised and even dumbfounded by the way Jesus attracted crowds to himself. I will cite a thought of Napoleon Bonaparte, when a prisoner on the island of Saint Helen, as he expressed it to Montholon, one of his near kin, also in exile:

Are you able to tell me who was Jesus? And without waiting for an answer, he continued: There are a few things I don't understand. Alexander, Charlemagne, and even I have established great empires. But what enabled their realization? Force, naturally. Jesus, on the other hand, has constructed his on love. And each day millions of Christians would give their life for him. I also have inspired in crowds an enthusiastic devotion, such that they would all die for me; but to accomplish this, it was necessary that I be present, with the influence of my glance, my words, and my voice. When I spoke to men, I kindled a flame of devotion in their hearts. But Jesus, born some 1800 years ago, by some mystical influence, attracts men to him to the point where now, at a single word of his, millions of men would rush to throw themselves in the fire or the sea for him, disregarding their own life in relation to Jesus Christ's.

What Napoleon perhaps did not know was that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he had come to save those who were lost. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us: *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* And our Lord Jesus tells us in John 3:16,17: *For God So loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

All this, dear brethren, because God loves us So much. Frequently we ask ourselves this question: *Why in the Word of God is love accorded a place of such greatness?* We think it is because it is the chief thing, the most important, the principal thing. Is it not said that love is the fulfilling of the law of God? (Romans 13:10)

And what did Jesus answer a doctor of the law who asked him this question to test him? We read in Matthew 22:36-40:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

We see then that love is always foremost in order to satisfy the requirements of the righteousness of God.

Why Does Love Occupy First Place?

In truth, love of sacrifice, as prescribed to the children of God during the present age, surpasses even the requirements of the perfect law, and we know this is possible with the help of our Lord. But now we ask ourselves again the question: Why does love occupy first place? Is it because God has arbitrarily decided it and, using his absolute power, has decreed by means of force that love must be first, as Napoleon seemed to understand it?

No. Having learned from our Lord Jesus to recognize the goodness and the love of God, we think that God has placed love above everything because no other character trait is so beautiful, so precious; no other trait brings to those on whom it is reacting such happiness, joy, and blessing as does love. We can well say that love is the very essence of God's character.

Let us judge for ourselves: *God is love*. It is this quality which particularly represents His personality. God is all powerful and supremely just in everything. Psalm 89, verse 14, tells us: *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne*. Nevertheless, brethren, we do not say that God is justice, that God is power, although these attributes appropriately belong to Him. But we do say that *God is love*.

Since God is supremely just, we see that His justice is practiced, but in perfect harmony with His glorious attribute of love. In other words, one might say love is, above all, the principal reason for all His deeds.

We read in the first epistle of John (4:10,11): *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the*

propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God So loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Do we not find it strange that in the Scriptures one finds So many times this phrase repeated: *Ye ought also to love one another*. The more one thinks of it, the more it gives food for thought. We think that God wants each of His children to engrave these words in his heart. Whoever wants to be like God must love; love must be the dominant trait in the character as well as the life of each child of God. Love and righteousness are inseparable because they complement each other. The Apostle John in his first epistle (3:10) says: *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

This means that to be acceptable to God, one must practice righteousness, but one must also love. In this way we understand the way in which righteousness and love are inseparable. Love will be for all eternity because only those who will become the active personification of this gracious character trait will live eternally.

The Apostle John, continuing to stimulate those begotten by the Holy Spirit, says in his first epistle (4:12): *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us*. How should we understand those words? We think, quite simply, that those who are begotten are energized by the holy spirit to form a character like the perfect model sent by God, Jesus Christ. There is no better way for us to proclaim the virtues of the one who called us and brought us out of darkness into this marvelous light than to manifest a spirit of love in every aspect of our daily life.

In evaluating Christian character, we must put love in first place and consider it as the principal thing for intimacy with the Lord and the favor we find close to him. Consequently it is our love for the Lord, for his brethren, for his cause (the truth), for our circle of acquaintances in general and even for our enemies since one must love them also, as enjoined by the Lord in Matthew 5:43,44 and not our cleverness, our popularity or our eloquence which determines if we are or are not something in the eyes of God.

We must not forget, too, that according to the ideal presented in the Scriptures, the members of the elect Church of Christ should in their interaction with the world be the most polite, the most refined, the most affable, the most generous and also lovable. We must not assume a form or purely exterior appearance in these enumerated traits, or even others (which is So common in the

world), but we should be all these things in the most absolute sense. If we are to exhibit gentleness, or perform a service, let it spring from the heart, having as its source the appreciation of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of the truth, the spirit of love, and also the spirit of righteousness.

The development of love in the heart of each individual thus has a supreme importance. This noble virtue of Christian character is not acquired instantaneously; it must grow. Its development is the principal occupation, the fundamental task of all the children of God, begotten by the Holy Spirit, who desire to know God and to obtain the great reward of life on the highest plane of existence. It is that of all those who would see our Father and our Lord face to face and be eternally in their presence.

Love Must Be the Supreme Motivator

Considering the magnificent explanation of the Apostle Paul in the 13th chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, which we will not read because of time, but which each of us knows well, having read it many times, we see that the supreme grace of love is indispensable when serving God in a manner acceptable to Him. As we have already said previously, if love is not the reason that guides us, the most abundant works in our consecrated way for the Lord and the brethren, even the most admirable eloquence placed in the service of truth and righteousness, have no value in the sight of God, and we will not obtain any reward from Him.

Though we may have a great ability to explain the mysteries of God, a profound knowledge of history, chronology, symbolic biblical types and symbols these prove nothing and are of no use unless accompanied by love for God, the Lord, and the Church. Even a faith that could move mountains would have no value in the sight of the Heavenly Father *if one has not love*.

Should any give all that he has to the poor or for the proclamation of the gospel, if love does not motivate these actions, God will not approve them. Even if we might suffer martyrdom, if such suffering is not the result of love shown for the Lord So that we may remain faithful to him even unto death, this will not be acceptable to God.

Perhaps we might ask ourselves this question: Why is this so? Because all these things could be done with a selfish motive, either to be seen of men, or to satisfy arrogant aspirations, or to give free course to a combative spirit or even to appear as heroes, as history

from the past supplies us with examples. This proves to us that love is not always the cause that serves the interests of the truth.

Moreover, we must examine ourselves to see if we are truly obedient to the commandments of the Lord and the truth. As it is said So well by the Apostle Peter in his first epistle (1:22): *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.* This therefore means not only to recognize brethren in the Lord, but to love them sincerely, recognizing that this is the basis on which rest communion with the Lord, on which we have all become new creatures, and which should awaken within us this sympathy and this desire to aid one another and mutually encourage one another in So far as possible.

This is what drives us to unselfish love, freely given, that asks nothing in return, that is far grander than brotherly love. It is a love So disinterested, So warm and So strong that if anyone possesses it, he is able to give his life for the brethren. As a matter of fact, it is this love of the heavenly Father which is displayed clearly when we read, *God first loved us although we were sinners.* Similarly, the love of our Lord is disinterested, sincere, and obliging. This is a love that does good and asks nothing in return. We see that God has sent His invitation to all who have ears to hear using His special envoy, His well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

And we responded to this invitation. But if we are to know that we are truly disciples of the Lord, if others are to see this, and if we are to prove it to our own selves, we must follow and listen to the words of the Lord. We read in John 13:35, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

We also know that one of the more decisive proofs for us will be our love for the brethren. We know that we must be disposed to do good unto all men, but especially to the brethren, as written in Galatians 6:10. We may be brought to be tested in this sense, that is, to see if we would give our life for the brethren. Will we then be ready to do so? There are different ways to do this, for example by offering our time, our money, by assisting others, by building them up spiritually So we can stand together in these evil days.

The Apostle Paul says in his first epistle to Timothy (1:5): *Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* This would mean that the ultimate purpose of God's dealings toward us and with us, and the final significance of all His divine promises which He has given

us, is the development of love, to become like God, because God is love.

For this love to be developed in the sense and the degree desired by the Lord, it is necessary that it come from a pure heart, perfectly in accord with the Lord and his law of love and in absolute opposition to the adversary and his law of selfishness.

To be sure, the subject of love is great and very profound. We have here considered only a small part of that which the Word of God teaches us about love. This subject is vast to the extent that it lasts for all eternity, because, whether one wishes it or not, there will always be something to say about love.

The apostle says that love does not rejoice in iniquity; no, love rejoices in righteousness and truth. Consequently it is in perfect harmony with righteousness. When one has love for the brethren, one beareth, believeth, hopeth, and especially endureth all things. For if one can neither endure nor bear with a brother, where is the love? There may possibly be circumstances that prove one can not do otherwise, but in such a case we must go to the Lord who is the sole judge. But for us, let us go back to the words of our Lord in Matthew 7:1: *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Would any one of us want to be So judged? I think not. Each person desires, rather, that love be manifested toward him.

I would like furthermore to recall the words of the Lord concerning the members of the Church. In the Gospel of John (15:12-17) we read:

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

I think these words of our Lord have no need of additional comments because they are really simple and comprehensible.

In conclusion love must be the reason that moves us to serve God; otherwise all that we have done and will want to do eventually will have no value. We will have been, as the apostle says, *sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal* neither more nor less.

Dear friends, the fact of being here, in this locale, this place of fellowship with other brethren in Christ from all countries, does it not stimulate us to ask ourselves this question: Am I here because I love the Lord and the truth? Is it because of my love for the brethren that I have made sacrifices such as expenses, travel, fatigue, etc.?

If the answer is yes, we can be reassured that these sacrifices will be acceptable to God and that we already are receiving His blessings. But if we have come here to be seen, to have a good rest, or to see the country, we then must ask this question: Is it love that is the motivator of our stay here amongst the brethren? We leave to each one the task of reflecting upon this question and answering it.

This is why, at the end of this discourse dear brethren, my desire is that you and I belong to this privileged class the Lord calls his *friends*.

And why does he call them his friends? Because they love each other, quite simply.

Thank you for your attention.

Another Heaven and Another Earth-Bro. Rudolphe Liberda, France

And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. He 1:10-12

IN CITING these verses, the apostle calls to mind the prophetic words of Psalm 102:25-26. He uses these words to give witness to and confirm the magnitude of God's thoughts as well as those of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Even though we are totally in agreement with the witness of the apostle, we could still ask ourselves the question, How can we harmonize this with another statement in the Bible, which says that

the earth abideth forever? Ecclesiasties 1:4, *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.* From one dispensation to the next, important (geologic) changes have occurred, but the shape of the earth has stayed the same.

Symbolic Heavens and Earth

Various Bible commentaries show that the words *heavens* and *earth* are often used in the Scriptures in a symbolic imagery sense and also in a literal sense. We will show that in a symbolic sense these words represent the order of things today, such as political governments which are more or less unsatisfying and unjust, and which must be dissolved in order to give place to a new order of things based on justice. It is ideas of this sort that the apostle wants to make clear when he uses the words *world*, *earth*, and *heavens*.

The words of the Apostle Peter are identical, when he states in his second epistle, chapter 3 and verse 10:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

In our reasoning, we think that the terrestrial globe was and will always be the support of the world which was before the flood, which is now, and which will be when our Lord, as King, will reign and submit all to the heavenly Father. Concerning this thought the Word of God in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 confirms:

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

If this earth must, with its works, dissolve, disappear, give place to something else, how our present earthly ambitions, which occupy our time and money, are vain! In Ephesians 5:16 the apostle says to *redeem the time, for the days are evil.*

The process of dissolution is under way. *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.* Today, the world is as if intoxicated with diverse political and religious influences. These are intertwined, like brambles and thorns. They prick each other, for each wishes to build with its own spirit, and not with the spirit of Christ.

The apostle tells us in Ephesians, chapter 5 verse 18, *But [rather], be ye filled with the Spirit.* And the spirit of God is that which builds, consoles, heals, keeps us watchful.

If we look back at the world that was, which existed before the flood, all the earthly society was destroyed (except the family of Noah, who accepted the will of God). It was the same with the spiritual order (the heavens), those who had the mission of leading mankind to God, but who disobeyed, mixing with earthly things, bringing upon them the severe judgment of God and destruction by the flood. After the flood, a new order was re-established, in reorganized conditions another earth, and new heavens, which the apostle tells us will again pass away with a great noise. Why? Is it that the Creator could have made an error in His arrangements? Could they be unjust? No!

The curse still ravages the world. Satan, as the prince of this world, does not wish to permit anyone to come nigh unto the Lord or unto God. He constantly suggests his wine, his influences, thoughts agreeable to our flesh, but which grieve our spirit. All who do not ask the Lord's help are carried astray, toward the evil world that leads to destruction.

We know that when God made the earth, Adam, created in His image, was king. He had dominion over all the inferior creation. (Genesis 1:26-27) In regard to heavenly things, our first parents recognized the highest divine authority, *THE WILL OF GOD*, which gives life. It is that authority which will be and will remain for all creation, to wit: obedience to God.

In what way was this good and lovely disposition established by our Lord? John 1:1-5, a well-known text, confirms this, as we read,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was [a] God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Have these words changed? No. They are still valid today, and even more today than in the beginning. The Lord came himself to fulfill the will of his Father. Our Lord demonstrated and clarified the mysteries of God. He is the light that shines in the darkness.

This darkness, with its prince, must be done away with. This earth and these heavens must, with their works which they comprise, consume away, be destroyed, and neither the terrestrial globe, nor the sky.

Let us recall David who, faithful to his Creator, wanted to build a dwelling for God. Let us turn to Acts 7:46-50:

David found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob; but Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

This text remains symbolic, and signifies the return of divine favor and the rule of God on the earth by our Lord Jesus Christ. How could God destroy His throne, *THE HEAVEN*, or the place of His footstool, *THE EARTH*? On the contrary, the Lord first prepares the new symbolic heavens, in completing his Church; and second, the earth, in progressively reconciling mankind and the world.

A similar thought is written in 2 Peter 3:13, *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Would this be referring to a new galaxy, and a new planet? No, but to a new spiritual government, where Christ, Head and Body, will reign. On the earth, righteousness will replace iniquity and injustice.

We have faith that the Lord already deals with his own, and when the Church is glorified, and the heavens changed, he will begin his work on the earth, the new earth.

The New Heavens and Earth

A new earth and new heavens will be similar to those in the beginning. In the Millennial Kingdom of our Lord, each will have to respect the divine law: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* And justified mankind will understand their responsibility toward God. They will render to him glory and honor, as well as to the

Lord Jesus Christ he who has always been the right arm of Jehovah, His prime minister, His representative. He will execute the plan of God, bringing back to perfection all things. These are the words of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, which we have already read.

In Hebrews, chapter 8, verses 1 and 2, we read:

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

And in Ephesians 1:22-23:

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

In 2 Peter 3:9, we read,

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

May we all be able to keep our faith in God and yet we read in Luke 18:8, *Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Psalm 91 gives the state of things concerning the faithful of the Lord, those of us who are living in a time when the pestilence of *error* rages against us, and tries to contaminate us by all means, and we know that the evil one sleeps not, but is subtle.

Let us increase our faithfulness, but in a pure faith, and sincere. Let us not have the spirit that certain ones had (although they were part of the household of faith), as we read in Matthew 23:27,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

We have not to judge who this may be, but these words may from time to time cause us to reflect upon our own behavior as Christians. Today, more than ever before, let us not be as certain furniture or appliances that appear to be made of solid and costly wood; let us not try to file them down or plane them; for the cheap construction would soon enough reappear, for it is but a veneer.

And we know that a veneer consists of covering an ordinary wood by gluing or binding on it a thin layer of a more noble kind of wood walnut, rose wood, mahogany, oak, cherry, etc.

Christians abound with persons clothed with a veneer of piety. Outwardly, they are not easily distinguished from true Christians. Their conduct is honorable, they hold religious offices, do charitable works. But all this is superficial, and in watching them but a little more closely, their true nature appears. Trials fulfill the role of filing them down, planing off the veneer for false Christians of this sort: let come some difficulty in which faith, love, piousness, patience must be demonstrated, and like that! the thin religious layer disappears. The foundations of spiritual life, a conscious relationship with God through the Holy Spirit (the source of that life), are not there. It is a natural foundation, concealed for the moment by artificial means which give that appearance.

And why this *form of godliness* with which, So often, we love to dress ourselves? Because, as is generally appreciated, we cannot read the heart. Religion makes up part of social life, and in certain circles constitutes a recommendation.

But what does God think of this veneer of godliness? Can He be content with it? Absolutely not! He desires truth in the inward parts. Let us recall when the Lord was discussing with the Samaritan in John 4:23 and 24, as we read:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

In general, man does not like to have God look into the depths of his heart. In order to hide himself from His gaze, which embarrasses him, the sinner conceals himself under a religious covering, not under the Robe of the Redeemer; he would feel accountable for soiling it.

Where is the remedy for this mortal evil? In the Scriptures the Apostle Paul gives us a grand example: himself, a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee, as he writes in Acts 23:6. Having met the Lord, he understood his wretchedness; from that time, by his conversion, he was rendered humble and true. And he gives evidence of his uprightness and the power of grace in himself, in attributing to himself the title of Chief of Sinners. We read this in 1 Timothy

1:15: *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; OF WHOM I AM CHIEF.*

In another place, the same apostle gives us an example of our behavior. We read in 1 Corinthians, chapter 3 verses 12 to 15:

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath build thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet So as by fire.

Why does it say in these last days perilous times will come? The prince of this world attacks not his own, but those who are the Lord's, the true Christians. We are living in the last days. Let us clothe ourselves with the whole armor, which the Apostle Paul refers to in Ephesians chapter 6.

Furthermore, our Lord puts us on our guard in Matthew 24:24 saying:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great SIGNS and WONDERS; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

But let us find our refuge under his wings, under his feathers, in the warmth of his love, though a thousand and ten thousand fall at our side into unfaithfulness. For our part, let us hold out our arms to the Lord, let us keep our faithfulness, as he himself has kept his. Let us reject the temptations of the evil one and let us follow the example of our Lord in saying, as he indicates in Matthew 4:10,

Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

I shall conclude my thoughts by returning to Psalm 102:25-28:

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

Amen. So be it.

Psalm 19-Brother Ray Luke, USA

WE CHOSE as the theme for our meditation this day a very familiar Psalm, one of the most quoted and beautiful penned by David, the sweet singer of Israel. This shepherd boy became such a monumental figure that he was characterized as being *a man after God's own heart*. (1 Samuel 13:14)

It is difficult to understand how one of flesh and blood could earn such a glorious epitaph, *a man after God's heart*. Especially one who was involved in the basest of crimes: seduction, murder, anger, unpredictability, impulsivity for example, on one occasion he decides to number the people and out of that, 70,000 lives were lost. How could such a one be after God's own heart? The answer is in David's striving to be like God. That word *after* is an active verb, the act of becoming, the act of striving and reaching for the character and will of his Creator. It is in that sense that we perceive his reverence and love for God whom he saw in every area of his life. He was So enveloped in the beauty and power of the Creator that his every breath served to reflect this reverence.

And this is the dominant theme of the 19th Psalm, in which he sees God everywhere in his life. God is in the infinite, macro-cosmic universe, and yet he sees God in the very infinitesimal, the micro-cosmic, and then above all, David sees God's power exercised within himself.

God in the Cosmic Universe

During those star-studded nights above the plains of Judea, David would look into the heavens and there behold the vast glittering band of stars making up our Milky Way, and then the familiar constellations, as they proceeded through their heavenly routes, night after night, he was awed, and knew there had to be boundless power, intelligence, might, and purpose behind it all. He was simply transfixed and So identified with that power and purpose that it became his passion. Everywhere he looked he could see the stamp of the divine Creator. He exclaims in words that just well up from within his heart,

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night

sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

The italicized words *there is* and *where* are not in the original manuscript and were added supposedly to improve the meaning of the text. The marginal reference reads, *without these, their voice is heard.* In other words, there is no audible sound or voice, yet their message is so clear and unmistakable that all may recognize it.

The fourth verse continues: *Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Now that may seem to be contradictory. The third verse stated there is no speech nor language, yet in the fourth verse it states their lines and *their words go to the ends of the world.* This word *line* is from the Hebrew giving the thought of a measuring cord or rule.

Only in recent years has man begun to realize that the Scriptures have many clues and concepts which are far in advance of even the most modern and scientific findings. Recently astronomers have discovered that there are *measuring lines* going forth from the heavenly bodies. By means of modern technology, man is able to point huge electronic telescopes to the uttermost reaches of outer space, probing closer to the frontier of the universe. Electrical charges and particles are being received which it is believed emanated from the very beginning of creation in the original *big bang*. Billions of light years away at the point of creation, all matter being compressed into one mass, suddenly exploded to form the millions of galaxies that surround us in an infinite universe. These *measuring lines* reveal that there was a point of creation; but man is unwilling to admit that there had to be a Creator for there to be a creation.

Everywhere David saw the creative finger of God. In the fifth and sixth verses his thoughts turn to our own solar system, as though the universe is serving as a background for our planet earth on which the great divine plan of the ages is being enacted. David calls it *a tabernacle for the sun*. Our mental vision is drawn from outer space to our planet and, as we shall see, it is drawn even into the world of the minute and into the world of thought, which is beyond even the sub-particles of matter.

