

How To Be A Rejoicing Christian-Bro. Wade Austin, USA

PAUL WAS UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ROME when he wrote the letter to the Philippians. He was chained to a Roman soldier and could not go anywhere without the soldier. He was even ostracized by some in the church at Rome during this time. Yet Paul's letter to the Philippians was full of joy and rejoicing. At least twenty times the words for joy, gladness, or rejoice were used in his letter—more than any other New Testament book.

The key to being a rejoicing Christian is revealed in Philippians 2:5 (NIV), "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." In other words to rejoice requires us to have the same attitude that Christ had regardless of circumstances or people or things or worries that would rob us of joy. Each one of these things can be likened to a thief that would rob us of joy. What can we do to protect ourselves from these thieves?

In chapter one of his letter to the Philippians, Paul tells us how to rejoice despite circumstances. In chapter two he tells us how to rejoice despite people. In chapter three he speaks of things that would rob us of joy. Finally, in chapter four he writes of how worry can keep us from rejoicing.

There can be no doubt that the wrong attitude about these things can keep us from rejoicing in the blessings of God and in His overruling providence on our behalf. What kind of a mind or attitude must we have in order to rejoice? Paul reveals this to us in his letter to the Philippians.

Chapter One

In chapter one Paul tells us that the way to rejoice in spite of circumstances is to have a singleness of mind. Some circumstances we can control and some we cannot. In fact, the vast majority of circumstances are beyond our control. Do we let them make us unhappy or do we choose to rejoice in the blessings God has showered upon us? What is there about Christ's attitude that would enable us to rejoice in spite of circumstances that would rob us of joy?

Verse 21 is the key: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." What does Paul mean by this phrase? The context of the first chapter suggests that as long as he was in the flesh he would preach the gospel. Thus he wrote, "for me to live is Christ." Why

did he write "to die is gain"? This phrase suggests that once it was his time to die Paul felt it would be the indication of his faithfulness and the time for his reward to be with Christ. So single was his mind that he could conceive of no other alternative after death than to be with Christ.

Paul's singleness of purpose, that Christ be preached and the fact that Christ was being preached, caused him to rejoice in his circumstances. His bondage and the circumstances surrounding his arrest were leading to a furtherance of the gospel. He understood this and he used his circumstances to accomplish his singleness of purpose. If Paul had focused on his circumstances and changed his purpose to that of freeing himself (even though he might have reasoned it would be but a temporary change of purpose), his sphere of influence in preaching Christ would have been greatly diminished. This was not God's will. The real question is, "Do we accept our circumstances, whatever they are, as permitted of God, and do we use our circumstances to serve God with the same single-mindedness that our Lord had."

In chapter one Paul describes three aspects of his singleness of mind or attitude that allowed him to rejoice in spite of his circumstances. The first eleven verses deal with a singleness of mind with regard to our fellowship in the gospel. In verse three Paul writes the beautiful thought, "I thank God upon every remembrance of you." Brethren, do each of us feel this same way? Do we rejoice at each passing thought of the brethren? Oh what a glorious state of blessedness that would be! Let us read verses 3-11 and ask ourselves as we read if we can say the same about our attitude toward the brethren. If we can't, then let us resolve to go forth from this place not only rejoicing in the blessed plan of God, but in our fellowship in this gospel whatever our circumstances may be.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 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: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without

offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." { *Philippians 1:3-11* }

The second aspect of Paul's singleness of mind deals with the furtherance of the gospel. He describes this in verses 12-26. Brethren do we really believe Paul's words in Romans 8:28? "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (NIV) Do we behave as if we believe those words? Do we excuse our circumstances or do we use our circumstances?

Paul was a great example for us to be content in whatsoever circumstance we find ourselves. He wrote in Philippians 4:11, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." But our duty is to be more than just content; we are to use whatsoever state we are in to the furtherance of the gospel. That is the great lesson we learn from Paul in this chapter. He rejoiced that his circumstances were really contributing to the preaching of the gospel message.