Our sun in its course pictures the laws and the plan of God pertaining to mankind. In the fifth verse David compares the sun in our planetary system as being like *a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race*. How significant is this language! We notice the comparisons: the sun,

the bridegroom, strong man, rejoicing, race. All these terms are descriptive of the role and work of the Lord Jesus here on earth. He is the sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2), the bridegroom (Matthew 9:15, 25:11; John 3:29; Luke 5:34), strong (Jeremiah 50:34; Psalms 24:8), rejoicing (Hebrews 12:1,2), the race (1 Corinthians 9:24).

The Psalmist sees the earth as being the theater where Jehovah's plan for the universe is being enacted and in this pictorial, symbolic language, he describes the one who is at the center of all God's purposes. All of God's dealings with man are through His dear Son whose influence and domain is throughout all the heavens. Like the sun, nothing is hid from his control or influence.

The exalted Christ was given a portion (the divine nature) with the great, with God himself (Isaiah 53:12). Even so, the bridegroom rejoices to divide the spoils of his victory with the strong the overcoming Church which fills up *that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ* (Colossians 1:24). Just as the literal sun is the means of sustaining physical life on earth, So the Lord Jesus is the means through which the heavenly Father gives everlasting life to all mankind.

In the seventh through the tenth verses, David defines the laws whereby it all happens and comes about. He describes the laws that God has within himself. The laws which govern the material universe also govern the moral and spiritual realms as well. They are bounded by wisdom, justice, love, and power, are infinite in their expression, are in unison working together for the blessing of God's creation.

Verse 7: *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.* The principle: the powers that govern are absolute. Today relativism seems to be the rule in the world. Everything is situational. But in God's terms there is no deviation whatever from His absolute and perfect law. It not only controls the very workings of nature, but governs the very thoughts of man, converting, changing, transforming the mind, the heart, the life.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. When we accept the ordinances of God, there is no debating the issue. Rather we know what we believe and more importantly, in whom we have believed. It gives a sureness and certainty to our lives that enables us to go forth in full assurance of faith.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. It illuminates and gives to one a great insight, a goal, a direction, which results in newness of life. Not only do we see the glorious character of our Father, but that He has a plan, and we are working together with God in this great work of sin offering.

David further sees the reverence, the fear of the Lord, as being cleansing to our hearts: *He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure* (1 John 3:3). In proportion to our love for God, will we seek more diligently to conform our lives to that of Christ. As we love God, we will keep his commandments, *Cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord* (2 Corinthians 7:1). Reverence for the Lord will always be a requirement for life and will never cease. The entire universe is to be a glorious cathedral of worship, cleansed from sin and serving God in spirit and in truth.

The Value of God's Laws

Then in verse 10, David recognized the value of this insight into God's laws: *More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.* He evaluated all of life's experiences checkered, difficult, triumphant and was able to weigh them, concluding that Jehovah's laws were far more to be desired than anything the world could offer.

As I look about at this convention, I know that each of you has made a similar evaluation and judgment. Were I to ask what would you exchange for your hope of the high calling, or what of earthly good would you exchange for the precious promises that are yours, your response would be the same as our Master's on the Mount of Temptation (Matthew 4:8-10).

We appreciate the Creator, our Father, in such magnificent terms, that we make the external judgments; and then come the internal satisfactions and joy of heart. We have the warmth, the love, the oneness, the intimacy of relationship which far surpasses the sweetest delicacy of this life. Where else would you rather be at this moment than here at DeBron in fellowship with the Lord's people, seeking a deeper appreciation and love for God? *Sweeter than the honeycomb.* This is the life of the spirit, and we are truly in the very courtyard of heaven!

God from an Inner View

But now we see David's focus in the Psalm is changing. It is like looking through a telescope. When you look through the eye piece you see the expansiveness and magnification. But if you were to turn that telescope around and look through the opposite end, then the telescope acts like a microscope and we can see the smallest of objects. Just so, David sees God from the universal outer view, then he turns around and looks at God from the inner and particular view. This he also does in the 8th Psalm, and he places man in this same perspective. *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained,* and asks the question about man's place in the order of things: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* (verses three and four). As it were, he pictures man standing at the mid-point of God's creation, between the infinite reaches of the physical universe, and the finite limits of earth.

And David now carries us beyond the world of matter and probes into the wonder and mystery of thought and consciousness which are beyond the physical. In the very next verse he says, *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. 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.*

He now comes to another revolutionary concept by introducing an idea which is very modern and which has contributed to a new understanding of man within his environment. David is saying in this verse that there is a whole part of ourselves which we cannot understand and of which we are unaware. This is a startling concept which introduces the idea of the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious mind of man. David is telling us that there is a lot of ourselves that we as natural beings really cannot understand or perceive, that there would be whole blocks of our thinking that we may not know about. These may be unresolved problems, attitudes, character defects which we do not realize, but which play an important part in determining our life style and characters. These have an accumulative effect upon our lives and God knows all about them, but we do not.

The conscious mind or intellect is but a small part of our mental capacities. It is like an iceberg which is seen floating above the surface of the ocean while 90% of its mass is submerged and unseen. And So it is with our consciousness. Much of our past and present experience has been forgotten and is submerged from our awareness.

In the miraculous organ of our body, the brain, made up of two to three billion specialized nerve cells, weighing little more than two pounds, is stored every impulse, every thought, everything that has ever happened to us from the moment of birth to our last gasping breath. Just imagine! Nothing whatever is lost, but all of this vast reservoir of experience is preserved, and the sum total of which comprises our character, our personality, our lives.

It is this individual character structure, this unique combination of all the impulses, thoughts, words, and deeds which God preserves and recreates after the moment of death. If faithful, the New Creature will receive a divine organism as promised in 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 1 John 3:2. Likewise all the remainder of mankind who died in Adam, their identity, personalities, and characters will be preserved and given human bodies so that they may erase the effects of sin during the glorious mediatorial reign of Christ. Nothing that ever happened to the individual is lost, but will all be a part of the experience of learning good and evil.

In view of this, David ponders how may he understand his errors, and then he pleads for cleansing from secret, unknown, and hidden faults. There are blemishes, defects, and spots in our characters of which we are not aware. We cannot know them, therefore we need God's guidance to reveal them and then to overcome them by the transforming process of sanctification and thereby converting the soul.

How often we get bombarded with ideas or thoughts or impulses without knowing from whence they came. Just let your mind wander for a moment and suddenly some thought will enter it. You don't know where it came from, and before you realize it, another thought is linked to it and a chain is being forged, leading to thoughts far removed from the original. Perhaps even while I have been talking these past 20 minutes, your mind may have been wandering and you may question why a particular unrelated thought suddenly entered your mind. These mental stimulations and impulses often spring from within, from the deep well of the submerged and forgotten past which break through to our present stream of consciousness. And how often the Adversary will play upon this Adamic storehouse, to use such thoughts to undermine and to discourage the Christian!

But David knew God is able to keep us back from these errors, faults, and weaknesses. We can't always control the suggestions that are introduced into our consciousness, but we must not dwell

upon them, nor allow them to govern us. Bro. Russell has given us the familiar illustration that while we can't stop the birds from flying over our heads, we can most certainly keep them from nesting in our hair. To the degree we are able to handle them and to bring them into conformity with the will of God, is the measure of the vitality and development of the New Creature.

Analyzing Our Thoughts

In 2 Corinthians 10:5 Paul admonishes us to *Cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*. Yet we cannot escape the fact that at times we are impelled by forces which we do not even discern, let alone control. Perhaps we can illustrate this in a simple manner, as, for example, a young child being frightened or hurt by someone, say a man with a beard. In time that experience may be forgotten by the child. The fear or fright is buried, since it is painful to keep in memory.

As the child grows to adulthood there may be felt a discomfort or feeling of suspicion towards certain adults in life, and more particularly towards adults with beards whose appearance may represent a threat or a danger which evokes a sense of uneasiness or insecurity. Often these kinds of mental associations influence our attitudes and become barriers to our relationships with others, and we may not know from whence they come. Therefore, who can understand his errors and know his secret faults? We must try to get to their source and become aware of them So that we may change and construct new thought patterns. How is that accomplished? David gives us the formula, the solution, the prescription: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer*.

We ourselves must become more observant of our own thought and behavior patterns. If we find ourselves having problems with others (and we all do), those problems may not necessarily be the fault of the other person, or it may not even be of the situation itself. There may be some of those little reactions, those irrational responses from the past which are influencing or determining our present attitude.

At times differences arise between brethren. In many cases they begin as doctrinal discussions seeking to clarify some element of Truth. In our contending for *the faith once delivered to the saints*,

all too often our discussion is not objectively along the lines of the purity of the harvest message. Unfortunately our Adamic background enters into the picture, and a clash of personalities or the carnality of the flesh enters into our discussion. What should be a spiritual exercise or exchange many become an occasion of contention to prove oneself right and the other brother wrong. We fail to observe Paul's warning in this regard when he said, *Henceforth know we no man after the flesh* (2 Corinthians 5:16).

In our relationships with each other we are to see one another as New Creatures and are to forget those things which are behind. If we find ourselves reacting to situations with anger, or hurt, or in defensiveness, we are to ask ourselves whether these are due to the little foxes, these secret faults that beset us. These weaknesses must be taken to the Lord in prayer, asking whether we are seeing the matter in its proper light, or whether it is the flesh that is contributing to what could turn into a less than brotherly exchange of viewpoints.

Using an example from the medical field, I wish that the New Creature were as much in control and responsive to the dangers besetting it as is its human body. The outer coating of our bodies which we call the skin is just a covering and contains within it all the body tissue and fluids. When the skin is penetrated, there is built into the body's mechanism an automatic action marvelous to behold. Millions of white corpuscles in the blood are drawn from every part of the body, and like one great army they converge on the point of invasion to fight a war unto death. I wish, dear friends, that our new wills were as automatic in their responses to sin!

This would mean total mobilization of our spiritual resources at the first assault of the world, the flesh, or the devil. We sing that beautiful hymn *Ernest Watchfulness*. But I wonder how often we dwell upon the import of its words:

I want a principle within Of jealous, godly fear; A sensibility of sin, A pain to feel it near; I want the first approach to feel Of pride or fond desire; To catch the wandering of my will, And quench the kindling fire.

These sentiments stand as a sermon in their own right. But let us briefly touch upon them in passing.

I want a principle within. I want that New Creature spiritual life to be So vital, alert, and active to watch over or guard every impulse. This is the same principle that David identified: *The law of the*

Lord is perfect, the statutes of the law are right, the commandments of the law are pure, the fear of the Lord is clean, the judgments of the Lord are true. With this as our measuring rod, as the guide for our lives, what a fruitful, godlike, reverential life results!

A sensitivity of sin. With the establishment of this principle in our hearts, there comes an awareness of sin we could not otherwise have. We are to love righteousness that's the principle. But we are also to hate iniquity; to love justice and to hate injustice. We are to espouse righteousness but also to eschew evil.

Do we have that kind of clear-cut definition of right and wrong as an operating, reflexive, automatic principle within us each moment of our lives? Have we so disciplined ourselves that regardless of the cost to the old nature and our humanity, we will serve righteousness? We are to have such an allergic reaction to sin that we will experience pain to feel it near, that at the very nearness of it we put as much distance between us and it as possible. That is sensitivity, for we do not *rejoice in iniquity, but rejoice in the truth*. The measure of our spirituality will be determined just that simply. Whether we are successful or not in the high calling will depend on how uncompromisingly we practice these principles of righteousness.

I want the first approach to feel, of pride or fond desire. The first approach not dwelling upon the thought, entertaining, and contemplating it! Any hesitancy after the wrong is seen only increases our susceptibility to the wrong and to the temptation. It is that moment of hesitancy, that Baalam-like attitude of divided allegiance (Numbers 23 and 24) when we begin to turn the temptation over in our minds, meditate upon it, give it an audience, that we waver and rationalize it. Then carnality takes over, and compromise with the sin or weakness results. *The first approach:* the immediate detection and instantaneous mobilizing of our spiritual powers to resist is our surest defense. This is the arena, this is the battlefield of our warfare. The future and our eternal destiny is determined on such issues.

We must leave to your own personal, prayerful consideration the remainder of this hymn, for it has valuable spiritual instruction. Each time we sing it, may it be with prayerful consideration of its message.

There are many close besetting sins within and about us and we must make sure that in our warfare we are not merely grappling

with their symptoms or results, but are really facing the root causes in the heart. The heart directs our thoughts and that is why the warning:

sow a thought, reap a word; sow a word, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny

is So basic.

As a man thinketh in his heart, So is he. . . . Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Proverbs 23:7; 4:23

Secret Faults and Presumptuous Sins

When we experience repeated testings along a particular line, let us not become discouraged. Rather we are to look for their causes, whether our thought process is undisciplined and uncontrolled by the principle of righteousness. When we allow the fleshly will to have its way, then these secret faults will emerge from one level of expression to another until they erupt into partially willful, and, if unchecked, into willful or presumptuous sin.

David continues: *Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.* Every day we must utter that request in prayer no matter how advanced we may be in the narrow way. And to achieve this, the Lord governs each experience of life. He gives us experiences So that we may be more aware of what is happening within and around us. God gives us circumstances or trials for the very reason a doctor does when he gives an injection or a vaccination. In protecting a patient from a plague or disease, a doctor may inject some germs of that disease into the body So that the body will be able to gradually build up resistance against the germ. For example, polio injections are given to children and there develops in the blood a defense against the polio germ should it ever invade the body.

So God does with us. He designs our experiences each and every day. Because we are created So differently, you will go through an experience far different than mine, and should they be similar, our circumstances will vary. We all have our common, yet diverse experiences in life. Why? Because God is giving us each our daily injection of trials So that our spiritual life will build resistance to sin. Later on we will get larger doses and greater trials or tribulations So that even greater protection against sin is developed in our characters. Ultimately we are formed and fashioned in the

likeness of His dear Son and are transformed by the renewing of our minds to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)

In keeping us back from our secret faults, God uses His divine providence. At times we seem helpless, and circumstances overwhelm us like a flood. Then all we can do is pray from the depths of our hearts for God's grace to endure these Gethsemane experiences. And, oh the blessedness of His deliverance!

God will not give us more than we are able to bear, but withal will give us the way of escape. (1 Corinthians 10:13) His providential overruling and the nicest definition of providence that I know is *God's hand in the glove of our circumstances* God's providence is controlling, guiding, directing, and shepherding in all of our affairs. And what we cannot do for ourselves, He will surely do for us! He is thus keeping us back from these overpowering circumstances or weaknesses, that they not have dominion over us. Under divine supervision we are purified through the purging of the flesh.

Our Burdens Are God's Gifts

Psalms 55:22 admonishes us to: *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.* In the marginal reference, the word *burden* is rendered *gifts*. Those burdensome trials we are called upon to bear are in reality gifts from God for us to grow on and to develop our New Creature's immunity to sin.

As children we received gifts on various occasions and we all remember how eagerly the packages were torn open. But first we asked the question, *Who is it from?* If only we could see all of life in those terms! If only we could take all the burdens, sorrows, pain as well as joys, all of life's experiences as gifts! And before tearing into them, just know that each label on the package says, *This thing is from me.* (1 Kings 12:24) Oh, how blessed to accept the circumstances and trials of life believing that all things are *of the Father and by the Son* (1 Corinthians 8:6) and there are no exceptions, and *all things are working together for good.* (Romans 8:28) If we could just unwrap each day's package and see that *No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.* (Psalms 84:11) And *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.* (Hebrews 12:6) How differently this would enable us to cherish each experience, to use them joyfully as we look beyond the gift to the giver and

realize that this is God's will for us. With this perspective, we are cleansed from secret faults and kept back from presumptuous sins.

Yes, there are the tears, the pain, the hurt, the heartaches as we each journey through our Gethsemane experiences. Yet in the midst of all of these there is the joy; the tears of bitterness are mixed with the balm of Gilead; the anguish of disappointment is stilled by the triumph of faith only because we know He is there with us and because like David we can see Him everywhere in our lives.

If we are willing to approach the demands of each day with that focus of spirit; living in expectancy and in anticipation of all God's arrangements for us; then as New Creatures we will be successfully fashioned in the pattern of Christ. We need not fear, no matter what our limitations, faults, or failures, knowing that whenever we come short, we have Christ's robe of righteousness and God's grace ever available to the penitent heart.

I hate my faults and failings / And I fight them day by day / But from self with all its weakness / I cannot get away. / Despite this fact, he uses me. / Beyond is still more grace. / And hosts will tell his glory, / His who found poor me a place. (R4960)

As members of Christ's body, God's glory is being reflected in our lives as we worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23; 15:8; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 1:24) But what greater glory will be revealed, far above that which David could discern in the heavens, when the glorified Church will be unveiled for all creation to behold: *A crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. (Isaiah 62:3)*

As great as all prior creation had been, the New Creation will be the ultimate demonstration of the workings of God's attributes and of His boundless glory. Thus will be revealed a God supreme, from the infinite reaches of outer space into the very thoughts of men and angels, beyond the realm of matter and space. EVERYWHERE will be heralded the declaration: *Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him. (Deuteronomy 4:35)*

God grant that we may prove faithful to his glory!

The Bride of Christ-Brother Pius Monye, Nigeria

DEARLY BELOVED brethren, I greet you through the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a great privilege and joy for me to be here with you, also having the privilege of sharing the Gospel of Christ with you.

I bring to you the greetings from my family and also from all the Nigerian brethren, mostly the brethren at Warri class, in Bendel State of Nigeria. The Nigerian brethren love you and they are praying for you.

We follow the great apostle's injunction, *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and So much the more as ye see the day approaching.* (Hebrews 10:25)

Psalm 45

Brethren, in a couple of minutes we are going to share together the inspired words from the Prophet David: *Hearken O daughter and consider, incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house, So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is the Lord and worship thou him.* (Psalms 45:10,11)

The beautiful imagery of our text and context relates to the elect Church of this Gospel Age, which is here pictured as a bride, the wife of the great King Emmanuel. Notice for instance the apostle's words to the Church of his day: *I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* (2 Corinthians 11:2)

The context declares *her clothing is of wrought gold.* Brethren, what does that mean? This pictures her as the Bride when all the trials, difficulties, and testings shall have been successfully passed and she shall be accepted as the very elect to be forever associated with her Lord and a sharer of his glory.

In Scripture symbology, gold is used to represent the divine nature. Hence the picture as a whole teaches us that when the King of kings shall present his Bride before the heavenly Father at the close of this age, after she shall have been glorified by the first resurrection, she will be possessed of the divine nature and have glory, honor, and immortality. (Romans 2:7) The Apostle Peter spoke of this when he said, *God hath given us exceeding great and precious promises whereby we might be partakers of the divine nature.* (2 Peter 1:4)

We do not get this divine nature or this gold raiment in the present life; our immortality is a hope and not an actuality. As the apostle says, *We seek for glory, honor and immortality.*

How difficult it is for us to grasp the thought that the great Creator desires that the elect, little flock, should be associated with His Son in the works of the Millennial Age and the blessing of the families of the earth.

No wonder the apostle declares that although we have God's assurance that we are sons of God, though this signifies that we shall be heirs of God, yet it does not appear what we shall be, how great we shall be. It is too wonderful a matter for us to comprehend, too wonderful to even be described in the Scriptures.

But the context says more respecting this raiment. Verse 14: *She shall be led unto the King in raiment of needle work.* This word led properly enough applies to the present life. All through this Gospel Age, from Pentecost until now, the Lord has used various ways to call out from the world this peculiar people, and by various instrumentalities He has led them from grace, from knowledge to knowledge, and changed them from glory to glory, to prepare them for their final acceptance in the first resurrection, of the clothing of Gold glory, honor, and immortality.

The Scriptures represent that all accepted of the Lord throughout this Gospel Age have been granted a wedding garment, clean and white, pure linen which is the righteousness of the saints. (Revelation 19:8)

These espoused ones are cautioned that their treatment of the robe will determine whether or not they will ultimately be of the Bride class. They must keep their garments unspotted from the world (James 1:27) and must embroider them with fine needlework. Painstakingly they must endeavor to fix and establish in their robes the glorious pattern outlined for them by the word and example of their Bridegroom and his mouthpieces, the apostles. If any of those called to be saints, on accepting that call and receiving the robe, supposed it would be an easy matter to keep it without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, he was mistaken. Each one of this class has found out that it requires great care to live in a world in which sin abounds and as a New Creature to act through a body the imperfections of which are continually coming to light as growth is made in grace and knowledge. The Apostle Paul acknowledged the impossibility of perfection under present conditions except that our hearts, our intentions, our wills, might be perfect, should be

perfect, must be perfect, thoroughly loyal to God and to righteousness.

The Word of God declares that *there is none righteous, no not one.* (Romans 3:10) When the thought of our own imperfections and the sin abounding all about us would make us fearful, convincing us of the impossibility of preventing our robes from receiving spots or wrinkles, what then, brethren? Ah! they tell us that the merit of our Lord's sacrifice not only cancelled our past sins for us, but that all subsequent imperfections, resulting from original sin, weakness and ignorance, may all be forgiven us and not remain as spots upon our robes. The apostle says, *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.*

The word *cleanseth* here refers not to something already past but to that which is now at our disposal, which is now in progress, a cleansing or forgiveness which all of the Lord's people need to pray for and to accept, as in the Lord's prayer, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

Thus through the age from Pentecost onward, those who have been called, accepted, and robed with the wedding garment have been obliged to strive to keep their garments unspotted and oft with tears to apply for the cleansing where a spot would be seen. They are more distressed to see one spot upon their robe than are many whose garments are filthy. But the effect upon them is a blessed one, as it develops in them more and more love for righteousness and greater zeal and strength in overcoming. They are making progress, even though to themselves it may appear slow; they are becoming fortified, strengthened and built up in character in their love for whatsoever things are just, true, lovely and of good report. (Philippians 4:8)

Embroidering the Garment

The Apostle Peter said, *If ye do these things ye shall never fall; for So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter 1:10, 11) He is referring to the same things that are represented by the embroidering, the needlework upon the wedding garment. All the espoused ones are shown the pattern on the robe. They are all informed of the necessity of working out their own salvation, of cooperating with the Lord in the matter of making their calling and election sure to the glorious station to which they have been invited. They are informed that through

much tribulation shall they enter the Kingdom. (Acts 14:22) This tribulation is the painstaking *fine needlework* of our context.

Brethren, remember that not all tribulation that may come to mankind is a part of this embroidery. The apostle speaks of some in these words, *But let no man suffer as an evil-doer or as a busybody in other men's matters.* (1 Peter 4:15) The intimation is that such sufferings are not incidental to the embroidering we are to do, but the result of our not being engaged in our embroidering work and having time to meddle with sin or with other matters and affairs.

Such tribulations add nothing to our embroidering on the robe, except as they might awaken us to a sense of our neglect of the important work which must be done in our own characters if we would be fit for a share with our Lord in his Kingdom, fit to be accepted as members of the very Elect, the Bride, the Church in glory.

It is time, dear friends, that we awake to the responsibilities of the hour, that we realize that the Bridegroom is present, that the last of the virgins will soon enter into the marriage and the door will be shut, and that the choicest blessings of all time will soon be won or lost as far as we are concerned. (Matthew 25:1-13 ; Ephesians 5:15-17)

Let us make no mistake as respects what constitutes this needlework, this embroidery. It is not knowledge, though knowledge is very necessary to its proper in-working. It represents not natural talents, though these may be utilized in connection with it. It is not merely laborious works, though these may be very proper and perhaps necessary to it if conditions are favorable. This embroidery represents love, for *Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* (Romans 13:10) This is the new commandment which our Lord has given, *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another* (John 13:34), love for the Lord and his truth. To our Lord and his Word we must be true at all hazards. Then comes love for the brethren because they are seeking to walk in his footsteps. *He that loveth not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?* (John 4:20)

The love must continue and extend to neighbors, friends, yea to enemies, So that those who would have the full pattern on their robes must have in their characters a true, genuine, staunch love for all these. And if, perchance, the enemy should be a brother, the testing to love might be all the more severe. Whoever does not

love even his enemies is not fit for the Kingdom, whatever else he may be fit for.

Love as brethren, be pitiful, be sympathetic, be generous, be helpful, be self-sacrificing, do unto others as you would they should do to you. Let the golden rule measure your thoughts, words and doings measure the length of the stitches in your embroidery and assure yourself that it is *fine needlework*.

Dear friends, here is the gist of the entire question. Our Lord declares that we and the entire world are either for him and his cause or against the same. There is no neutral ground. Hence in leaving the world and our own people, and in becoming members of the New Creation, the Church, the body of Christ begotten of the Holy Spirit, we should understand that the change is a radical one and not any longer seek for our fellowships and joys from the worldly sources but only amongst those who with ourselves are consecrated to the Lord and waiting for our change, and for the marriage and for membership in the elect class, the Bride.

The more we attempt to mix worldly things, prospects and aims with our high calling, the more it will be shown that we are as the most foolish virgins, for we cannot serve God and mammon. This, of course, does not signify unkindness toward friends or neighbors or kindred. The Lord's saints are exhorted to do good unto all men as they have opportunity but especially unto the household of faith.

We pray that we be hearers and doers of the Word. God be with you till we meet again. May the Lord add his blessing.

Amen.

The Judgment of the Angels that Sinned-Brother Spyros Pates, Greece

THE VERSE for today's lesson, dear brethren, is taken from the Apostle Jude. It reads: *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.* (Jude 6)

Surely we all remember the story of those angels which kept not their first estate as God's holy angels, but left their own habitation and their spiritual bodies and materialized in human form.

It is true that in the Old Testament we find no particular details about these angels who kept not their first estate. We only find something about them in Genesis 6, verses 1 and 2. It reads:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

These verses tell us that these angels of God, after they materialized and assumed human form according to Jude's testimony, saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and took as wives those that they selected. The result was that there were children.

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. (Genesis 6:4)

As soon as these holy angels, sons of God, materialized into human form and came in unto the daughters of men, they became defiled for two reasons. First, mankind was of a sinful estate. Second, they came into intimate association with the human race which is of a lower, earthly nature, in violation of God's will.

We are not given any details about why these angels came into this association with the human race. Some suppose that it was to help the human race and restore it back to perfection and harmony with God. Because they were of a higher nature and had greater power, they probably thought they could produce a new race of hybrid humans infused with superior vitality.

However, God's Word tells us this was not pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. The intermixture of these two different natures which produced a hybrid race was an abomination in His eyes. And the results of this action were tremendously evil, as we read:

And God saw that the wickedness of men was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And the Lord said . . .

his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. (Genesis 6:5,6,11,12,3)

The situation was indeed terrible. As told by the Bible these angels interfered in men's lives without God's commandment. They were not sent by God to produce a new race that would be in harmony with God and thus never die. Nor were they sent to help the human race to be recovered back to a righteous condition. That is why they failed in their experience and why they themselves were corrupted. Additionally they provided a way to test other angels.

Brother Russell comments about these angels in *The Photo-Drama of Creation*. On the 16th page he writes:

The disloyal course of the angels apparently continued for centuries without any outward manifestation of God's ability to check them. Thus all the holy angels were tested, and all who chose 'were disobedient in the days of Noah.' 1 Peter 3:20.

This work of restitution or restoration of man back to the condition lost in Eden, back to perfection and glory, was something to be handled by God Himself. He created man and He loved him. To Him belongs the choice of a plan and the suitable angelic son to be man's salvation. In Revelation 5, verses 2 to 5, we read:

Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

As we have already seen, these angels corrupted the human race and the whole earth. *Nephilim*, giants who were said to be men of renown, domineered and oppressed the human race. This is why God brought on the flood where all the people living at that time died, along with everything else that was a soul, including the *Nephilim*, the illegitimate race.

Tartarus

It seems from God's Word that the sinful angels left their human body and again took on spiritual bodies as soon as the flood killed all the people. This was the time when God cast them down to Tartarus and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved

unto judgment according to the words of the Apostles Peter and Jude.

Brother Russell refers to this particular subject on the 17th page of the *Photo-Drama*, which we quote in full:

The account of the fall of the angels from being sons of God to being demons helps us to understand why God decreed the Deluge to wipe out all of the human race except Noah and his family. We perceive that God from the first intended to deal only with Adam and his family. The giant sons of the fallen angels (Nephilim) came into being contrary to the Divine will; hence, properly, no provision was to be made for them. They never had a right to life, nor will they have a resurrection. On the other hand, all of Adam's posterity, redeemed by Jesus' death, must be recovered from death, with full opportunity to secure everlasting life.

After the Deluge, the demon angels dematerialized resumed their spirit conditions. St. Peter and St. Jude reveal the penalty inflicted upon them. 'Those angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation [spirit condition], God restrained under chains [restraints] of darkness, unto the Judgment of the Great Day.' 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6.

The liberties of the fallen angels demons were restrained. They are unable to use deceptions in the light unable to materialize as formerly. Note, however, that the limitation 'unto' implies that when the 'great Day of Wrath' shall come, these fallen angels will be permitted to materialize and become potent factors in the strife. Other Scriptures indicate that these fallen angels will have much to do with the great 'time of trouble' with which this age will close, and in which Messiah's Kingdom will be inaugurated.

These fallen angels were cast to tartarus our Earth's atmosphere. Satan, a cherub-angel of higher rank, is styled the Prince of Demons. They are not in some far-off place stoking fires, but keep as close to humanity as possible. Not permitted to materialize, they seek to obsess, to demonize by clairvoyance and clairaudience. Mankind would properly resent them if their true character were known. They therefore personate the dead, communicating through spirit-mediums.

Dear brethren, God's Word as well as man's history reveal the actions of these fallen angels or demons throughout the centuries. These evil spirits, and under Satan's guidance as their prince, had

established the first oracles in the days of Nimrod and Semiramis (Nimrod's mother and later his wife).

Historians mention that great ceremonies took place in large caves where, with different intoxicating herbs and with the demons' influence, lightnings and thunders occurred which greatly affected those attending these ceremonies.

From thenceforth and in different places on the earth, Satan was continually organizing other oracles, among which is the renown Oracle of Delphi. Particularly today the Devil seems to have changed his methods. These occult oracles have been replaced with mediums or mediators who are found in all the large cities of the world.

Preaching To the Angels

In this way the demons have seized the intellect of most people on the earth today. As God's Word reveals, the situation will get worse as these evil spirits gain additional freedom bit by bit. It was to these spirits that the Lord went and preached, as we read in 1 Peter 3:19,20:

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.

This does not mean that our Lord gave them a special talk before he was taken up to his Heavenly Father in the heavens. The Lord did not preach to them in the same way in which he preached to the people during his earthly ministry of three and a half years.

We rather think that our Lord's self-sacrificing life, his holy character, his faithfulness unto death, and his obedience to his Heavenly Father, was a preaching to these fallen angels who disregarded God by their behavior.

We are reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul who writes to the Church at Corinth saying: *We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.* (1 Corinthians 4:9)

This means that a holy, consecrated life of all God's saints is a spectacle to the eyes of the angels and to people. All of them follow, through the centuries, the faithfulness, the sufferings, and the obedience of the children of God. This *preaching* is the same to every one of them.

Someone has well said that *actions speak louder than words*. Yet in spite of the gentle examples of the Lord's and his Church's (his body's) faithfulness and obedience, the evil angels did not benefit. God's long suffering waited for them during the days of Noah for 120 years while the ark was being prepared.

It is true, as God's Word mentions, that these angels became worse. And it is even more true in the present time when the wickedness and evil of these fallen angels is reaching its peak. The unprecedented rise of Satanistic crimes which are taking place all over the world, the great corruption of the race at this time of the end, the disobedience of children to parents, the evil, wickedness, hatred, self-interest, and the unfaithfulness of people conclusively prove that these wicked demons are becoming worse and worse.

We see these characteristics in most people. We are really living in times that are very evil and wicked for God's New Creation. That is why we should be watching.

Battling Against Spiritual Wickedness

The Apostle Paul, referring to these evil days, writes these words to the saints of God:

Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:11,12)

In these verses the apostle is urging us to put on God's armor. The following verses tell us the constituent parts of that armor: loins girded with truth, a breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God (verses 14-17).

The apostle also calls our attention to the fact that our wrestling and struggle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places. If we therefore put on God's whole armor, which is essential in this time of the end, we will be able to stand fast and unmovable against the attack of the Devil and his helpers, the wicked angels. The wicked angels are the ones who act upon the sons of disobedience and conquer people's intellect.

The phrases *powers of the air, the principalities of darkness of this age, and the spirits of spiritual wickedness in high places* all refer to the fallen angels who disobeyed in Noah's day before the flood. These wicked spirits or angels whom God delivered into chains of darkness were forbidden to materialize. From that time forward these fallen angels started to act through people whose intellect they dominated. This is why we see that when the Lord cast out devils from people, they cried out saying: *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* (Matthew 8:29)

These evil angels' words to the Lord (*art thou come hither to torment us before the time*) verify the testimonies of Peter and Jude, who under the same spirit revealed to us that God delivered those angels who sinned into chains of darkness and restrained them unto the judgment of the Great Day at which time they will be judged.

As God's Word reveals, the great God of Glory has appointed a day during which these fallen angels will be judged and God's condemning sentence will be placed upon them. The Scriptures and all the signs of the times show us that this day of judgment of these evil angels is near.

The Four Winds

In Revelation these demons are referred to as *winds* who are held back, whose actions are restrained for a time. John writes these words:

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. (Revelation 7:1-3)

Rather than making any personal comments about this, we will quote words from Brother Russell, who talks about these winds in Reprint 5470 (written in 1914). First, his words concerning the holding of the four winds:

The winds of the earth referred to here are, of course, symbolic. The thought is that the winds from the four quarters North, East, South and West are being held back and that when the restraint is withdrawn, they will rush together, and the result will be a whirlwind. Certain Scriptures tell of a whirlwind that will be raised up from the coasts of the earth. See Jeremiah 23:19; 25:32,33; 30:23,24. We do not understand that this will be a physical whirlwind, but this symbolic expression is used to convey the thought of a severe strife of the powers of the air.

These 'powers of the air,' or 'winds,' are not powers of natural air, but are the powers referred to by St. Paul when he speaks of Satan as 'the prince of the power of the air.' (Ephesians 2:2) Those spirits who have been under the control of Satan the fallen angels were to be restrained in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day. (2 Peter 2:4) The letting loose of these winds, or air powers, would seem to show that God has let go his hand of restraint; that he will have to do with the permission of the terrible trouble that will come upon the world . . .

Our text seems to imply that this outside influence will exercise a baneful effect upon men, when finally granted the liberty. These fallen spirits have been under restraint for these many centuries, but they have exercised their influence to whatever extent they have had permission.

If they had had unlimited power, they would have wrecked the world long ago; but they have been restrained. Apparently God will soon cease to restrain the fallen angels, and they will then proceed to vent their fury upon humanity, So that the whole earth will be full of violence, the same as in the days of Noah . . . The power manifested by the demons when loosed will, we believe, be with a view to the injury to mankind. We do not know but that many of our readers will have a share in that injury. We have every reason to suppose that, if these fallen angels shall get loose, they will vent their first anger upon the Lord's people.

Second, his words concerning the phrase *that the wind shall not blow* in Reprint 4880 (written in 1911):

As soon as the power that is now controlling them shall be removed, we shall have a reign of evil all over the earth. The evil spirits will do all the evil that is in their power, and this will constitute the trial of all the fallen angels the lifting of the restraints to see whether they will go contrary to the divine will. All who thus manifest their alliance with evil in any way will

become subjects of the second death, while others who show their loyalty to God will mark themselves as worthy, presumably, of everlasting life.

It may be something in connection with the saints that will constitute the test of these angels. And that will be the key, the secret connected with the awful time of trouble which the Bible tells us will mark the conclusion of this age and which will constitute the forerunner or beginning of the new dispensation.

We continue with Reprint 4822 where Brother Russell writes:

Our thought is that the evil angels would long ago have done injury to the symbolical earth, sea and trees, had it not been for the restraint of divine power. Symbolically, the earth represents organized society; the sea represents the disorganized masses, and the trees represent the household of faith. The letting loose suddenly of the fallen angels will account well for the suddenness of the coming trouble, which everywhere in the Scriptures is one of its particular features 'in one hour'; 'suddenly as travail upon a woman'; 'as it was in the days of Noah,' and 'as it was in the days of Lot.'

Brother Russell in Reprint 4880 says this:

There is only one way, So far as we can see, in which these fallen angels can have a trial, their trial consisting in having a fuller opportunity to sin, if they so desire, or an opportunity to show, if they wish, that they are sick of sin and desire to return to harmony with God. We cannot think that God will allow this trial of the angels during the Millennial reign, for then, nothing shall hurt; nothing shall destroy; Satan will be bound and all evil influences will be restrained. No, it cannot be then. And in order to be tried at all, these fallen angels must have certain liberties granted, to prove them. Otherwise, where would be their trial? Consequently, reasoning along this basis (2 Peter 3:7), we reach the conclusion that the trial of these fallen angels is in the near future perhaps to some extent already begun.

As we see from these quotations, Brother Russell refers to the manner in which the fallen angels will be loosed and how their judgment will occur. We thank the Lord that He did not leave His favored people uninformed as far as the future is concerned. The Lord informs us where we stand and what we may expect in the near future So we may be prepared during this time of the end when the ends of the world have come.

Therefore Brother Russell, referring to these fallen angels, evil spirits, tells us that they will indeed play an important role in the aggravation of the universal situation as they receive their freedom. Brother Russell's opinion is that these fallen angels will receive even more freedom in the near future to the point of materializing and taking human form as they did in the days of Noah before the flood.

A Grievous Error

Brother Russell believes that these fallen angels will receive more freedom in the near future and as a result, this great tribulation and anarchy will take place which will consume the earth like a fire. In contrast to Brother Russell's writings, today there are teachings from brethren being circulated claiming that the demons are being gradually restrained. This teaching is indeed in great contrast with biblical prophecies, with Brother Russell's words, and with the events we are presently experiencing.

Is it possible that while the demons are restrained, evils will increase on earth to an unprecedented degree since ever there was a nation? Is it not written in the Bible that the Lord will bind Satan So that the nations will not be deceived? Since the nations are today experiencing the greatest deceptions in their history, how then can the demons be restrained? How are the nations being deceived? Oh what a great deception! How greatly surprised will those be who accept such thoughts when they finally realize they have been deceived and that they did not watch So they could avoid the harmful actions of these devils!

Dear brethren, the vital conclusion derived from all that we have said about the fallen angels does not just lie in the simple recounting of their story and their activities. We know this story well. The important conclusion of our lesson today is that we must take more protective action since our great enemy emerges in front of us into more and more freedom each day. But if we underestimate this enemy and do not clearly see his warlike preparation and mission against us, then we will be sure to lose the battle and will fall under his arrows.

In like way as this enemy had freedom against our Lord, Jesus said to his disciples: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* So let us all watch, dear brethren, considering these words because they surely warn us that day by day Satan and his fellow helpers, the evil angels, are receiving increasing freedom against the world

and particularly against the last members of the Body of Christ which is, of course, *US*. Amen

The Great Pyramid and the Bible

THE ANCIENT world was famous for its seven wonders. But today the phrase itself is much better known than the actual wonders. These seven ancient attractions were on or near the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Two were in Greece, two in Turkey, one in Iraq, and two in Egypt. Let's look at the first wonder.

The Seven Ancient Wonders

Here's an artist's conception of the statue of Zeus. It was constructed in 450 B.C. None of it survives to our day.

The second wonder was the Colossus on the Greek island of Rhodes. It was built in 280 B.C. and stood just 56 years before it was destroyed by an earthquake. None of it survives today.

The third wonder was the temple of Diana at Ephesus. It was still standing in the time of the Apostle Paul. But today's ruins have no trace of the temple. All that remains is a part of one column in the British museum.

The fourth ancient wonder was the tomb of King Mausolus at Halicarnassus, built in 400 B.C. Pieces of it survive in the British Museum. These two statues were originally in the tomb. This horse was mounted on the top of the structure.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were terraced gardens on an artificial mountain maintained by pumped water. They lasted less than 100 years. None of it survives.

The lighthouse at Alexandria was the sixth wonder. It is the only wonder with a functional purpose. It was the tallest lighthouse the world has ever seen. None of it survives.

The seventh wonder surpasses all the others in every way. It is by far the greatest and most ancient of them all: the Great Pyramid at Gizeh. This huge structure is so old it was standing for 1700 years before any other *wonder* appeared on earth.

How old is it? The best estimate places its construction at 2170 B.C. If this date is correct, it had been standing for 600 years when

Moses received the ten commandments from God when none of the the Old Testament had yet been written.

The Great Pyramid is almost 500 feet high and covers 13 acres. It is more massive than any other pyramid in the world. We still don't know how the Egyptians could construct such a structure. Some of its stones weigh 70 tons. They've been cut and placed So expertly, in places there's almost no mortar between the blocks. The pen knife shows the meeting point of two huge blocks.

Its size alone guaranteed it would survive anything. Students of this pyramid have been intrigued not only by its sheer mass, but by its intricate system of passages and chambers. No other pyramid in the world even approaches the interior complexity of the Great Pyramid.

There have been many guesses about why the Great Pyramid was built. Many people think it was built as a tomb for a powerful Egyptian King. Others say it was used to geometrically determine land divisions after the annual flooding of the Nile. A third theory says it was a kind of astronomical observatory (when the upward pointing passages were still exposed to the sky). But one theory has greater evidence to support its claim than all the others. That theory suggests that the Great Pyramid is a God-given parable in stone, illustrating God's plan for man, covering the past, present, and future.