Finally in verses 27-30 we are encouraged by Paul to stand firm in the gospel and to not fear what others may say about us or do to us as long as we are conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Paul has told us that we are sharers together in the fellowship of the gospel and in the furtherance of the gospel and now his admonition is to stand together in the faith of the gospel. Standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and not yielding to fear is a recurring theme in Paul's epistles. The admonition is to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, to struggle your hardest. The Greek word used here means "to wrestle together with." Thus we rejoice that we do not fight the battle alone. What a blessed thought this is when we realize that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. How thankful we should be to know that our brethren are struggling together with us.

Thus in chapter one Paul tells us that the way to not let circumstances rob us of our joy is to maintain a singleness of mind. We must be single-minded in our joy of fellowship, in our joy of spreading the gospel, and in our determination to stand fast in the faith regardless of our circumstances.

Chapter Two

In chapter two Paul tells us that the key to rejoicing in spite of people is to have a submissive mind. Just like circumstances, the actions of others are beyond our control. Like circumstances people may be influenced, to be sure, but do we let their behavior or their expectations make us unhappy? Do we lead our lives to please another person? What does Christ's example teach us about rejoicing in spite of the behavior of other people? The key verses for this attitude are in Philippians 2:3-8,

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Paul's words here are supported by the words of Jesus in Matthew 20:27, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

Paul continued in the second chapter by explaining that a submissive mind would enable us to recognize the source of our salvation. Though he says we are to "work out our own salvation," we are to do it with "fear and trembling." What does he mean by fear and trembling? The Greek words *phobos* and *tromos* literally mean fear and trembling. The same words are used in Ephesians 6:5-7,

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

While a servant might literally quake under the direction of his master, I think Paul's intent is to emphasize the humility and submissiveness with which we ought to serve. Just as a servant knows the source of his sustenance, So too we must realize that it is God who works in us to perform His good pleasure. The thought of verse 13 is that God's power creates within us both the desire and the power to execute His gracious will. We are not to fear what people can do to us or be robbed of joy because of them. We are reminded of our Lord's words in Matthew 10:28, "And fear not

them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Yet while we fear the awesome power of God we also rejoice in the knowledge that this same power works within us to accomplish His will.

Basically Paul is telling us in these verses to follow his example. It was an example of joyfully suffering for the sake of the gospel. It was also an example of submissiveness and humility. Paul reminds us of his humility in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5,

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Paul concludes the second chapter by using Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of having an attitude of service, a submissive mind, for the joy of spreading the gospel, in spite of people who would rob them of that joy.

Chapter Three

In chapter three Paul tells how we can rejoice in spite of things. This requires us to have a spiritual mind. All of us are aware of the admonition of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount to not lay up for ourselves treasures on earth but to lay up treasures in heaven. Yet how many of us really heed this advice? Worse yet, do we lead unhappy lives because we have a mental image of the things we would like to have but have not acquired? We are aware of what Christ said about "things," but do we really understand what his attitude was So that we might emulate it?

The key verses in the third chapter are 19 and 20: "Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." (NIV)

How foolish we are to worry about anything in connection with the Lord's work.

If we center our lives on material things, if our joy comes from things, then our destiny too will be destruction. Yet all too often each one of us falls into the trap of thinking, "If only I had this thing or that thing, how much happier I would be." All of us know that money and things cannot bring happiness and yet each of us continues to rejoice in things and to be unhappy when we don't have them. Why is this? Perhaps it is because we haven't truly put on the mind of Christ, the attitude of Christ that speaks: "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, then would my servants fight, but my kingdom is not from hence."

In this third chapter Paul uses himself as an example of having a spiritual mind. He does this with examples from the past, present and the future. In verses 7-11 Paul writes of his attitude past:

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

In verses 12-14 Paul writes of his attitude present, and in verses 15-17 he admonishes his brethren to emulate his attitude of running a race with a singleness of purpose and a spiritual attitude:

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk So as ye have us for an ensample."

In the final verses of the third chapter Paul focuses our attention on the future glory we shall have with Christ and even then we shall

have an attitude of submissiveness to him who is able to subdue all things unto himself.

"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." { *Philippians 3:18-21* }

Chapter Four

The final chapter of the letter to the Philippians deals with the secure mind. Paul lets us know that a secure mind defeats worry. Just as we are aware of Jesus' admonition about not storing up things, So too we easily recall his admonition to "be anxious for nothing." Why was he able to have such an attitude in the midst of his own persecution and the threats upon his life? How can we copy his attitude in the midst of our own trials and in the midst of a world controlled by Satan who is surely determined to do away with the seed of promise, the church?