Notice how the Prophet Isaiah referred to the Great Pyramid as this symbolic parable of God's purposes. *In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt . . . and it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt.* [Isa 19:19,20]

The phrase, *Altar to the Lord* is very significant. Although altars were usually used for sacrifices, they were also constructed as monuments with their inscriptions often containing important information and events.

When Isaiah wrote those words, altars were constructed by placing stones one on top of another. The analogy becomes apparent. The Great Pyramid is the altar or monument designed by God as a memorial to himself and His plan. He has given us this massive stone monument which, as we will see, pictorially corroborates His written testimony.

The Bible's Teachings

There is a common thread throughout all religions. Every religion attempts to explain where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going. Christianity supplies answers to these same questions.

The Bible tells us man arrived on this planet by the direct creation of God. According to the dates in the Bible, that first man, called Adam, was created over 4100 years before Christ. Adam was told he would live as long as he obeyed his Creator. But instead of obeying, he disobeyed and plunged himself and his future race into a life of sin, sickness, and death.

This fall from perfection reached such a degree of wickedness that God thought it best to destroy nearly the entire human race in a great flood of waters. The flood occurred almost 1700 years after the creation of Adam.

According to pyramid scholars the construction of the Great Pyramid took place about 300 years after the flood.

For over 1800 years God dealt exclusively with the nation of Israel as His chosen people. But, like the rest of mankind, Israel could not keep God's perfect laws.

A sinful and dying race could not rescue itself. It required the sacrifice of a perfect man to ransom the first perfect man Adam from the condemnation of justice. That perfect man was Jesus the Son of God, who became a man and died to redeem mankind. The reward Jesus received for obeying the will of his Heavenly Father was divine life, the highest form of life in the universe.

The past 2000 years since Christ has been the age of Christianity. During this age only those called by God to a life of sacrifice are in special relationship to Him. Those who obey God and sacrifice their own interests receive life of a very special kind, a life in heaven.

The remainder of mankind, those not in a special relationship with God, will be resurrected back to earth. This is shown in the words of Jesus when he taught his disciples to pray: *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth.* Resurrected mankind, like Adam, will be tested to see if they will obey the instruction they receive from God. Those who obey will live forever on the earth. Those who disobey will die, never to live again.

When Jesus was on earth, mankind received information about God's plan. We have his description of God's plan in the Bible. God also recorded this same plan in the stones of the Great Pyramid more than 2000 years before any part of our Bible was written. Let's go on now to see how the Great Pyramid symbolically portrays God's *Plan of the Ages*.

The Great Pyramid's Symbolism

Today there are two entrances to the Pyramid, both on the north face. The arrow points to the original entrance which was cleverly concealed under outer casing stones. In the Ninth Century an Arab kalif named Al Mamoun forced his way into the Pyramid seeking the riches usually buried with ancient Egyptian kings. His forced entrance, lower and to the right of the original entrance, is shown here. Although he did find his way into the Pyramid's passages and chambers, there was no fortune anywhere.

Egyptian authorities have sealed the original entry. The forced passage of Al Mamoun is the only way in. Electric lights and hand-rails have been installed to make it easier to visit the interior of this monumental structure.

The entrance passage into the Pyramid is called the Descending Passage. It measures just four feet high and 3-1/2 feet wide, making it very difficult to walk in it. The Descending Passage actually leaves the Pyramid's superstructure and continues down through the foundation rock. It levels out for a short distance, then terminates in an unfinished room called the Pit. The walls and ceiling of this room are smooth, but the floor is rough and unfinished. It's almost as though we were meant to see it as a bottomless pit.

We believe this passage and unfinished room, like everything in this Pyramid, conveys a symbolic message. In humanity's experience, we have seen a downward descent starting with the creation of perfect beings, but ending in a pit of sin and death. There appears to be no way to escape this final destination, no hope of something better. Mankind has come to accept death as an inevitable part of life. This, we believe, is the symbolism of the Descending Passage and the Pit.

About 100 feet after entering the Descending Passage, there does seem to be a way of escape. It's called the Ascending Passage. Instead of looking down the Descending Passage, we can look up in the ceiling at the beginning of the Ascending Passage. But

notice how that upward passage is plugged. Here's another view of the plug.

There are actually three granite blocks, next to each other, that prohibit us from climbing up into the Ascending Passage. In the entire Pyramid, granite can be found only here and in the uppermost chamber, called the King's Chamber. Limestone is found everywhere else.

These plugs were originally hidden behind a limestone cover. The vibration from Al Mamoun's forced entry dislodged the cover, his men heard it fall, and they tunneled toward the sound. They found the granite and tunneled around it to enter the Ascending Passage. Experts say these plugs were built-in at the time the Ascending Passage was constructed.

After bypassing the granite plugs, we can climb into the Ascending Passage itself. As usual, the passage is just four feet high. We are again struck with the force of the architect's symbolism when we realize that the Ascending Passage represents the Jewish Age.

Like the walk of mankind in the Descending Passage, Israel too has stooped under the burden of sin. God told his chosen people if they obeyed His Law, they would live. *For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me and ye shall live.* [Am 5:4] But the Jewish people found they couldn't obey it. Their way to life was blocked by a Law too hard for them to keep.

And So we see that the hard granite plug represents the Jewish Law given to the nation of Israel. Because of their inability to perfectly keep God's law, Israel found itself doomed with the rest of mankind.

As we travel down to the Pit, we now can see an opening to a narrow passage. This passage eventually climbs vertically, ending in the upper passages of the Pyramid. It is called the Well, probably because at times it is nearly vertical. This Well was concealed for centuries. The Pit and the Descending Passage were well known to the ancients. But the Well stayed hidden until relatively recent times. The arrows identify the entrance in the right side wall.

The Well shaft is steep and dangerous. It would be almost impossible to ascend without a rope for assistance. The shaft opens up into a natural cave in the foundation rock, called a grotto. Then

the shaft continues up a short distance to meet the Ascending Passage.

It's clear that this man-made shaft is part of the Pyramid's symbolism. The architect arranged for the walls to be finished with limestone blocks. It's not just a roughly hewn tunnel added as an afterthought.

The top of the Well shaft connects to the side of the Ascending Passage. Wooden planks have been installed there to prevent anyone from falling into the opening. As we look for the meaning of the Well, we must ask: How can mankind escape from the downward course of sin and death leading to the Pit?

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. [Joh 14:6] There is only one way to life, and that's through the death and resurrection of Jesus. He opened up the well shaft So that man could live.

The top of the Well shaft and top of the Ascending Passage join at the base of one of the most surprising and beautiful passages in the Pyramid. It's called the Grand Gallery. The passage is still narrow, but the ceiling is 28 feet high, seven times higher than all other passages. Why was it made So high? If it were merely to allow for adequate head room, the vertical dimension would only need to be twice as high. It must have a symbolic meaning.

Those who want to go up higher toward God must walk this Grand Gallery. It's steep and slippery, but hand-holds on the side help the traveller. In looking for the significance of the Grand Gallery, we must first ask: How can anyone expect to arrive *up higher*?

Because strait is the gate and narrow the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. [Mt 7:14] Those who willingly sacrifice their own wills to walk this narrow way arrive at the very highest chamber of the pyramid.

In the Bible the number seven pictures divine perfection. So a passage seven times higher pictures the perfection of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment available to those who walk this path.

The top of the journey ends at the largest room of the Pyramid. It's called the King's Chamber. We're at the top of the Grand Gallery and can see the entrance to the highest chamber in the Pyramid.

One can go into the rooms beyond only by first stooping under two barriers. The opening is not quite four feet high.

There is a little anteroom just before the King's Chamber itself. We enter this anteroom by stooping under a block of granite. At this point we're standing on something new: granite. The arrow points to a *seam* in the floor where the granite blocks begin. The first block is raised a quarter-inch to attract our attention to the change. The floor, walls, and ceiling are all granite. It symbolizes a change of nature from the *limestone* or human condition, to the divine, heavenly nature.

After stooping under another granite block, we enter the King's Chamber itself. The only object in the entire Pyramid is this empty granite box at the back wall. It's called a coffer. There is a block of granite at the right. It was dug from the floor by Al Mamoun in his fruitless search for treasure. The coffer is empty and has no lid. It is not a coffin and the chamber is not a tomb. Remember, we're dealing with symbolism.

These wall decorations in another pyramid are typical of the tombs of ancient kings. But there are no wall paintings in the King's Chamber. Al Mamoun found absolutely nothing in this Pyramid, and we have no evidence anyone took the treasure before him.

The King's Chamber does have something not found in any other pyramid in the world: it has air passages or vents. Two openings extend from this room to the outside of the Pyramid. This was a room for the living, not the dead. As the highest room in the Pyramid, it pictures a living, heavenly state for those who sacrifice their life as Christ sacrificed his.

But what happens to those who do NOT walk the Grand Gallery, those who know nothing of Christ and a life of sacrifice? There's a place for them: It's called the Queen's Chamber.

This is the entrance to a straight, horizontal passage constructed under the steep Grand Gallery. It's at the junction of the top of the Ascending Passage and the Well. The arrows indicate the passageway straight ahead. Because it is level, it is much easier to walk than the Grand Gallery.

This is a backward view of the horizontal passage. We're looking back along its length to the junction with the top of the Ascending Passage. This passage has a curious step. The passageway starts with the standard size: four feet high and 3-1/2 feet wide. But after

traveling six-sevenths the distance, you come to this step, where a person of average height can stand upright.

This is another picture of mankind's walk. Today people are constricted by the prince of this world, Satan. It's been that way for 6,000 years. But during Christ's 1,000-year Kingdom, those constrictions will be removed.

This is the entrance to the Queen's Chamber. There's no need to stoop here as when entering the King's Chamber. It's very easy to enter. There's only limestone in the Queen's Chamber, no granite. The exclusive use of limestone in the Queen's Chamber shows that mankind obtains life, but not life in heaven as symbolized by the granite in the King's Chamber.

We have air vents in this room too, but with a curious difference. The two vents in this room were originally covered by five inches of stone. A scientist in 1872 thought the wall sounded hollow so he broke the stone and found the vents. So we see the Queen's Chamber is also a place for the living. It pictures life on earth. There is no reason to cover the vents with stone unless you're making a symbolic picture. We believe it shows people could not *live* in this room until the covering stone is first taken away, when Christ establishes his kingdom on earth for which he taught us to pray.

Summary Thoughts

Why do we believe the Pyramid communicates God's plan and was not a tomb for an Egyptian king?

1. There are no wall paintings like all other Egyptian tombs;
2. The Egyptians always buried their kings below ground;
3. Queens were always buried apart from kings;
4. Air vents to tombs were never provided; vent pipes are unique in the Great Pyramid;
5. The Grand Gallery is seven times higher than it needs to be;
6. There's an unnecessary step in the passage to the Queen's Chamber;
7. The Pit is unfinished. Everything else is carefully finished;

8. The Ascending Passage is plugged with three built-in granite blocks, a material found only in the King's Chamber.

We should not be surprised that the message of the Great Pyramid is being conveyed to us in symbols. Consider how Jesus spoke to the people in his day: *All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.* [Mt 13:34] The Great Pyramid is another parable, a parable in stone, and is in complete harmony with the Bible. It was built as the first communication of God's plan to man.

Here's one of the oldest man-made structures on earth. We can't be absolutely sure who built it, when it was built, or why. But we do believe it's design and construction were inspired by God, it's true architect.

So what have we learned? From our study of the Bible, and our parable in stone, we've come to appreciate:

FIRST: Man's creation as a perfect being and his fall into sin and death. Romans 5:12 [New English]: *It was through one man that sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race, inasmuch as all men have sinned.*

SECOND: Man's rescue from death through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus. John 3:16 [New English]: *God loved the world So much that he gave his only Son, that every one who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.*

THIRD: An opportunity for life in heaven for those who obey God in this present life. 1 Peter 1:3,4: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . has begotten us to a lively hope . . . to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*

FOURTH: A coming Kingdom to bring mankind back to everlasting life right here on earth. Daniel 2:44: *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall . . . consume all [other] kingdoms and it shall stand forever.*

Jer 31:33,34 says:

I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother

saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. [Re 21:4]

That's the Bible's description of the Kingdom and we thank God for it!

If you'd like more information on this subject, may we suggest two books. The first is called *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. It traces God's plan for man from his creation through the blessing of Christ's coming Kingdom. It contains a unique fold-out chart showing how to better understand the Scriptures. The second book is called *Thy Kingdom Come*. The last section of the book contains diagrams and charts to show how the Great Pyramid agrees with the teaching of the Bible.

And now, may God bless you as you seek to know Him and His great plan of salvation.

Our Quest for Unity-Brother Kenneth Rawson, USA

SISTER VIRGINIA and I have been looking forward for many months to sharing the blessings of this convention with you. I bring the warm Christian love and greetings from your brethren in the class of New Brunswick, New Jersey. One of the blessings of the International Convention is to learn about our brethren in other countries. Therefore, I would like to say that I am associated with a large grouping of classes in the United States, sometimes called the Independent Brethren.

We believe that the teachings of all six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures* with Brother Russell's 1916 Forewords are important for the Church today. After 40 years, I find Present Truth more precious than ever.

Admittedly there are different groupings of brethren in the United States. Although we agree the Lord is present and the door to the high calling is open, there are differences among us. However, there seems to be a growing desire both in the United States and elsewhere for unity. The International Convention is an example of this quest for unity. Some emphasize a unity based on love; others, a unity based on doctrine.

I believe as Paul admonished in Ephesians 4, we must pursue a dual quest for unity—a quest for both the unity of THE spirit and the unity of THE faith.

Eph 4:2,3,11-13 says:

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep *THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT* in the bond of peace." Skipping down to verse 11: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all come in *THE UNITY OF THE FAITH*."

Unity of the Spirit

First, our quest for "the unity of THE spirit." What is the unity of THE spirit? The Holy Spirit is the invisible power or influence of God. The Bible is the source of the spirit of influence of God. Therefore, "the unity of THE spirit" is that harmony between Christians that comes from believing and living the principles and teachings revealed in the Bible.

The Holy Spirit is the spirit or influence of love, of patience, of humility. It is also the spirit of Truth. To the degree each Christian is influenced by these scriptural principles and teachings, to that degree there will be THE unity of THE spirit. To the degree each Christian is influenced by unscriptural principles and teachings, there will either be (1) disunity, or (2) unity based on the spirit of error.

Never overlook this subtlety. Satan often uses error or wrong principles as a rallying cry, a unifying force among the Lord's people. In addition to Jehovah's Witnesses, we have seen whole groups of Bible Students in close harmony, yet steeped in error.

Theoretically the unity which the Holy Spirit effects would be complete harmony in devotion, in service, in doctrine. But complete harmony among the Lord's people is impossible, since we all dwell in sinful flesh.

We should rejoice in a bare minimum of unity effected by the Holy Spirit. This minimum is: (1) accepting Jesus as our Saviour, and (2) making a full consecration to God. Bible Students have traditionally accepted this minimum of unity.

We might share an in-depth scriptural concept with a brother and yet disagree in another area of scriptural responsibility. There are many brethren I agree with doctrinally, yet I believe they are too narrow in fellowship. There are brethren with whom I share an enthusiasm for public witnessing, yet we disagree in other scriptural areas. I share high consecration ideals with some, yet we differ on doctrine.

We should cherish the areas of unity the Holy Spirit has effected, and use them as bridges to attain greater unity by dialogue in other areas.

The Apostle Paul's relationship with the brethren at Corinth provides a scriptural example of seeking THE unity of THE spirit with brethren with whom we disagree or with brethren who vigorously oppose us.

What were Paul's differences with the Corinthian brethren? From 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 we learn there were divisions and heresies. Paul was faced with doctrinal error at Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 5:13-14 some accused Paul of being a mental case; in 11:5-7 some claimed he was not really an apostle; in 12:16-18 others claimed he took advantage of them by guile.

But what was Paul's attitude towards his brethren at Corinth? 2 Corinthians 7:2,3 says, "Receive us; we have wronged no man." Here Paul is addressing those that opposed him. But what is Paul's attitude? Verse 3 states, "you are in our hearts to die together and live together."

The very brethren that Paul was in doctrinal disagreement with and who made all sorts of accusations against Paul were in his heart—they had his deepest affection. They were in his heart—note the Greek prefix "together" —to "die together" and "live together." The two phrases—to die and to live—denote everything we do as a Christian. "To die" denotes all our experiences in sacrificing the flesh. "To live" denotes all our growing experiences as new creatures.

Paul So loved his brethren at Corinth that they were in "his heart to die together and to live together." He So loved his brethren that were in error and those who were making accusations against him that he wanted to experience heart fellowship in all of their Christian experiences.

What is our attitude towards brethren in doctrinal error, or brethren who make accusations against us, or brethren with whom we have personality conflicts, or brethren who challenge our eldership? Do we So love them that we want to share a heart fellowship with them in everything they do as Christians? Do we in our hearts die together and live together with them? This is what is involved in the scriptural quest for THE unity of THE spirit.

Doctrinal controversies make it especially difficult to maintain the unity of the spirit. But there were doctrinal problems in the early Church. (1) There was the Law controversy which we are familiar with. (2) There were prophetic differences. I want to scripturally trace these, because the early Church had prophetic differences in the same general areas we have today.

The early Church's prophetic differences were based on a misunderstanding of what Jesus said in John 21:20-23. When Peter asked what would happen to John, Jesus said in verse 22, "If I will that he [John] tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." Notice the great misunderstanding that resulted. Verse 23: "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that John should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

Because some misunderstood Jesus' words, a wrong view of Christ's return spread throughout the brotherhood. Some concluded Christ would return soon, even within John's lifetime. What were the prophetic repercussions of this? 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 reads:

"Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind . . . that the day of the Lord *HAS COME*. Let no man deceive you in any way."

Some in the early Church wrongly concluded that the Lord had returned and the sleeping saints were raised. Did Paul say, well these matters are prophetic, not doctrinal, therefore not important? No! Paul warned "let no man deceive you."

Similarly in 2 Timothy 2:17-18 Paul speaks of Hymenaeus and Philetus, "who concerning the Truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." Some again wrongly concluded that the resurrection was past, that is, the resurrection of the sleeping saints was past.

1Co 4:8, "Ye have reigned as kings without us, and I would to God ye did reign, that we might also reign with you." Some had not only wrongly concluded that Christ had returned and was reigning, but that *THEY* this side of the veil were reigning with him.

Yes, the early Church had prophetic differences in the same areas we have today: the time element of the presence, the reign of Christ, and the resurrection of the sleeping saints. The Apostle Paul showed that the Truth in these prophetic areas was important.

But what was Paul's attitude towards those who had these prophetic errors? "You are in our hearts to die together and live together." Also in 2 Timothy 2:24-25 Paul observed that an elder must be gentle, patient, apt to teach, So that in meekness he might instruct those that oppose. The Greek word for "patient" here is only used once in Scripture and means "patient with wrong." Here the wrong was doctrinal error. How patient and gentle are we with brethren with doctrinal error?

Is class division consistent with keeping the unity of THE Spirit? Remember now we are primarily discussing "the unity of THE Spirit" within the framework of those who believe in the presence and believe that the door is open.

Brother Russell had an idealistic and realistic view on division. Idealistically he felt brethren should stay together as long as possible. His realistic view is found in a 1913 *Watchtower* article entitled "Doctrines More or Less Important" (Reprint page 5284). Brother Russell was dealing with the doctrinal controversy at that time. He observed: (1) some make too much of the Church's share in the sin offering, and others do not make enough of it; (2) if a class is continually arguing and feels it can progress better by dividing into two classes, it would be wise to do so; (3) division should not alienate either class from the Lord's people or Brother Russell. Why? Because both still accepted the ransom.

The parallel today: If a class is continually arguing about differences, say on the teachings of Volumes Two, Three, and Four, or, in order to eliminate controversy, avoids the study of whole areas of Truth, it might be better to divide as Brother Russell suggested. Why? So that they can grow better as New Creatures. But class division should not alienate them from each other or other brethren. Class division should not result in isolation. We are to maintain a unity of the spirit where divisions have occurred. I suggest that such classes periodically have

fellowship conventions or "unity of THE Spirit" conventions to maintain their unity in scriptural areas they do share.

A unity of THE spirit convention is much like the International Convention. The International Convention does not maintain a doctrinal standard for speakers. For example, many of the speakers from the United States are not mutually accepted by each other as speakers. The main function of the International Convention is to bring together as many brethren as possible from different parts of the world (doctrine not being the main consideration) in order to fellowship, exchange viewpoints, learn of each others' needs and share each others' needs.

I might define a Unity of THE Spirit convention as follows. It is understood that there is not a mutual agreement on doctrinal standards for speakers; therefore the platform only professes a general respect for Present Truth. The convention is mainly for the purpose of maintaining the various degrees of unity into which the holy Spirit has already brought us.

There are a mere handful of Bible Students throughout the world, yet we have our differences. And I don't minimize these differences. But dear brethren, what can we do—what can we do to maintain the unity of the spirit we have attained? Prayer is one thing we can do.

In 1 Corinthians 1:4 Paul thanked God always for his brethren at Corinth, many of whom opposed Paul. For over 40 years I have been amazed at how some in all groups can write off whole groups of brethren not in their association—write them off from their fellowship, from their prayers, from their love concerns. When you pray, whom do you pray for? I hope not just brethren in your group. I hope not just brethren you agree with. I hope not just brethren in your country. If all would daily pray for brethren in differing groups and for brethren from as many countries as possible, what a wholesome effect this would have on our attitude to endeavor to preserve the unity of THE spirit.

Unity of the Faith

Now the unity of THE faith. Because knowledge is So vital to faith, the Scriptures use the phrase "the faith" to refer to the system of Truth we believe. Ephesians 4:11-14,

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of

the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in *THE UNITY OF THE FAITH* . . . that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

Notice the knowledge of "the faith" is not revealed to us individually by the Holy Spirit. Rather Paul shows that special revelation by Christ-appointed teachers is necessary to bring us into the "unity of THE faith."

Also notice the doctrines of "the faith" are necessary. (1) Verse 14: to give us doctrinal stability "not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine." (2) Verse 13: for the perfecting of character.

What is "the unity of THE faith"? It is the mutual acceptance of the doctrines that are essential for each stage of the Church. There cannot be complete unity of THE faith this side of the veil. But there is a standard of truth that is essential for each stage of the Church that, generally speaking, the Lord expects agreement on.

Remember Ephesians 4:11-13 showed that the truths that compose "THE faith" can only be understood by revelation through Christ-appointed teachers. These are primarily the apostles and the seven messengers.

In Revelation 1:13,16,20, Jesus Christ is in the midst of the seven candlesticks, which are the seven churches. He has in his hand—his right hand—seven stars, which are the seven messengers to the seven churches. Now, if there are seven messengers to seven churches, it is difficult to think of all seven messengers existing together all during the Gospel age. Rather, there are seven messengers to seven successive stages of the Church. And each stage of the Church is given the truths for which it is accountable.

A basic quality in attaining "the unity of THE faith" is meekness—teachableness: a realization that the Bible can only be understood through revelation by Christ-appointed messengers and not by our own personal study.

At this point I want to say that we cannot tell our brother what he must believe. Why? Because we are not God. We must grant our brother the liberty to believe what he wants. But this does not mean anyone has the liberty to believe what they want. God expects us to believe the Truth He has revealed through the seven messengers.

It is important to know what stage of the Church we are in. It is important to know who our messenger is. It is important to know the message the Lord gave him to reveal to us.

I have proven to my satisfaction that Brother Russell is the seventh messenger to the seventh stage of the Church. Matthew 24:45-47 is a parallel passage in which the historic sequence of events identify Brother Russell as "that wise and faithful servant."

Mt 24:45-47 reads, "Who then is THE (Greek) faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household [or in the Greek, house of servants] to give them [that is, the servants] meat in due season?" Notice in verse 45, THE faithful and wise servant is placed over the other servants, that is, the whole Church, for the Lord's purpose of giving them spiritual food, meat in due season.

Now verse 46 of Matthew 24: "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find So doing." This is the key verse in identifying Brother Russell as THAT SERVANT. When the Lord returned in 1874, Brother Russell was already dispensing meat in due season. From 1872 onward, before the Lord returned, Brother Russell was already teaching the ransom for ALL, the restitution of ALL THINGS, that Christ would not return visible in the flesh but as an invisible spirit being, and other newfound precious truths.

Now verse 47 of Matthew 24: "Verily I say unto you, that he [the Lord] shall make him [Brother Russell] ruler over ALL his goods [that is, all the truth]."

Notice from these verses because Brother Russell was already teaching newfound truths when our Lord returned, he placed Brother Russell over two things: (1) over all the household of servants, the Church, and (2) over all the Truth So that Brother Russell could give the Church all the Truth necessary.

Ezekiel 9 and 10 also points up the ministry of Brother Russell. It speaks of "the man with the writer's inkhorn." Thus the emphasis is not upon the man, but upon his writings or teachings. His writings are basically the six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*.

Ezekiel 9 reveals his writings would first mark or seal in the forehead all those who sigh and cry for the abominations of Christendom. This sealing message would certainly include all of Volumes One, Five, and Six, and certainly parts of Volumes Two, Three, and Four.

To understand Ezekiel 10 we must apply the "Jeremiah principle." Ezekiel and Jeremiah prophesied during the same period. Remember Jeremiah was instructed in Jeremiah 1:10 to destroy nations. Jeremiah 25 shows that all the nations of the world would be destroyed by a whirlwind of trouble. Jeremiah never destroyed any of these nations. He merely preached that the Lord would destroy them because of their wickedness. What is the "Jeremiah principle"? Because Jeremiah predicted the Lord's destruction, the Lord in his reckoning accounted the destruction unto Jeremiah. But the nations of Jeremiah 25 were not destroyed by the whirlwind of trouble in Jeremiah's day. This destruction takes place in the time of trouble at the end of the Gospel age.

Therefore, on the basis of the "Jeremiah principle," Ezekiel 10 attributes the destruction of Christendom to the man with the writer's inkhorn. He is given coals of fire (symbolic of destructive judgment), and he scatters them over the city. Brother Russell's writings in Volumes Two, Three, and especially Four predicted and give the scriptural reasons for the destruction of Christendom.

Thus Ezekiel 9 and 10 show the writings of ALL six volumes of Brother Russell would be used to accomplish the Lord's work at the end of the age. There will also be a future fulfillment of Ezekiel 10.

Another reference to Brother Russell's writings: Revelation 17 describes how the harlot (Babylon) would be destroyed. In verse 1 it is one of the seven messengers who reveals this destruction to the John class, the feet members of the Church. Volumes Two and Four deal with the judgment and destruction of Babylon. The Lord has used the teachings of Volumes Two and Four to reveal this to the Church in fulfillment of Revelation 17:1.

These are a few of the Scriptures that refer to the teachings of an individual who would accomplish various works at the end of the age. These teachings are found in ALL six volumes.

I have proven scripturally to my satisfaction that the six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures* with their updated 1916 forewards contain the scriptural truths that make up "the faith" for our time. The 1916 forewords are important. Brother Russell was not infallible. He made mistakes. In the Lord's providence, the 1916 forewords contain the necessary corrections that have kept the volumes relevant to our day.

A warning on this point. Anyone who accepts the teachings of the six volumes simply because Brother Russell said So is just as much of a bigot as a Catholic who believes something because the Catholic Church said so. We must thoroughly prove the Volumes by the Scriptures.

On the other hand, anyone who is inclined to put his own views on the level of the seventh messenger would do well to ponder the lesson of Ephesians 4:11-13 and Revelation 1 and 2. The Lord has chosen to reveal *THE FAITH* by Christ-appointed teachers.

I think most of us would agree that the Truth necessary for the Church today is contained in the six volumes. Unfortunately there are differences between us as to how much of the six volumes is necessary today. But none of us can play God and determine what of Brother Russell's writings other brethren should have.

Part of our joint quest for "the unity of THE faith" should be to provide the complete message of that Wise and Faithful Servant, So that brethren of all languages might be able to discern for themselves what is "THE faith" for today.

Suggestions for Future Work

Now a few words, especially to the United States brethren. There is something far more basic than the translation of monthly magazines and booklets for our overseas brethren, as helpful as that might be. There is the complete message of the Wise and Faithful Servant, for which there is no substitute.

All brethren need a good translation of (1) all six volumes, and (2) at least a segment of Brother Russell's reprint articles. The *Watchtower* reprints, from 1914 to 1916, would provide supportive helps in understanding the Lord's message for the Church today. Providing the Harvest Message for our overseas brethren has historically been the responsibility and privilege of the United States brethren. Perhaps this is one reason the U.S. brethren have been blessed with more wealth than our overseas brethren.

Understandably, the shortness of the time concept has affected our view of this responsibility.

Thirty years ago none of us thought that the Church would still be here in 1988. Unfortunately, for over 30 years the "shortness of time" concept has often caused the United States brethren to provide only patchwork Truth assistance to their European

brethren. These are our brethren in Christ. How many of us in America would ever go one year without a complete unabridged set of volumes or the reprints? We must make every effort possible to provide for our overseas brethren that which is So precious to us.

I do not believe it is too visionary to publish a complete set of volumes in a good translation where they don't exist or where they only partially exist. For example, our Polish brethren have volumes in an old language. Other brethren only have a partial set of volumes. Secondly, I do not believe it is too visionary to publish translations of Brother Russell's *Watchtower* Reprints from the years 1914 to 1916 as a starter. Yes, this is a tremendous undertaking, but because it is So basic, I believe brethren of various groupings in the United States would support this effort.

I'm using the phrase the "unity of THE faith" to refer to the system of Truth that, generally speaking, the Lord expects the Church to believe in our day. Whether we choose to use the phrase "unity of THE faith" this way or not, there is a system of Truth given to the Church today. This system of Truth is the vision of Habakkuk 2:2,3 which is the Divine Plan of the Ages. The prophetic features seem to tarry, but they are true. It says, "They will not lie." Brother Russell's prophetic predictions are taking longer to be fulfilled than expected, but they are correct. This system of Truth would seem to include time prophecies like the 1260, 1290, and 1335 days, because Daniel 12:7-12, referring to these time prophecies, states that "the wise shall understand." This system of truth would seem to also include Revelation 11:15-18, the message of the seventh angel which John hears. Remember, the John class are the feet members of the Church. The message of Revelation 11:15-18 details Christ's work as King during the whole period of his *parousia*. These are some of many Scriptures that show features of Truth the harvest Church would see together.

Our quest for "the unity of THE faith" would involve the following five points:

1. Providing for all the brethren the volumes that contain THE faith for today.
2. Having class or ecclesia studies of the volumes and not just Volumes One, Five, and Six, but also Volumes Two, Three, and Four. We need these studies to help each other scripturally understand the message of that Wise and Faithful Servant. In the

Reprints, Brother Russell strongly urged class volume studies because they are actually the best form of topical Bible study.

3. We should be willing to dialogue with brethren who disagree on items of "THE faith." And the spirit in which we discuss controversial truths is all-important. In the context of coming to "the unity of the faith," Paul admonishes in Ephesians 4:15, "Speaking the Truth in love." Our dialogue on "THE faith" must be in love.

4. Our quest for "the unity of THE faith" would include electing as elders brothers who believe and teach the doctrines of Present Truth contained in all six volumes.

5. Ephesians 4:13 says, "Till we all come in the unity of THE faith . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The full attainment of THE faith is not just a knowledge of the Truth. THE faith must work in us and transform us into the likeness of Christ. Otherwise it is sterile intellectualism.

There is nothing more repelling in the Church than a brother that uses the Truth as a club, insisting that everyone dot the *i* and cross the *t* exactly the way he does. There is nothing more pathetic than a loving brother uncertain of many features of Present Truth. There is nothing more helpful than the brother fully convicted on the Harvest Message, who speaks the Truth in love as he seeks to show love for all of his brethren.

The Essence of Our Message

We must realize that brethren are in different stages of development. We must understand that the time element of responsibility to various scriptural teachings varies with individuals and with groups. This is especially true of brethren from different parts of the world. Therefore, we must strive to keep the unity of THE spirit with ALL of our brethren: with those we agree with doctrinally and with those we disagree with doctrinally; with those we have personality conflicts with and with those who say all manner of evil against us. Often we tend to plateau or stop at this point and feel unity of THE spirit is the height of attainment.

Additionally, we MUST strive to attain "the unity of THE faith" by directing our brethren to the message of that Wise and Faithful Servant and by speaking the Truth in love.

And while we are pursuing our dual quest for the unity of THE spirit and the unity of THE faith, there is another perspective. We are in the time of the harvest during which the Truth will do a sifting. But we are not to do the sifting because we cannot read our brother's heart. The Present Lord is responsible for the sifting, not us. All we can do is preach the Truth in love. Whatever our brother's reaction, it is between him and the Lord. We cannot judge our brother, nor can we punish or reward him. All we can do is to be *BUILDERS* and *HEALERS* in Zion.

But by the time the Church passes beyond the veil, the spirit-begotten class will have been sifted into three groups. Hopefully only a few will be in second death. The majority will be in the Great Company. A few will be in the Little Flock. The difference will be how you—and I—react to THE faith. Not only must we believe and obey all features of THE faith, but it must work in us the likeness of Christ.

I will close with a scene in a refugee camp. This particular camp was So bad that even members of the same family were selfishly withholding from each other in their efforts to survive. A social worker noticed one family in the camp that was So different than the others. Instead of everyone being for themselves, this family shared everything, one for all and all for one. One day the social worker went up to the five-year-old girl in the family and said, "Wouldn't it be wonderful to find a home for you and your family?" The little girl looked up at the social worker with a big smile and said, "Oh, we already have a home, all we need is a house to put it in."

Dear brethren, are we already at home with our brethren this side of the veil? If not, then we are not yet ready to move into our eternal house beyond the veil.

My prayer is that God will help all of us to be ready for our eternal home.

If Sons, Then Heirs-Brother Lutz Ruthmann, Germany

THE HOLY Scriptures portray the Israelites as a proud and self-confident people. The basis for this self-confidence came from the fact that they were a unique people, a nation selected from all people on the earth by almighty God, a chosen people.

Were they not the descendants of Abraham, a man whom the Almighty indicated as his friend? Were they not the heirs of

Abraham and, therefore, heirs of the promise "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"? Wasn't this promise confirmed with an oath to Isaac? What more, then, was necessary to make clear the fact that they were unique, the only people that God had chosen from all nations on earth, the descendants of Abraham and Isaac?

Israel believed God, So far as the promise is concerned, and faithful Jews are still waiting today for the appearance of the Messiah, who will pour out the promised blessings to Israel and, through Israel, to the whole world.

Do we want to scold Israel for believing with a whole heart that God will keep his promise in any case? Certainly we do not want to do this, for the Apostle Paul explains that the grace of God is without repentance. With regard to their unshakable faith and their holding fast to the unmoving and faithful character of God because of one single promise, they certainly are only to be praised.

For, dear brethren, we find in the Scriptures that the people of Israel were warned not to glory in their having Abraham as a forefather and thus being the sole heirs of the promise. This admonition was spoken by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:9:

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

These were prophetic words, a warning which had already been proclaimed by the prophet Hosea: "And I will say to them which were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, thou art my God." —Ho 2:23 (Romans 9:24-26)

The Law Covenant

John spoke this warning in reference to the Messiah whom he proclaimed. The background for this admonition was the Law Covenant to which the Abrahamic Covenant was appended. John wanted to remind the people of Israel that they as a nation had made a contract with God, but their obligations had not been fulfilled. Israel had not reckoned that the Law Covenant required perfection in all its statutes and that the blessings were attached to this Covenant. Moses put forth the blessing and the curse to Israel. The blessing, however, was bound together with an "if" clause:

"If you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people . . . and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." —Ex 19:5,6

Israel could not keep the Law because it was perfect and required a perfect man to keep it. Then why have the Law? Why did God attach the promise to the Law? He did this in order to show that the promised blessing could never ever come from the Law. Paul explains that the Law was given to show that no man was in a position to meet the conditions of the Law, and that the Law worked as a curse.

Also, the symbolic offering given by Israel on the Day of Atonement could not bring a real atonement—the curse remained. The Law should, however, fulfill a specific purpose, namely, to remind the people of Israel that no one among them was worthy to be the true seed of the promise, that our Lord was the only worthy one. The Law was in this way a schoolmaster of Christianity.

Paul describes the entire tragedy of the people of Israel who, with zeal, attempted to please God through the Law and the works of the Law. In his letter to the Romans he writes:

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." —Ro 9:30-33

Israel did not recognize the favor of the hour in which our Lord offered himself as King to his people, and they stumbled and fell over this stumblingstone.

Just as our Lord prophesied to his people, their house was left unto them desolate. According to actual time, Israel remained in God's favor for three and one-half years after their symbolic rejection. This was the time period necessary for the gathering of all the ripe wheat of the Jewish harvest. The words of the prophet Daniel saw the fulfillment of this time: "And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." (Daniel 9:27) God had broken off the natural branches of the olive tree, had cast away

his chosen people as a holy nation, and had turned to a nation "which was not called by his name."

The Abrahamic Covenant

But what does it mean by the Abrahamic promise, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"? The people of Israel, seed of Abraham, were rejected of God. Could God have changed his intentions? Isn't it so that the Scriptures state, "God's grace is without repentance?" No, God did not change his plans. Paul writes in Galatians 3:16:

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."

The first chapter of Matthew presents the genealogy of Jesus. We read in the first verse: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It shows us that the fleshly origin of our Lord can be traced without interruption from Joseph, his adoptive father, back to Abraham. Paul speaks further in Romans 9:6:8:

"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

What does the apostle want to say to us? Abraham had several sons from several wives, but the blessing would be confirmed through his son Isaac. Why? Why did the blessing bypass Ishmael, the firstborn son of Abraham? The Bible tells us that it was right in God's eyes for Sarah to drive out Hagar and Ishmael so that Isaac would not have to share his inheritance with Ishmael.

Isaac was confirmed by God in this way as the seed and, thereby, heir of the promise. Isaac had two sons, and again the blessing bypassed the firstborn Esau. Jacob became the seed of the promise. This, too, has a symbolic meaning. From Jacob the promise went out to the twelve tribes of Israel, which were heirs of the promise. Why this unique choice by God?

Paul tells us that the three wives of Abraham typify three different covenants whereby the promised seed and inheritance of the promise should come from Sarah, as we read in Genesis 17:19:

"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him."

Like the types presented by the three wives of Abraham, Isaac is also a type. And what does Isaac typify? As we know, Isaac is a picture of our Lord. This fact is made clear through the intended offering of Isaac by Abraham. We see that Isaac was the seed of Abraham, who was to inherit the promise, who was to bring the blessing to others.

But Isaac died without having blessed the world. Why? Because Isaac was only a picture of our Lord, the true or antitypical heir of the promise. As it is written: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." —Joh 1:11,12

The Birthright

He came unto his people Israel, but Israel as a nation did not accept him. To those who did receive him and followed him in faith, he gave the right to become children of God through the sacrifice of earthly desire. These went from Moses to Christianity, from a house of bondage to a house of sonship. Israel was under the Mosaic Law Covenant in servitude, typified by Hagar and her son Ishmael. Paul discusses the standpoint of this Law in Galatians 4:4,5 under which he himself had stood, before the Lord made him one of his chosen tools.

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." In comparing the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), we are shown symbolically how God's favor changed. The rich man, Israel, the people of the promise, died as a nation when our Lord rejected them. On the other hand, Lazarus, as a godless nation, took his place and rested in the lap of Abraham. Lazarus, that is the Gentiles, entered into all rights and favoritism which Israel as a nation of kings and priests had formally enjoyed.

Paul gives us another symbol in the wild branch, picturing the Gentiles, that is grafted into the precious olive tree and thereby

receives life from the root of the tree. This olive tree pictures the Abrahamic promise.

God's firstborn son, his people Israel, proved unworthy of the birthright and ended up in the role of bondsman. Israel forfeited, therefore, all birthrights which occur to sons and heirs, as we have seen through the types of Ishmael and Isaac and, still more clearly, through Jacob and Esau. Ishmael pictured fleshly Israel who, even though a seed of Abraham, did not obtain the inheritance. Isaac, however, pictured the spiritual seed and did receive heirship.

More plainly do we understand through the picture of Jacob and Esau. Esau hardly valued his birthright, and "sold" it to Jacob, who again represents the spiritual seed.

Yet another picture is given to us for consideration when we read of Jacob in Peniel. He struggles with the angel of God until morning's dawn and persistently demands to receive a blessing: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This speaks to us as we have our own struggles from being called by Christ. Like Jacob's struggle, it is a struggle until morning's dawn. Jacob overcame the angel, who bade Jacob change his name: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." We, too, dear brethren, will receive a "new name" as we are told in Revelation, when we win this struggle and are allowed to become part of the class of overcomers.

The name change of Jacob has yet another symbolic meaning for us. It shows us the bridge of promised blessing from fleshly Israel, pictured by the name Jacob, to spiritual Israel, pictured by the name Israel. In his typical struggle, Jacob became an overcomer and his name was changed to Israel. After that, Jacob became a picture of fleshly Israel, the servant class. Jacob and Israel are one person. This is a fact we should well remember, since it shows the unity of fleshly and spiritual Israel. Both are Abraham's seed and heirs of the promise, even if under different conditions and times. Paul shows us this fact with the following Words: "to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." —Ro 4:16

Israel, under the New Covenant, will be the promised "blessing giver" for the rest of mankind. When God has written His law in their heart and the covering of unbelief is removed from their eyes, then Israel, under the direction of the Christ, Head and Body, will

bless all nations on earth and So fulfill the promise made to Abraham.

Before Israel (that is Jacob or fleshly Israel) can be blessed, another more important work must be finished —the completion of the Church, which is the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Paul makes a very clear remark regarding Israel, which is that not all who come out of Israel are of Israel. Just because they are the seed of Abraham they may not be children and heirs:

"In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." —Ro 9:7,8

These are they who, through faith in Jesus and through their covenant of sacrifice as children and sons of the promise, will be counted. However, not only do the natural descendants of Abraham have the opportunity to come to the Father through Christ and become sons of the almighty God, but all nations will have this opportunity.