How foolish we are to worry about anything in connection with the Lord's work.

Worry cannot rob us of joy if our mind is secure in the belief 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." { *Romans 8:38,39* } The key verses in chapter 4 are 6 and 7 (NIV):

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

The first eight verses of this chapter truly give us a picture of the mind of Christ. We emphasize mind here because they reveal to us not only the attitude of Christ but also the peace of mind he had because of his attitude and the resulting relationship he had with the Heavenly Father.

The study of this chapter makes me realize how foolish we are to worry about anything in connection with the Lord's work. We know that He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. { *Ephesians 1:11* } To worry is to demonstrate our lack of trust in God's providential overruling to accomplish His will. Let us not get distressed at roadblocks to our efforts to serve instead of rejoicing in the providence of God and in the knowledge that His purpose will be accomplished.

Paul describes for us three things we must do to have a secure mind and to not let worry rob us of our joy. In order to have a secure mind we must have 1) right praying, 2) right thinking, and 3) right living.

First, in verse 6, Paul explains that we must have right praying. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Paul doesn't simply tell us to pray about our trials, but a careful study of the phrase "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" will reveal that our prayers for help should also include our adoration and praise and our appreciation and thanksgiving for God's grace on our behalf. Prayer is a powerful force placed at our disposal and our prayers can be just as effective as the prophet Daniel's prayer was to give him peace in the midst of his difficulty. Do you think Daniel worried about the consequences of disobeying the king's command? Perhaps he did, but through right prayer his mind was set at ease. So too, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Second, in verse 8, Paul tells us what we must think about if we are to have right thinking. We do not have time to go into detail about this verse because whole discourses have been developed on its powerful content. If you find yourself doing wrong thinking, then set a goal for yourself to study this verse and to learn what these things are that we should think upon:

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

Third, in verse 9, Paul counsels us to have right living. He writes, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

To learn a matter is one thing, but to receive it is another. Paul's counsel is to receive his counsel in our inner man and to embrace the principles which we have learned in the Word of God. He also counsels that we are to do what we have heard and seen of him. To hear something about a person is one thing, but to see them in action is another. So too it is with us. What others see us do is what others will think and remember of us.

Right praying, right thinking and right living will give us the peace of God which passeth all understanding. These are the things we must do to have a secure mind, a worry-free mind, a mind that will transform us into the image of Christ. When we do not have right praying and thinking and living, then not only will we worry about circumstances, people, things, and the cares of this world, but we will worry about our relationship with God because we do not talk with Him. We will worry about what others think of us because we are not thinking correctly, and we will worry about what they think of our poor behavior if they know about it; and if they don't know about it, we will worry about whether or not they will find out!

Let us talk with God daily, let us meditate upon His goodness and the beauties of His creation, and let us reflect in our lives the glory of His countenance So that just as Moses' face shown after being in the presence of God, So too, will our lives radiate the glory of God. The difference is that the brightness of Moses' face faded away So that he put a veil upon his face So the Israelites could not see the brightness diminishing. But we brethren have an everlasting covenant, the hope of eternal glory. Let us not veil our faces, but let us go forth daily rejoicing in the splendor of God and reflecting that splendor even as we are by His grace being changed from the glory we behold to the same glory through the power of His spirit. { *2 Corinthians 3:18* }

Brethren we need daily to put into practice the lessons we have learned from our study of Philippians. If you find that the cares of this world—circumstances, people, things, and worries—are robbing you of a joyous relationship with our Heavenly Father, then return to Paul's letter to the Philippians and study his "how to" manual. For in this letter God through Paul tells us how to have a single mind, a submissive mind, a spiritual mind, and a secure mind So that each one of us might emulate Christ and be obedient

unto death. That is our goal brethren. Our goal is not to rejoice, but to be faithful unto death; obedience will yield the fruit of joy.

Let us rejoice in the promise of God that if we be dead with him, then we shall live with him, and if we suffer with him, then we shall reign with him for the purpose of blessing all the families of the earth.