Paul confirms this in his letter to the Romans: "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people: there shall they be called the children of the living God."

Sons of the living God! Can we measure what this means? Can we grasp the depth of these words only at a close range? We and you, dear sisters and dear brothers, enter into a kinship with God through our consecration into the death of Christ. The almighty God considers us as His sons, as brethren and joint-heirs with Jesus. God has accepted or adopted us through our faith in Christ. The Greek word for sonship is *iothesia* (adoption). This word *iothesia* is comprised of the syllables *ios* (son) and *thesia* (acceptance).

What does adoption mean? It means accepting a person as one's own. In the case of sonship, it means that before the law, this person will be recognized as heir. This means for us that we are called from the Gentiles and are sons in and through Christ. Yes, we are sons, heirs, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. God deals with us as with sons; that is, He counts us in His sonship, although we are still in the flesh and have not yet fulfilled our covenant of sacrifice in death.

Paul says in his letter to the Romans:

"The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if So be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together."

The Inheritance

If we suffer with him, then we may be glorified with him: if we withstand all in faith to the death, then we will be true sons of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. The question arises, "What was Christ's inheritance foreseen by God? What did our Lord inherit?"

The holy Scriptures tell us that our Lord came unto his own. In Matthew 21 our Lord spoke of himself as the son and heir of Israel's vineyard in order to gather the harvest. We read in the 38th verse:

"But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance."

We see also that Israel was the lawful heir. Why? Israel, as seed of the promise in Isaac, was pictured as heir of the Abrahamic promise, whereby we should remember that Abraham is a type of our great God.

Was Israel the only heir of our Lord? As we know, our Lord was sent to the people of Israel only. What about the Gentiles? Didn't he come as a light unto the Gentiles? (Isaiah 49:6) Of course he did! We read in Psalm 2:7,8:

"I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son: this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

Were the Gentiles, then, viewed as a supplemental inheritance? No! Paul tells us clearly that Gentiles would be grafted into the precious olive tree, picturing Israel, or, as we have already considered, the Gentiles became adoptive sons in the inheritance of our Lord. Israel is God's inheritance.

Paul tells us in He 1:2 that God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world."

Doesn't this mean that our Lord will inherit something besides Israel? This is especially so when we keep in mind that our Lord died for those who at this time have no faith.

What will happen in the resurrection of all things to those who walk on the highway of holiness? The Scriptures tell us that in this time "ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you." —Zec 8:23

This means, in other words, that also in the Millennium, in the resurrection of all things, there will be no blessings outside of Israel. The Gentiles can be viewed pictorially in the olive tree. They are grafted and grown into Israel in order to be blessed through Israel.

We also remember that in the promise made to Abraham a symbolic picture of the stars of the heaven and the sands of the seashore is provided to show the type of a spiritual and a fleshly Israel.

Our Lord is the sole heir of this blessing. Paul says correctly that God has made him heir of all things. From another viewpoint, from the consideration of the ransom, we could say that our Lord has bought the entire race of mankind with his precious blood. In Psalm 2:8 we already read, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

With his precious blood, his sacrificial death, our Lord bought the earthly life-rights for Adam's race. He has not yet asked for the rights of resurrected mankind, because a more important work is still incomplete, that is the glorification of the Bride class.

Only after the Church is complete will the Lord ask God for his possession: the life-rights of mankind. This is so that he, with the glorified Church, can pass on these life-rights to the world. In this sense, we are joint-heirs with Christ, for when we overcome, we will share our Lord's inheritance and take part in the work of blessing all the families of the earth.

The prophet Isaiah mentions this when he says: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." (Isaiah 53:12) Without a doubt the glorified Church is meant here, for only these can be indicated as "great" or "strong." They will be kings and priests with our Lord.

After his resurrection, our Lord was able to say of himself: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." —Mt 28:18.

We also, dear brethren, shall be given this power in heaven and in earth as joint-heirs with Jesus when we finish our course faithfully. Everything that our Lord received from his Father will be given to us also, that we in brotherhood may share in all things.

Yes, with these strong ones will our Lord share the spoils. What is hidden, however, behind the word "spoils"? What does "spoils" mean? According to our understanding, spoils represent something that one takes from an enemy in battle. This expression is very aptly chosen, for we are reminded of our Lord's battle against the enemy of God and the truth, against the adversary, the father of lies. When we think of his struggle in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Luke 22:44) before his surrender, we can measure how difficult this battle was. This battle did not end until he cried out from the cross, "It is finished."

Our Lord wrung the spoil away from Satan who, through cunning and lies, had unlawfully taken it to himself. But what are these spoils? These spoils are mankind. It is dying man who through Adam's disobedience received the death penalty. It is mankind who presently remains caught in *sheol*.

This mankind, lost through Adam's disobedience, bound as prisoners of *sheol* and delivered up by the adversary, has been redeemed by our Lord's ransom sacrifice, freed and brought back to life. He has destroyed death (the wages of sin), snatching it away from Satan, who believed it to be secure and safe. The Apostle Paul declares enthusiastically: "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" —1Co 15:55

He will divide the spoils with the strong. With the glorified Church, the members of his body, our Lord will lead the grand work of the resurrection and restoration of mankind.

When we remain faithful to our covenant of sacrifice and die as more than overcomers, we will take part in this work. We will share the acquired spoils with our Lord, for when we suffer with

him, we shall also be glorified with him and share with him in the splendid restitution work.

Isn't this enlightened truth overwhelming for us, that we will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, sons of the Living God? And God already deals with us as sons. We have received the spirit of sonship in which we say "Abba, Father." (Romans 8:14 and Galatians 4:7)

In prayer we can converse with our Father. We are now allowed to linger in the heavenly regions. But how will it be after we reach our high goal and see Him as He is? God is true, and if we remain true to our covenant of sacrifice unto death, we will truly be children of God for all eternity: "And if children, then heirs."

May the Lord bless us in our first attempts along the Way and strengthen us in endurance. Amen.

The Word Was Made Flesh and Dwelt Among Us- Brother Pawel Suchanek, Poland

DEARLY BELOVED in our Lord and Redeemer, I would like to greet you all with the words of our Lord: "Peace be unto you."
Luke 24:36

It gives me much joy to be able to participate in this gathering which provides a foretaste of heaven. I have heard much in relation to the wonderful and unrepeatable thrill that brethren have experienced from previous years. With this in mind, I would like even more to express deep gratitude to the heavenly Father as well as to you who have made it possible for my stay here amongst you. I also would like to bring to you all the sincere, brotherly love from the Polish brethren, especially the class in Olkusz where we live, and the neighboring classes.

In this talk I would like for us to consider the most wonderful being (next to the Father), that of our Lord, and especially that part of his life which includes his pre-human existence and coming to earth. We call our study "The Word Was Made Flesh and Dwelt Among Us," words taken from John 1:4.

The Word Was Made Flesh

We know about the pre-human existence of our Lord only from that which is written in God's word. The Scriptures say that our Lord was rich and became poor—not that he was rich and

pretended to be poor, but that in reality he was made poor So that we would be rich. The Apostle Paul states that Jesus gave up the state in which he was before he became a man and took the form of a servant.

He was made flesh. The clarification of this is in the words "but a body hast thou prepared me" (a human body), and in this way he was made "a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death."
—He 10:5; 2:9

When we compare the Biblical definitions concerning our Lord's pre-human existence we find that our Lord was: —the Word (*Logos*) —"The beginning of the creation of God" —the "Alpha and Omega" of God's creation.

About him we recall that "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3) He was next after the Father in the spiritual realm. In the Polish Bible the word *logos* is translated *Word*, and in many places our Lord was thus called. Literally *logos* means *word*, the pronounced word, speech, pronunciation, learning, reason, or ability to understand.

Most likely in olden times, kings did not speak directly to their subjects. The king sat behind a curtain and his spokesman, or Word, in front of the curtain spoke to the people in a loud voice whatever the king said to him in a whisper. Such a spokesman was called the royal Logos. Whether true or not, it well illustrates the use of the word *logos* in relation to our Lord and Master before he became a man. This also describes his high position as the heavenly Father's representative.

In the history of the Old Testament there are many places where we find our Lord as the Father's representative in particularly important surroundings. Let's touch upon at least three examples.

—Our Lord was among the angels who came to Abraham informing him about the planned destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

—It's possible to see that he guided the Jewish nation from bondage to the promised land of Canaan.

—We also find him in the experience of the three youths in the flames of the fiery furnace.

Created in the "Beginning"

Let's consider, then, when the *Logos* was created and by whom. John 1:1 says: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Which "beginning" is spoken about here? Is it the beginning of the world's creation? Is it the beginning of the universe? Do the Scriptures tell us something about this beginning?

In Proverbs 8:22-25 we read:

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way . . . I was set up from everlasting . . . or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth."

These verses show that the beginning does not mean the earth's beginning, but an event which took place much earlier, the "beginning" of the heavenly Father's "way." These words also prove that the *Logos* was the first of God's creation before the establishment of heaven and earth. One can also attribute this to God's eternal wisdom which was most explicitly revealed in our Lord Jesus.

In John 3:16 it is written: "For God So loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."
—1Jo 4:9

These verses prove that the *Logos* was the only direct creation of the heavenly Father—the "only begotten Son." God did not directly create other beings. All other sons of God (angels as well as humans) were indirectly created of God by the *Logos*. Take, for example, the words used in the context of Adam's creation, the first man. In Genesis 1:26 we read: "Let *US* make man." The plural used here describes the heavenly Father and His only begotten Son—the *Logos*. The Lord told his beloved disciple, "I am Alpha and Omega." (Revelation 1:8) "I am the first and the last" means "the first" as a being created by God and "the last" because God alone did not create anyone else.

In another place, when our Lord was already on earth, the Jews denied his pre-human existence when they asked him, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham . . . whom makest thou thyself?"

(John 8:53-58) The Lord answered, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and saw it, and was glad." Even Abraham saw "the day of Christ" with the eye of faith, believing in the divine promise concerning the Messiah. Then they mocked him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Then the Lord declared, "Before Abraham was, I am."

These words clearly prove the previous existence of our Lord before Abraham lived or, in other words, before he came to earth. At the same time the phrase "I am" proves the uninterrupted existence of our Lord's life until the moment of this conversation. But we will consider this more later.

Now let's consider what kind of position our Lord held when he was the Logos.

The Nature of the Word

We can see that because he was in heaven, the Logos was a spirit. In other words he was an invisible being on the spirit plane. The Logos was with the Father and was surrounded with glory. In John 1:1 the Word is defined as God: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God (Hosea *Theos* means God the Father) and the Word was God (*Theos*)." Moreover, the prophet Isaiah similarly called our Lord "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God." Isaiah 9:6

The word *god* means potentate. By this definition the Logos was a god. However, the article placed before the phrase "with God" excludes the equality of both beings, that is God the Father and His Son. Therefore this verse does not give any basis for the trinity that is often found among other religious groups. Moreover, the Lord never proclaimed himself in any way, but only showed the superiority of his Father: "My Father is greater than I." (John 14:28) Furthermore, we can show that the Logos was the highest of the angels, the archangel. We find him under the name of Michael, which means "who is like God," or God's representative. John 1:3 says, "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

How elevating and important the thought these words suggest to us concerning the majesty of the only begotten Son, the Logos. From the point of view of his primary greatness and goodness we can better understand the meaning of the Apostle Paul's words when he says, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that

though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." —2Co 8:9

From this fact we can focus on how rich he was in glory, which he himself recalls in the prayer at the end of his mission saying, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5) Our Lord was such a great example of humility in that he wanted only to return to the state that he had previously, nothing more.

Let's return to the words of John 8:58. "Before Abraham was, I am." It's impossible to doubt the truth of these words. In the Scriptures we never find that the only begotten from "the beginning of God's creation" ceased at any time to exist until Calvary, when he gave up his spirit to God. Then he ceased to exist for three days, after which he was awakened by the Father, never more to die, death having no more dominion over him. (Romans 6:9)

His birth as a human, "a little lower than the angels," in order that he could become the sacrifice for the sins of the world, did not mean his death as a spiritual being, but a transforming of his life from a higher, spiritual nature to a lower nature. This is very far from the approach of so-called "incarnation" in which many people believe. They think that the Lord in coming to earth was still a spiritual being who only took on human form, a form that suffered greatly, although the Son himself did not. This type of approach leads to very many doctrinal mistakes, including a direct association with "the immortal spirit" that is entirely contradictory to the Scriptures.

The teaching of the Bible is that our Lord did not take on flesh like the angels did in ancient times for the covering of their spiritual bodies. As is stated in the verse, "he humbled himself." In reality he rid himself of the spiritual nature and took on a human nature. In the words of our main text, "The Logos was made flesh."

Transformed in a miraculous way by divine power, the embryo of life took on the nature of his mother, "was made flesh" by a woman giving birth. However, he was holy and pure. He came not from unclean conception, but from God, and merely developed in Mary. (John 8:42; Galatians 4:4)

Thus we ask, Did the Logos *HAVE* to come to earth? The answer is no. It was necessary that a perfect man agree to give up his life as a ransom. The perfect man, Adam, sinned, and God's justice

required satisfaction, no more and no less. It required a perfect life for that which was lost in Eden. Not one of earth's inhabitants could fulfill this condition, because no one was perfect. The psalmist says, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." —Psalm 49:7

In considering the great weight of this task, the great risk, and also the great reward for the successful fulfillment of the redemption of mankind, God proposed His own Son. Being the closest to and always with God, he accepted because one of the characteristics of God's Son was and is obedience and readiness to do the will of the heavenly Father.

The psalmist in Psalm 40:7,8 describes his heart condition by saying, "Then said I, lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

He Lived Amongst Us

The next part of our main text is, "And lived amongst us" (speaking about the Word), first as a child, later as a growing youth, and finally as an adult man.

The childhood of our Lord is described as a period of growth and development: "The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." Further on: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." This development was faster than the average man, since he had a perfect mind. He learned faster and more exactly than others. This explains the fact that as a child he could surprise the teachers of the Law. Thanks to his natural capabilities he could more easily and exactly judge a situation. However, after the conversation with the teachers of the Law in the temple, he understood that as a twelve year old boy, a son of the Law, he still could not undertake the mission for which the heavenly Father had sent him. Nevertheless, he knew that he must be about his Father's business. After this Jesus returned with Mary and Joseph and stayed with them until he was 30 years old.

At the age of 30 our Lord consecrated himself to God's service with the aim of fulfilling the mission of redeeming mankind. At his baptism in the Jordan he was anointed with the Holy Spirit. It's noted that "the heavens were opened up unto him," which can be defined as the "heights" and "depths" of God being revealed to him.

After being anointed with the Holy Spirit, he became acquainted with the things concerning his suffering and previous experiences with the Father. The Scriptures were illuminated for him. So he could understand his sacrifice in the fullest sense. He learned that he would die and that he would be an innocent victim. He had to be crucified as an antitype of the copper serpent held by Moses in the wilderness.

At his consecration at Jordan he became the Christ (meaning the Anointed). Isaiah 53:11 says, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Our Lord began to bear the iniquity of the world at the time of his consecration, and finished at his crucifixion.

The next part of our main text says, "And we beheld his glory." The perfect man, Christ Jesus, anointed by the Holy Spirit, was thus very different from imperfect man. Therefore, it was not strange that he remained separate from sinners. He was the image and likeness of the invisible God.

Who, then, saw "his glory"? In the Gospel of Matthew 17:1-9 we find a description of the time when the three apostles (Peter, James, and John) saw the Lord in glory on the mountain, talking with Elijah and Moses. Here Moses represents the faithful of the Jewish age, while Elijah represents the faithful of the Gospel age. The Apostle Peter also refers to this in 2 Peter 1:16-18 when he emphasizes the power and coming of the Lord as an "eye witness," and not as "cunningly devised fables."

In a later period we find still other forms in which we see the glory of the Lord. There was Stephen, the first man martyred for the Lord's sake. After that, Paul saw the glory of the Lord in the future, about which it was "not possible for a man to utter." —2Co 12:4

Being on the earth our Lord saw the effects of sin. His sensitive heart regretted the weaknesses of the degraded human nature. He sensed, more subtly than we do, human suffering, illness, pain and discomforts. The continual contact with people certainly had its effects on the beautiful appearance of the perfect man filled with the Holy Spirit. He who "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself" (Hebrews 13:3) behaved with great patience and humility. He was "The man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all." (1 Timothy 2:5,6) Our Lord innocently suffered

torture until in the end he expired on the cross, but in the conviction that "it is finished."

The Ransom

My beloved in the Lord, how great is the weight of the words, "a ransom for all." This is not for individuals, not for one nation, not even for a group of nations. It is a ransom for *ALL*. Because they are first, the Lord's followers have the privilege of profiting from the ransom in that they receive Christ's merit. Only when the Bride of Christ is complete will the merit of the ransom be freed and applied to the whole human race. First, the Ancient Worthies will be raised and will be leaders executing the counsel of the completed Christ. Later, all of mankind will be awakened from the grave, and for a period of 1000 years be guided to perfection and harmony with the heavenly Father.

The Wonderful Counselor of the New Covenant will be our Lord, he who alone was "tempted in all points yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) Our Lord "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" in very unfriendly circumstances and very far from the conditions in heaven. He returns reconciled mankind to God the Father in order that "God may be all in all." —1Co 15:28

Beloved in the Lord, what a wonderful plan of salvation the heavenly Father has prepared for mankind. What a wonderful role our Lord plays in this plan. We believe that he, who in the beginning was the Word or Logos, then Jesus, and later Christ, will soon take the office as mediator in the atonement work.

What a wonderful example our heavenly Father gave us in the person of our Master. And we have the assurance that "If we suffer with him we will also reign with him." (2 Timothy 2:12) Therefore we follow in the "footsteps of our Lord." If we do this faithfully, we will find ourselves in "the house of the heavenly Father." This is my desire for you and me. Lord, may you thus provide!

Amen.

Symposium: The Unity of Faith-Brothers Joseph Wozniak (France), Roman Rorata (Poland), Carl Hagensick (USA)

Fundamental Aspect of Unity (Brother Wozniak)

Beloved brethren in the Lord, dear young people and friends of Present Truth, may the peace of God be with you!

I am going to speak to you about the fundamentals of the Christian faith. The Apostle Paul, in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 6, writes this: "For without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Our faith must rest on a sure foundation in order to permit us to comprehend the ten fundamental truths, which are:

—the Creation—Justification—the Promise made to Abraham—the Birth of Jesus—the Ransom—the Resurrection—the Revealed Mystery—the Second Coming of Christ—the Glorification of the Church—the Restitution of All Things.

The Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, chapter 1 verse 7, tells us, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

This faith, which saves us, rests on three invisible but sure realities: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

We have the absolute certainty of the existence of God and of the truth of His Word related in the Bible.

We read in He 11:1-3:

"For faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Beloved brethren, from the height of the heavens, the Lord looks down upon the children of men to see if there is any who understands and seeks God.

Oh, yes! The ways of God are perfect, the Word of God is tried, He is a buckler to all those who put their trust in Him, for who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God? [Psalm 18:30,31] Jesus, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 18 verses 2-5, speaks to us of the justice done to widow by a judge. Then, speaking of God and of His elect, he declares in verses 7 and 8,

"And will not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

We have, beloved brethren, the certainty that our Lord is present. His first work was to awaken those who were asleep in him; and we who are still here, if faithful, will be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the end of our course, to be forever with him.

The faith that Jesus left the apostles and to the Church of those times, is that which he would want to find at the time of his Second Advent. Our faith, whatever occurs in our life, must have in our heart a profound foundation. It must be well anchored on the Rock, that is to say on God and on the Lord Jesus.

We are consecrated to God in our Lord Jesus, for we know that there is one God, and it is He who justifies us in response to our faith and our consecration. And now, we are all children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. Our hearts must therefore be purified from all evil to receive Him who must there occupy an important place. Our faith is founded, not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

The Faith of Abraham

Let us remember Abraham, who was called "the father of the faithful." As the Scriptures say, true faith is manifested by the works that it motivates us to do.

The first of these works is obedience, which is translated into a decision and an undertaking dictated by the foundation of the faith which rests within us. Let us consider how Abraham lived in faith, or if you prefer, walked in faith or by faith.

God gave to Abraham a promise as a basis when He told him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. I will bless thee and thou shalt be a blessing." Abraham obeys. He leaves and, after many obstacles, many faintings also—for faith has its eclipses, as has the sun—he arrives at last in the country of Canaan.

The child of promise, Isaac, is not yet born. Will he be born one day, or never, this child so long awaited? Let us admit that he had some reason to despair.

What will become of the magnificent promises of God? "I will make thee the father of a great nation. In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed, and I will multiply thee forever!" God had indeed told him this. Abraham believed it, but nothing had changed!

Twenty-five years had elapsed since his departure from Charan. Twenty-five years of long waiting. Twenty-five years of unexplainable silence.

Was Abraham mistaken? Were the voices heard merely the echo of his own desires? Was his faith but a mirage, an illusion? Surely not! Abraham continued to believe. He believed against the evidence, against the facts, against the impossible. His faith was deeply anchored in God. It proceeded from the deepest depths of his heart. It filled his whole being. He never forgot the words planted in him by God, our blessed Heavenly Father. He believed in God, and God also believed in him. The role of faith is of paramount importance, faced with the diverse circumstances of life.

Hear what the Apostle Paul says of Abraham in his epistle to the Romans, chapter 4, verses 17 to 22:

"I have made thee the father of many nations. He is our Father, before whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through incredulity; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

His faith was immovable, firm to the end, such that God declared him justified. It was not because he was better than others, or more holy, or more pious, but because he put all his confidence in what God had told him; it was because of his great faith.

As for us, we are not "Abraham with his great faith." We are not him, it is quite true! In the face of such a giant in faith, what are we? How well could our faith perform based on the foundation of Jesus Christ?

Listen to what Jesus tells us in this regard: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." This mountain is our imperfections, our sins, our earthly cares, our "me, myself, I," our ambitions and our pride. All this must be thrown to oblivion.

The grain of mustard seed is a very little seed. A grain of mustard seed and a mountain—such is the comparison. Jesus did not say, "If you have faith as a mountain, you shall say to this grain of mustard seed, Remove hence." But he has made us to understand faith, even a small faith, resting entirely on what God has said and on what he has promised. And God, by our Lord, has promised us life eternal, life in itself. In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 11 verse 22, Jesus declares to his disciples, "Have faith in God."

We have become disciples of the Lord from the time we offered our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which was on our part a reasonable offering.

Commenting on the verse we have just cited, in the *Manna* for October 15, Brother Russell expresses himself thusly:

"Our daily experiences since we have become the Lord's followers have been guided and guarded apparently by the power unseen, to the intent that as pupils in the school of Christ, we may all be taught of Him and develop more and more the graces of the Spirit, and particularly more faith. [*I add, a faith well founded relative to the invisible things concerning the Kingdom of Heaven.*] It seems to be the one thing that the Lord specially looks for in those now called to be followers . . . So according to our faith we will be able to rejoice even in tribulation. We cannot not enjoy the suffering, but we can rejoice in the thought which faith attaches to it."

This faith is nourished on the hope of one day becoming a member of the Body of Christ. Moreover, let us not forget that all the heavenly things—things that the eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man—God has in reservation for those who have a strong faith, immovable, and who love Him above all.

The great faith of the patriarch, and our faith, are both based on the same foundation, that is, the immutable Word of God. It is the same faith, in principle; only the object hoped for is different. For Abraham, it was the birth of a son. For us, it is the liberation from servitude to sin, an inner liberation, a freedom from certain habits

and sure temptations. It is deliverance from our doubts and our earthly cares.

Jesus said, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that he shall receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11:24) We shall see it accomplished if we pray with a faith well anchored in our hearts, a living faith in God.

The Triumph of Faith

Returning to Abraham, let us add that it was not only on the occasion of the birth of Isaac that his faith was manifested. He demonstrated it in a very singular manner when God asked him to sacrifice him for whom he had waited So many years, his only son whom he had been given. In this circumstance, above all, faith triumphed.

The Apostle Paul in Hebrews, chapter 11, verses 17-19, writes this:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called'; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

The faith of the patriarch was of such granite that he did not even dispute such a demand. God had asked his son; he submitted. All the rest concerned God. His son God would return to him, be it by resurrection. And God returned him to him without even his having to sacrifice him.

God, who spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, honored Abraham's faith. He will also honor ours if we know how to honor Him ourselves, by our constant faith, built upon Christ, the sure foundation. Peaceful, untroubled brethren reveal to us that faith permits us to discover new horizons by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. We have cleared in advance the spiritual door, permitting us to pass from Adamic death (1 John 3:14), and now, as travelers *en route* to the heavenly City, we must take hold of all the required arrangements in order to successfully attain unto the decisive point of death in the Lord (Revelation 14:13), although the world does not see the difference between our death and that of men in general.

In the course of our pilgrimage, we are not passive, nor fearful, but active. Our Spirit is turned forward, toward the heavenly country

which we catch sight of by faith. Our intense spiritual life separates us little by little from the world. We do not strive to attach ourselves to the earth by any possible means, for we have renounced life on the earth.

The work which God has entrusted to us and which we have begun to erect on the firm foundation of faith in Christ, consists in making our calling and election sure and in presenting, to all who have ears to hear, the good news of the Kingdom of God, that they may also become ambassadors of God and of Christ and continue this work after us. Let us be as Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These patriarchs, in blessing, solemnly uttered the words which were going to favorably influence the faith and comportment of their descendants. They imparted to them the best of what they themselves had discovered and learned in their communion with God. Their words were words of faith which engendered faith. Fastening the sheaf of favors received, these men offered to their descendants as a seed of life, that in their turn they themselves may prepare a new field and cultivate this seed there. These men of God have also proved themselves generous and wise.

Do we do the same? For the good of our children, who are dear to us, let us teach them the fundamentals of our faith and let us cause them to know the blessings which we have received of God, that they, too, may be led to God and to Jesus our Savior. To bring our subject to a close, let us read verses 1 to 5 of chapter 5 of the epistle to the Romans:

"Being then justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand [firm], and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."

The blessing of God be with you all.

Faith That Works Through Love (Brother Rorata)

Beloved brethren in our Savior Jesus Christ and dear participants in the Fourth International Convention in Deuteronomy Bron. I would like to welcome you with the Lord's peace and convey the warm Christian love from the brethren in my home class of Bilgoraj.

As a participant in the symposium on the "Unity of Faith," I will speak about the feelings that are evoked by faith in the hearts of believers, brethren of the same precious Christian faith. This part of the Symposium is entitled "Faith that works through love." These words are taken from the epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5, verse 6.

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

The Apostle Paul reveals to Christian believers one of the basic truths of God: faith is revealed through the good deeds of love. The priests of Israel and other sons of that chosen nation put great emphasis on the rules of the Law, making obedience to it a necessary prerequisite to reconciliation with God. Despite the change of dispensation, they held to the idea that the conditions of the Law Covenant were absolutely necessary to have fellowship with God and obtain His blessings. However, the apostle definitely concludes that Christ fulfilled the Law,

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross:" (Colossians 2:14) "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." (Ephesians 2:15)

Since then, every Jew who became a believer in Christ and accepted him as his own Savior was freed from the precepts of the Law.

The apostle explains: "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body (substance) is of Christ." (Colossians 2:17) "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14) Thus to the household of faith, sons of God, the basis of atonement with God is faith in the ransom of Jesus Christ, which works through love.

Faith consists of different elements. The whole family of those elements complement one another and enrich the virtue of faith without which no one can please God. The Apostle Peter describes these elements in 2 Peter 1:5-8:

"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love."

As we see, the apostle enumerates a whole range of factors that cooperate with faith. If these elements abide in us and abound every day, we will not be found useless or idle as members of God's family, as brethren of the same precious faith in Christ. These elements will cause our faith, as evidenced by our works, to not die.

Faith and Works

We cannot be pleasing to God if we do not develop faith, an essential element and fruit of the Holy Spirit. Faith's effectiveness reveals itself in good and unselfish works. Faith unites the Lord's people in one wonderful, interdependent and complementary organism, with each member provoking one another to good works, obedience to God's Law, the law of love, as well as pointing to the essence of the New Commandment given by the Lord for believers—"that you may love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34) Remember, he gave his life for us.

The Lord's people through faith are capable of achieving the type of love that will release in them a willingness and desire to do good to all, but especially to the household of faith. The elements of a living faith will not let them be indifferent to a brother or sister, a co-worker on the same road of sacrifice. Such a living faith will seek opportunities to help others and thus serve the Lord. Seeking opportunities to satisfy the needs of others will become their purpose in life and will be a source of satisfaction, joy, and happiness.

The words of the apostle, "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," (Galatians 6:10) should cause those of this household of faith to direct their feelings toward their brethren, the family of God, to the utmost degree. Our primary interest should focus on our brethren because we share with them the same way of sacrifice and the same experiences. We should especially try to serve them in small matters, even if it be a cup of cold water. Service to the brethren should have been a major goal set at our consecration.

Brethren, let us run patiently toward that goal, remembering the words of admonition given in 1 John 3:18, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." If we are indeed motivated by such noble feelings, we will obtain the testimony of our faith. This, in turn, will be a driving force in our life. It will

create a desire to perform good works and develop the virtue of service to our brethren.

The elements of faith in the heart of a believer inspire him to act as a Merciful Samaritan. They stimulate believers to help other members of the body of Christ. They shape the spirit of service. Such an attitude of service is absolutely essential to the Church. The attitude of service will be necessary to help mankind regain perfection and the image of God that was lost. Such a spirit of service has to be developed in the present time. We have to develop it here on earth if we would be part of the mediator and mediation process in the millennium.

Faith as a Basis of Prayer

A desire to pray is a fruit of faith, the result of a deep conviction in God's providence and help. The Apostle James wrote, "Pray for one another . . . the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16) Difficult experiences, whether they are our own or that of our brethren, evoke in us a greater need to pray.

Unmovable trust in God's help and intervention in life's difficult affairs, taking tragic events and painful blows to Him and waiting with hope for the required action, unite God's people in prayer. We notice it in the example of Peter. When he was put in prison, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." (Acts 12:5) The whole ecclesia prayed to God. They were not indifferent to Peter's circumstances. Faith was the agent that caused the church at Jerusalem to raise their voices in fervent prayer to the throne of God's grace and power. They were waiting for an answer because they believed that God was able to free their beloved brother. Their prayers were filled with strong faith and therefore proved to be effective.

God answers prayers that are based on faith. In Peter's case, they did not have long to wait; God's answer was immediate. An extraordinary event occurred and Peter was miraculously conducted from prison. Thus we see that faith creates a strong bond of fellowship among God's children. Their prayers reach heaven. It would be very desirable for classes to follow the example of this first church and pray to God in their different trials, seeking God's help and intervention.

Our prayers should always contain a great portion of faith. No one puts a letter into a mailbox without the faith that it will reach its

destination. Our prayers and faith are similar. The Apostle James says, "Ye ask, and receive not because ye ask amiss." (James 4:3) This is why we should pray with faith, with deep conviction that our prayers will be answered if only we ask for the right things.

We do not always pray in the right spirit. At times, some selfishness in our hearts interferes and our prayer is not answered. A lack of self-control over egotistic tendencies in our fallen flesh may spoil the unity of prayer. God does not answer selfish prayers.

Selfishness, or a lack of appreciation for the needs of our brethren, may have a negative effect on the unity of the Church. This unity is dependant to a large degree on each consecrated member's contribution. The contribution cannot be selfish. It should come from the heart. There should be a desire to do good to others.

As the sun reaches with its beams to all corners of the earth, So a sincere prayer should encompass all affairs of the Christian commonwealth. This particularly includes spiritual things such as the Apostle Paul practiced in his life and which he mentions in Colossians 1:9, "I do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Faith vs. The Unity of the Church

It is important to realize the influence of faith on the unity of fellowship. Faith cements the hearts of believers. On the banner of faith we find, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism . . . one God and Father of all." (Ephesians 4:5,6) This phrase unites all under the banner of Christ.

Faith kept the Ancient Worthies close to God and his promises including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and many others. In the present time of the Gospel Age faith keeps the Lord's people close to the promises of God, "That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) These promises provided a better thing for us, the Church. (Hebrews 11:40) They apply to the Church directly and bind it into one fellowship.

The degree of unity among the Lord's followers determines also the unity of faith. Where there is a fullness of faith, there are no divisions, there is unity.

Faith unites all who belong to Christ. Those who have faith and who through the covenant of sacrifice are the recipients of God's

promises should, by their noble standing and unfailing trust in God's providence, be an effective influence on the unity of all members, "that there should be no schism in the body [of Christ]; but that the members should have the same care one for another." (1 Corinthians 12:25)

If we have a desire for unity, a feeling of a common bond with all brethren who fight under the banner of the cross, then we have Christ's spirit. This was also expressed in the Lord's prayer, that his followers be "one." (John 17:21-23) The unity of brethren also focuses on suffering. The Lord Jesus represented that aspect in the unleavened bread and the cup, which he gave to his disciples as partakers in his sufferings.

The words written by the Apostle Paul constitute a yardstick to measure our heart:

"Ye are the body of Christ. . . . And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26,27)

Even a small lack of interest in the suffering of brethren, no matter how insignificant, is a sign that our feelings are not right, that we should work on improving the condition of our heart. We cannot be indifferent when hard experiences touch our brethren. In such moments we should rush to help and express our sympathy. The root of such feelings is grounded in faith. The willingness to help our brethren who are undergoing Gethsemane experiences is precious in the eyes of God as well as in the eyes of our brethren.

On the other hand, we should rejoice when a brother or a sister is showered with God's grace and blessings. We cannot allow ourselves to be envious of their exaltation either in spiritual or material matters. Jealousy is very common due to the weakness of the flesh.

Faith, an Agent of Forgiveness

The ability to forgive is a Christian virtue. This results from faith in God's providential overrulings in which the believer placed his life. He accepts all circumstances and matters as the will of God. He sees God's wisdom in them and believes that, "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

Such was the case with Joseph, Jacob's son. His brethren hurt him terribly by selling him to the Midianites for 20 pieces of silver. The

price was very low considering the value of a human life, particularly the life of their brother. Thus Joseph went through the tragedy of separation from his beloved father and years of imprisonment and misery.

Many people would never forgive such brutal treatment. However, faith acted in Joseph in all its fullness of beauty. He was willing to forgive the harm. When after 22 years his brethren came to buy grain in order to avoid death by starvation, Joseph said: "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me, hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." (Genesis 45:5)

Joseph believed that everything happened because of God's providence. He only wanted to make sure that his brethren had learned lessons through their experiences. He knew that people often change for the better and he expected such a change in his brothers. Often such changes are a consequence of life's strong "shake-ups" such as personal tragedies, the losing of security, the recollection of forgotten facts, the distressing voice of conscience, etc. Joseph's brothers experienced all of these when he gave them a severe test. Joseph noticed the change.

Aren't we led in a similar way by the Lord? Maybe we are on the edge of disappointment, collapse, and anger toward our brethren because of their conduct or the way they treat us. Do we experience rebellion in our hearts, a desire for revenge, to compensate for the humiliation and hurt? Yes, of course. However, if we give in to such feelings, it shows a lack of faith and appreciation in God's providence.

If on the contrary you overcome the hurt, bear the pain in silence, forgive your enemies their wrong, it is faith that triumphs because faith overcomes the world. It overcomes everything that is of this world.

The ability to forget wrongs done to you, purging them from your heart, is more valuable than a good memory. It may be a long and slow process, requiring great self-denial before a feeling of compassion is deeply rooted through faith. Only strong faith, working through love, guarantees forgiveness.

If we pray "forgive us our trespasses" and believe in the power of our prayer, this belief will obligate us to "forgive those who trespass against us." In Joseph's case we see an act of faith exhibited in the names given to his sons. "Ephraim" means "fruitful." It signifies hope rooted in faith in God's blessings.

"Manassah" means "forgetting." In order to forget old wounds, hurts, humiliations, and wrongs, and let the scars heal, we have to possess faith that works through love.

As children of God, we desire to learn how to act in faith that unites all believers in one fellowship. Faith among brethren creates a fire of spiritual warmth, provides energy for useful activity in the Lord's vineyard. Faith is the power of peace and forgiveness. It motivates us to keep a good spiritual atmosphere and order in the Church. Faith means a fight with the adversaries of the Spirit. Faith is a smile in times of trouble. Faith is victory. Faith is salvation, therefore: "Lord increase our faith." (Luke 17:5)

How to Preserve the Unity of the Faith (Brother Hagensick)

One thing is certain, there can be no *MAINTAINING* of Christian unity in the Church until it is first *OBTAINED*. Thus our remarks will focus on these two areas: (1) obtaining Christian unity and (2) maintaining Christian unity.

While Christian unity is based upon a unity of belief, Paul's emphasis is more on a unity of common Christian experience. Ephesians 4:3-6,

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Nevertheless, it is true that true unity of the Spirit should lead to unity of doctrinal belief. Philippians 1:27, "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel." But notice that this is a unity of belief that is to be striven for, and not one that is inherent in Christian congregations. Truth, as it is often pointed out, is an absolute. Two opposing viewpoints cannot both be right. However, they can both be wrong.

While it is correct to state that there is only one truth on a subject, it may not be correct to say that I have it or that you have it. Absolute truth is a goal, not a present attainment. Pastor Russell has expressed it well in the *Question Book*, where he says that we call ourselves "truth people," not because we have the truth, but because "we are those who put the truth before anything else, we love the truth and would sacrifice anything we have for the truth." (Page 345)

Another principle for obtaining unity is the principle of respect. It is not enough to tolerate an opposing viewpoint, but we must have sufficient respect for another to recognize that they may have a clearer concept of truth than we, and that we might need to be the one taught, and not the teacher.

The Scriptures present the search for truth as developmental, a matter of progressive searching. Two quotations from the pen of Pastor Russell in the *First Volume* are quite to the point:

"Light will continue to increase beyond the present—'unto the perfect day.' It is one continuous path, and the one continuous and increasing light is the Divine Record, illuminating as it becomes due." (Page 20) Again, "Perfection of knowledge is not a thing of the past, but of the future." (Page 25)

Our object in searching for this truth must first be to find it in its purity and then, by sharing it, to encourage others to see the same beauty. This process has two benefits: first, it leads to a blessing of another with a vision of truth; but, more importantly, it gives the other an opportunity to correct and clarify our vision by the results of their study.

One of the most difficult principles to put into practice in the search for truth is intellectual honesty. Who among us is free from the bias of pre-formed opinions? In answering the question, "How Readest Thou?" the poet has well said:

Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed, Thus understand but little what they read; And every passage in the book they bend To make it suit that all important end. Some people read, as I have often thought, To teach the Book, instead of to be taught.

This sincere, honest, shared search for truth with other Christians leads to perhaps the most important tool of all in the obtaining of the Unity of the Faith—open dialog.

Perhaps one of the better examples of the type of sincere dialog to which we refer is that between Paul and Apollos described in the first book of Corinthians.

Unity in the Apostles' Day

From the first chapter we learn that there was a sharp difference of opinion, if not personally between Paul and Apollos, at least between their followers; So much So that it threatened to divide

the whole Church at Corinth. In the fourth chapter, Paul lays down two principles which governed his actions in this circumstance. In verses 1 and 2 he states,

"Let a man So account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:1,2)

Here is the principle of no compromise. Faithfulness to God demanded his defending the truth in its purity, no matter how others might look at it. Such a course of action may put us out of favor with others, and they might even judge us as trouble-makers. Thus Paul outlines his second principle in verses 3 and 4:

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment . . . but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

But now, notice how Paul applies these two principles in verse 6,

"And these things [the principles of no compromise and the irrelevance of man's judgment] I have in figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us [that is, in our debate or discussion], not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another."

In other words, the Church at Corinth was the benefactor. When Paul presented his viewpoint with the relevant Scriptures, and then Apollos presented his with the pertinent texts, they could hear all that the Scriptures had to say on the subject.

This breadth of Paul in accepting an opposing line of thought is remarkable, but as we read further it become even more so. Many of us might be willing to concede the fairness of an opposing viewpoint being heard, but would we encourage it?

If you were a speaker and firmly believed something to be true, you might well refrain from speaking against another who held differing views. But would you vote for him to serve your class? Or would you be more inclined to feel, "I respect Brother So-and-so, but for the sake of avoiding confusion it would be better if he did not serve and confuse the brethren here"?

Paul's attitude is given in 1 Corinthians 16:12,

"As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time."

The only difference in the principles requisite for obtaining and for maintaining unity is continuity in the principles used for its attainment.

Unity in Our Day

Let's be very specific and bring the matter right down to our own day and age. Those of us here at this convention share a common spiritual heritage. We are the products of a religious movement. We like to think of it as "The Harvest Movement" or "Present Truth." Our detractors may prefer to call us "Russellites." And while we may not like that name, and cringe at its connotations of following a man, they are not totally wrong.

Our common spiritual heritage is the writings of Pastor Charles Taze Russell. We seek to use him as an index finger pointing out the truths of the Bible, rather than be mere followers of him. Yet, as one brother in our country noted, "I am not a follower of Russell, I just haven't been able to catch up to him."

It is not reasonable to think that each of us here, studying the Bible independently, would have the same unity of belief that we currently enjoy. We share this unity because we have studied the Bible using a common source book, the six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*. To the great majority of us, we see in his ministry the fulfillment of such Scriptures as "that wise and faithful servant" and "the Laodicean messenger."

The threat to our unity of belief comes when one or another, particularly an elder, in his own study comes to an honest and sincere conclusion that the Scriptures teach somewhat differently than that presented by Brother Russell, or that the commonly accepted interpretation of Brother Russell's teachings does not accurately reflect what, in fact, he taught.

How do we maintain Christian unity in the light of such challenges to "Bible Student orthodoxy"? There are three courses of action open to us. Our decision is which to take.

(1) We could insist upon a unified platform.

This has been a time-tested way. It served the Catholic Church well in times past. It has served the Jehovah Witness organization equally well in more recent times. But its end product is uniformity, not unity. It protects truth by silencing error and by squelching the consciences of those who honestly hold a differing opinion.

Commenting on the evils of this course, Pastor Russell himself wrote in *The Divine Plan of the Ages*:

"Since their [the Reformer's] day, Protestants have made little progress, because, instead of walking in the light, they have halted around their favorite leaders, willing to see as much as they saw, but nothing more." (Page 23)

(2) We could bury the problem by preventing or discouraging the discussion of controversial issues.

But here, too, lies a problem. Like the proverbial ostrich, we are merely burying our heads in the sand.

The Scribes and Pharisees suggested a similar solution to the new concepts which Jesus was preaching. His response was that in so doing, they were taking away "the key of knowledge." (Luke 11:52)

(3) Or we could do just what we suggested earlier, have a healthy, dispassionate dialog on the subject.

It is this approach alone which will protect the spirit as well as the fact of our unity as the body of Christ. Commenting on the doctrine of Christian Liberty, we read from the *Watch Tower Reprints*, page 202,

"The true doctrine of Christian liberty is not our right to think for ourselves, but the right of the other man to think for himself. . . . It is his liberty that demands defense at all hazards; for, if liberty is denied him, how long will it be conceded to us?"

Practical Suggestions

In the very brief time remaining, let us look at some practical ways to keep our discussion of controversial issues from being divisive, and to constructively maintain the unity of the faith.

First, tone of voice. Differing opinion has the natural habit of raising the voice, assuming an argumentative pose. The best dialog is carried on dispassionately, letting the strength of the argument, and not the volume of the voice carry the weight. Only too often, the note on the old minister's sermon notes is true, "This point is weak So speak loud."

Second, selection of vocabulary. Words often convey different meanings to different people. Therefore it is wise to use those words that your listener understands rather than terminology you might prefer. For instance, the word "restitution" to some means only the resurrection process; while to others it includes the preparatory tearing down work of the time of trouble.

Third, listen. It is a frequent temptation to use the other person's speaking time for the framing of our rebuttal instead of really listening to the force of his argument.

Fourth, don't jump to conclusions. The fact that we would extend a thought to what seems to us the only logical conclusion does not mean that another draws the same conclusion, but may see another logical alternative.

Fifth, isolate the exact point of difference. Frequently, differences that sound tremendously far apart are little more than a specific interpretation of a supportive text, or the semantic interpretation of a word. Take the time and trouble to understand the opposing viewpoint by thorough discussion. Don't feel that you really understand another's point until you can repeat it back to them in words with which they would agree.

Sixth, refrain from the repetition of "old answers." As Bible Students we have a common background for our interpretations, and one with a differing viewpoint knows the standard answers. Be resourceful and search out new and additional supports to buttress your arguments. These your opponent may not have heard and may be open to considering.

Seventh, don't ignore statements of Scripture, Brother Russell, or other authorities that may contradict your interpretation and support that of your opponent. Keep your mind open to the fact that there often is evidence that must be considered that does not favor your position on a matter.

Brethren, our allotted time has expired, and I want to leave you with one final principle for maintaining unity, namely,

Likemindedness has more to do with love than with doctrine. Philippians 2:2, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." May the Lord bless us as we all strive together for this unity. As Jude 4 says, we must "contend for the faith," but we need not be contentious in this contending.

Rather, our feeling should be as that of the pilgrims who approached Jerusalem each year and saw others filing in from different directions. This is when they would have sung the next to last of the "songs of degrees," recorded in Psalm 133:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

To Timothy, My Dearly Beloved Son-Brother Michal Targosz, Poland

"There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."—Psalm 4:6-8

WITH THIS PSALM I greet you, those who are gathered in this auditorium, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially those of you who because of the language barrier cannot freely converse about our greatest joy and hope.

I also bring you love from members of my class in Chrzanow. In this way I would like to add a blade of grass to the nest we are building together here: Christian fellowship.

We meet together every So often in big or small groups, at various places and times, yet one thing never changes: the book we hold in our hands which is our hope, encouragement, and the source of strength and prophecy.

This book joins us. It is the best translator in our discussions. It permits the impossible to happen in our contemporary world. It allows us to understand ourselves. To it we will always be called, and by it we examine our character.

For a few moments I will read from this book. This is not a deep analysis of a chosen text nor a discourse on a biblical truth. I am going to read a testament—the words, thoughts, and opinions—of a man who knows the end of his earthly pilgrimage is near.

Let the title of our consideration be an address and at the same time one of the first sentences of a letter from the great apostle to the Gentiles, our apostle.

To Timothy, my dearly beloved son. (2 Timothy 1:2)

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an orthodox Pharisee, a blasphemer, a persecutor, slanderer, homeless, friendless, without daily affection, but not alone! And not deserted and not deprived of something most important, the love of another being. And Timothy, a young bishop of frail health, a disciple, a beloved son in the faith—a friend. Joined by a sympathy for each other and a will to serve in the fight together for the "faith once made known by the Holy Spirit."

Not much time had elapsed since an unexpected separation with Barnabus to the point where God next gave direction in the strange and difficult life of Paul. A second person, an inconspicuous disciple, soon became the apostle's mainstay because Paul needed support.

Paul fought all his consecrated life. He never had a moment for himself, never had what we call a private life. He divided himself between the tens and hundreds surrounding him, and the thousands of his followers of future centuries. His words resound with determination.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. So then death worketh in us, but life in you."—2Co 4:7-10,12

Paul needs support. He writes to Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand." (2 Timothy 4:6) A "crown of righteousness" laid up for him is already near (verse 8). Yet there are still many things to do; So many matters have been started, So many unfinished. On the table are letters

waiting to be answered. There's uneasiness about the ecclesia at Ephesus, unstable Corinth . . . and still the biggest experience, that nothing would be left of the sufferings of his Master:

"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."—2Ti 4:16

Of his close and faithful friends only Luke was with him. The others, feeling perhaps that the end was near, had left. Visits became more rare, less and less warm. There was more and more doubt and emptiness in the rented apartment at Rome.

In his previous letter the hope of their meeting soon was still alive:

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly." He writes because "if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." (1 Timothy 3:14,15)

When Paul writes his second letter, there is no such hope. He writes a testament: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." (2 Timothy 4:9) He says he is "greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears," and your "unfeigned faith." (2 Timothy 1:4,5) Some he had sent to work; others departed. With great pain he adds yet another sentence: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." (2 Timothy 4:10) When the parchment reaches Timothy, Paul's tears have already dried. Only a friend could perceive and hear the call for help: "Come quickly!"

Between the lines, as if stuck in haphazardly, is still one more request: "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus . . . bring with thee." It is cool in Rome, and getting colder. "And the books, especially the parchments." (2 Timothy 4:13)

In life Paul loved books the most. They were his strength when he tried to destroy the church of God and also later when he purged and built it. From youth he had been fond of books. As a pupil of Gamaliel, he forged his own "sword" which he so perfectly mastered throughout his whole life. These books were God's word, his guideposts. Now, at the end of his life, comes the answer to doubts that were always there as he served Christ.

Paul Writes About Faith

From these words directed to a friend, flows a lesson to all the generations of his followers. These aren't energetic discourses,

requests, and commands. By the serious and calm tone of his last letter it is difficult to resist being touched as we look at the apostle writing the words which testify to the valiant expectation of a martyr's death. He has the feeling of having fulfilled his responsibility and a certainty of Christ's awarding him the prize. These words are a lesson for us all. Let's learn them!

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." [Timothy, there is still time . . . there is still time.] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables."—2Ti 4:1-4

Somewhere in the deepest recesses of our minds remains a question which so often we stifle, fearing an honest answer. How difficult it is to escape from Paul's eyes as they look on us and remind us time after time:

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." (2 Timothy 1:6-8)

He says this so that you will stir up the fire anew. Look, your lamp is going out!

What is reading and consideration for? Why do we travel so many miles for just a few days? For a hand shake? A smile? To grow? To widen our knowledge of the Bible? Of course not! It is to stir up the gifts of God. It is to drag ourselves from a comfortable armchair, to pull ourselves away from everyday business and to stand again in full armor, to again take strength. It is to encourage each other to apply God's word in action and, in the end, to strengthen ourselves in faith.

Satan inquires about this in words found in Job: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" (Job 1:9,10) This is a classical example in the Bible showing the problem of Christians in a contemporary world. Do we love God because He is

good and loving? Do we trust Him because He is our heavenly Father? Do we believe in Him because we want to be saved? Do we rejoice in Jesus Christ because we see in him the only light guiding us to the Father, our only joy? If we serve God because everything is going well, because we expect that He will defend us from all the evil of this age and shower us with health, joy, friends . . . if such is the case, our faith is not true.

Satan proposes a test: "Turn away from him . . . put forth thine hand and touch him and see if he will curse." (Job 1:11, paraphrase) This is a simple and truly Satanic test. Yet faith as well as love—two of the most positive powers guiding our way—have one thing in common: they work in spite of everything. Are *WE* able to believe and love in spite of everything?

Once upon a time a little girl asked her father, "What is faith?" He did not answer at once. A few days later he was doing something in the basement after climbing down a ladder through an opening in the floor. The little girl came to the opening and called, "Daddy! Can I come down?" "Yes, come!" she heard from below. She was just about to descend when she suddenly saw that the ladder was not there.

"I can't come down," she cried. "There's no ladder." "Jump down," she heard. "But I don't see anything!" "Jump! I'll catch you." "But I don't see you!" "Jump! I see you! My arms are open!"

You may wonder how this story ends. I don't even know if it actually occurred. I do know, however, that it is a perfect answer to the question, "What is faith."

Our Faith Must Be Strong

There are thousands of people whose names appear in the registers of various churches. They go to church when it's comfortable for them. They give money to the church and support its activities. After the service they greet each other and tell the preacher how they enjoyed his sermon. They use a religious vocabulary and can quote many scriptures they memorized. But they have never experienced the true meaning. Their relation to religion is, in a certain sense, indifferent. They pray to God only when they are in a difficult situation. But in everyday life, they do not care very much.

There is not a single text in the Bible that says you can be a Christian and lead whatever kind of life you like. When Christ

enters a human heart, he insists on being Lord and Master. He requires total surrender and demands watchfulness over intellectual development. He requires that your flesh be given to him, and him alone. He demands your talents and abilities and that all your activity and work be accomplished in his name. He demands trust.

This is faith! And we are not like this. Of course we know how to explain our endeavors. However, the fact still remains that we are not like this. We know perfectly well how much of our life is really consecrated and exactly how much progress we are making. We know perfectly well, and this disturbs us.

The acceptance of Christ should not be treated as an experiment. It must be an intelligent decision which is followed by full devotion. As a good soldier is called to serve for the defense of his country and is unafraid of the threat of danger, we must go forward, never looking back. A soldier of God burns all bridges behind him and follows a way so carefully that misfortunes and changes in life do not divert him. Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—Lu 9:62

Paul got up from his knees blind. On the road to Damascus when the glory of Jesus dragged him from his horse, his whole life was also cut down. Educated, wise, and informed with the writings of the law, he had made a frightening mistake. He read, commented, taught, and did not see the Messiah of whom so many prophecies foretold, who was so distinct and so longed for.

On the Damascus road Paul is an example for us of conversion when Christ arbitrarily eradicates our present life, when as blind we look for a hand that could pull us up from our knees. But in this the apostle precedes us considerably. Broken down, he changes completely. He does not look around nor try to save that which is behind him. He changes everything.

It is not difficult to understand his love for Timothy when we read his last words: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience." (2 Timothy 3:10) Does Paul write to us also? Or perhaps we have succumbed to the idea that we cannot give more of ourselves. Thus we pray, "Lord God, forgive, forgive," with even a lack of words to justify ourselves. And God? He continually forgives, understands, pardons, even when we desert Him in anger, regret, and indifference. He always waits. He is able to wait many years, often a whole lifetime as He did for a Pharisee named Saul.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." (Luke 15:20) This text is from one of Christ's most moving parables. Even though we all know it as the parable of the prodigal son, we feel the son is not the main character; the father is. This father did not forget, did not curse, did not stretch out his hand to be kissed, and did not set conditions for forgiveness. He "ran and fell on his neck . . . and kissed him."

Once a certain writer told a story about a young man whom he met on a train, someone who looked very worried and nervous. In the beginning he was not anxious to talk. But after awhile, when the trip had been prolonged, he shared his problems with the writer. He had led a careless and riotous life adding to his parent's anxiety and, in the end, causing their heartbreak.

When after many times they had tried to lovingly encourage him to change his way of life, in a tide of anger he resolved to leave them and, yelling back that he would never again cross the threshold of their home, he shut the door.

Through many good years as a prodigal son, he lived on his own, taking advantage of many pleasures. He satisfied his pent-up dreams. But just as in the biblical parable, hard and lonely times came. He began to think about returning, about home, and his already elderly parents. More and more often he thought about starting a new life. He often dreamed of a large meadow, trees, pathways, and two sad and wrinkled faces. These dreams were tormenting and accusing. And the most difficult question kept recurring: How to go back? The thought tormented him because of the way he had treated his parents. They might not agree to his return. So he wrote a letter and talked about everything. At the end he said he would return if they agreed. He was not sure they ever wanted to see him again. In the letter he told them which train he would be on, a train that went by their home. Then he bought a ticket to the next station.

Because the family home stood near the railroad tracks, he asked his parents to tie handkerchiefs to the branches of the trees between their house and the tracks. He could see these from the train window. The handkerchiefs were to be a sign that they were expecting him. If he saw no handkerchiefs, he would understand and continue travelling.

He finished his story just as the train neared the town. The young man realized that when they passed the next curve, he would be able to see his house. He squeezed the writer's hand. "Please, sir, please look for me. I can't. Please look and tell me what you see." The writer looked through the window. "Young man, I see a house like the one you described. I also see two elderly people standing on the steps. They are looking this way." "Well, do you see handkerchiefs?"

The writer took him by the shoulders and turned him in the direction of the window. On the tree thousands of handkerchiefs were hanging, several from each branch. From far away it seemed the tree had bloomed with strange, exotic flowers. The young man cried.

Faith Is Not Enough

Let's go back to elderly Paul as he bent over a letter and reflected on his own life. That which is the most valuable, that which he had achieved after so many experiences, he reveals for his son: "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart."—2Ti 2:22

Paul knows that young Timothy has more temptations and trials, that he has really experienced so little of life's deceptions and deceits. He gives a simple, effective, but much demanding way to develop character: "Flee from youthful lusts!" Do not evade, do not consider, do not stop. Flee! Only when you cut yourself off from lusts which cause you to stumble can you win. Every other way leads to calamity: first a little deviation, then a bigger one. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Timothy, you have to be firm and hard. We all must be firm and hard on ourselves, and only on ourselves.

Several lines earlier in this same letter the apostle teaches us gentleness, patience, and humility:

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil."—2Ti 2:24-26

We must learn to make progress in our love for others. But to do so we must learn to forgive others. Because we live in a world where people do wrong and injure us, we are daily confronted with

a decision: Do we have to forgive someone who has sinned against us? If we are to be obedient to God, we will have to forgive them no matter what they have done. Imitation of God means progression in His example of forgiveness.

God is forgiving, full of sympathy and mercy. He forgave us our sins, as Paul writes in He 8:12, when we did not deserve His mercy. Our opposition did not keep Him from working to our advantage and exercising forgiveness. He calls us to do the same. "Be thou therefore merciful as your father also is merciful," ring the words of the gospel in Luke 6:36. And Paul adds, "Lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."—He 12:15

If we permit a lack of forgiveness to remain in us, the "root of bitterness" will grow. In the beginning when it is just a root, it may appear harmless. But if we permit it to grow, it will become a great tree of hatred and injury that will be difficult to uproot. This will affect the one who feeds this feeling and also those around him.

Therefore let us have more forgiveness, love, and humility, more of the features which so often appear in later years only after the sieve of life and experience demonstrate the right proportions, when moments of unnecessary agitation, anger, and aggression reveal themselves in their true light.

Such is the spirit of Paul's last letter. It is alive with vigorous wisdom largely supported by the Holy Spirit. Since the majority of our conflicts, injuries, and offenses are trifling, the apostle did not forget to write about these as well:

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."—2Ti 2:14,15

We battle over words, and words alone. We may not extend our hand in greeting because of words. We are able to fight to the death about things which we alone have defined, laid out, and thought out. We do not perceive anyone else's life, anyone else's consecration, anyone else's character development. Often we only fight over words. Even in a study we sometimes manage to lose all the beauty of the gospel because our life is made up more often of words rather than works.

Suppose, for example, I decided to prepare a talk on the subject of joy. I open a concordance to the word *joy*. I list the citations from the Bible on a notepad. (You would be surprised how much the Bible says on this subject.) With a strong sense of responsibility I chose several texts that are, in my opinion, the most suitable and convincing. I then check a Greek dictionary to obtain a wider definition of the word. One might also consult a Chaldean-Hebrew dictionary, lexicon, etc. The form and content of this study begins to expand. To make the remarks more attractive, I might determine what Luther had to say on this subject and what others in the literary world had to say. Finally I decide it is enough.

The meeting begins and I speak: "Brethren, the word *joy* in the original Greek language means much more than what we understand it to mean in our language . . . Concerning joy, Abraham said . . . Jesus said . . . The Apostle Paul said . . . Luther said . . . Amen!"

Some of those at the meeting may have a problem with one or more of my thoughts. Undoubtedly most would receive satisfaction from a study of God's word. A few might even comment upon the depth of my analysis. However, it is probable that no one has increased their joy—which was the point of all the Biblical citations.

Jesus did not come to uncover a new conception of life for the world. Instead he came to offer his own life. His message was life, not a narrative about life. Therefore in our discourses, witness work, and discussions we should, by our godly life, seek to inspire those with whom we come in contact, that our words provide food for spiritual development, that they lead to the application of God's word in action. This is not an easy task.

There are people born to sustain others in spirit. The Apostle Paul calls them "strong." He even stresses that they should bear the imperfections of the weak. This does not, however, excuse the weak since no one is exempt from the responsibility of serving. With joy Paul writes to Timothy:

"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day."—2Ti 1:16-18

We find the phrase "a cup of cold water" in the pages of the gospel. (Matthew 10:42) It is a phrase at the root of many parables including the difficult parable of the sheep and the goats: "Lord, when did we see you thirsty? When were you hungry? When did you come looking for a place to spend the night? We never saw you thus, we who are lukewarm, indifferent, without eyes, ears, hands, or even hearts."

It was this state that was of the utmost concern for Paul, not death nor suffering. He had a continual fear for those who were lukewarm, that they not be shallow. Paul knows this not only on the basis of direct revelation, but from observing the development of his own sowing. He knew the great enthusiasm after his visits and sermons would not last long. Emotion cools. The seed that falls on the wayside dies away fruitless and often brings about hostility for the gospel and itself. Paul shares his great concern with Timothy:

"This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes."—2Ti 1:15

This is not information. "This thou knowest" applies to Timothy. These words mean more. In this one sentence there is great pain which always accompanies saying good-bye to those whom one had brought to Christ, who were already close, who had already touched the future kingdom.

"Timothy, you know what has happened? I can not understand. I can not be reconciled." Paul feels as though his hands had been cut off. This would cause the collapse of the Church, the body of his Master. He could not accept that all of his sowing would not be glorified by Christ. Notwithstanding that he teaches this, additionally he introduces apostasy as one of the signs of the closeness of the kingdom. However, the pain remains after those who "left their first love."

Let's sit down at the table together with him. Let's try once again to affect our own hearts. Let's try to believe that the gospel is not a story about remote people and events.

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1Ti 6:13,14

I give thee charge!

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."—1Ti 2:1

There is no doubt: the life of a Christian should be godly and dignified. The whole world fights for human dignity. In many places in this world it is still unattainable. In a Christian, dignity has to be a result of godliness. We have the most high God and His law in our hearts. Notwithstanding that our vessel is weak and of little value, it does, however, preserve a treasure. This treasure is ours if we do not allow the forces of the world to take it away from us and that we cultivate it with our own godly dignity. Paul advises us to pray, to ask for help, So that by following the divine law we may live our lives in peace and quiet. Human laws do not reflect the will of God. God's law makes it impossible for one person to be subservient to another, nor does it allow one to exploit and debase another. We know we will not be popular. Others will not put us on a pedestal. Even if they do, they will eventually stab us in the back in the name of some other entirely different dignity. The fact that we were right, the apostle was right, that even Christ was right, will not convince anyone in this age.

Let's sit down together with the great apostle. Let's listen and watch. Let us try to not lose any of his last words. Let's allow them to take possession of our heart So we lose a desire for anything that is not of Christ, So that we become citizens of his kingdom. And perhaps even we will dare to draw out the deep standard that is hidden and unfold it before the world by saying aloud and clearly, Yes Christ!

Then the words from the apostle's testament will become our words:

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."—2Ti 4:18