Amen.

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem-Bro. Michael Brann, USA

FIRST OF ALL, I WOULD LIKE TO BRING the love of my home ecclesia, the Seattle Bible Students in the state of Washington, USA. Also I bring the special love from my father-and mother-in-law, David and Shirley Bruce whom many of you know.

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

My wife Sr. Ginger and I, along with about 300 brethren from around the world, had the wonderful opportunity to attend the Jerusalem Convention one year ago last Spring. There we had many, many very special and unique experiences, one of which was while the brethren visited the Hebrew University. The convention organizers arranged a special speaker to address us that evening, one which they knew would be of interest to us as Bible Students. The speaker was the first Israeli ambassador to Egypt, Mr. Moyshe Sasson, who is now officially retired. His topic was *Israel's Relationship with Other Nations*. Mr. Sasson is a professional peace negotiator!

As you are well aware, Israel's relations with other nations with regard to peace is a very stormy and turbulent one. Of all the attempts at peace with some of their hostile neighbors, only one nation has successfully negotiated a peace treaty with Israel: Egypt. Mr. Sasson played an important role in that process signed in 1979 now famously known as the Camp David Peace Accord. Menachem Begin was Prime Minister of Israel and Anwar Sadat was president of Egypt. Later, you may recall, Mr. Sadat was assassinated in Egypt. Mr. Sasson was on the speaker's platform with him at that very time.

This professional peace negotiator, Mr. Sasson, said there were a certain number of requirements before peace could be successfully

attained between nations. I would like to take four of his points and use them as principles for peace amongst ourselves. These principles, if followed, would help us in our spiritual lives when dealing with overcoming barriers or obstacles to peace whether it be obstacles between individuals (perhaps in a marriage or family), whether it be overcoming obstacles to peace within the ecclesia, or overcoming obstacles within the framework of the Bible Student movement. Although my remarks are applicable to each of these areas, I must say that as I listened to Mr. Sasson I could not help but think of the Bible Student movement. Many of my remarks will be focused on this last area.

It was brought to our attention that the Jew and the Arab are brothers! Both of them trace their roots to Abraham. We, as brethren in Christ, trace our spiritual roots to the same Father, our Heavenly Father!

Ps 122:6 says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." What Jerusalem is the psalmist speaking of? Surely those who are interested in the peace of the natural city of Jerusalem would be referred to here. Yet Jerusalem, meaning "possession of peace," has experienced anything but peace since its conception. It has been built, destroyed, and rebuilt more than a dozen times. Since Jerusalem and the nation of Israel as a whole are so central in God's plan, it stands to reason that those who pray for its peace are to that degree in harmony with God and stand ready to be prospered or blessed by God.

There is another view we might take of the matter. The Apostle Paul in Galatians 4:24-26 speaks of two Jerusalems, not just the literal Jerusalem but also a spiritual Jerusalem.

"Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." { *Galatians 4:24-26* }

Since we, the body of Christ, are to make up this city or spiritual government eventually—otherwise called the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:2—it stands to reason that it might be a lesson for us to pray for this spiritual Jerusalem's peace, with the added thought that spiritual prosperity would come to those who do so.

We have a simple visual graphic to help us illustrate the four points of our lesson today. Here we see the obstacle: a four-tiered wall

separating people. As we proceed, we will identify each tier or level and discuss some of the problems and principles associated with each. Remember, these were suggestions from a man who dedicated his life to bargaining for peace between hostile nations.

Level 1

The first level is "Recognizing a Common Enemy."

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." { *Ecclesiasties 4:9,10*}

This common enemy is easy enough for us to identify in a spiritual manner and the easiest part of the wall to remove. For the Israeli and Egyptian in 1979 their common enemy was Britain. For the brethren, we can quickly agree on three common enemies:

1. Satan;
2. The world (i. e. , the spirit of the world, things that attract us from our goal of being conformed to the image and likeness of Christ);
3. The flesh (i. e. , selfishness, and the gratification of fleshly desires and ambitions).

No matter who we are or where we live in the world, if we are in Christ, we have these same three enemies in common.

Sometimes we have an easier time identifying our enemies than in recognizing our friends. Let us ever be aware that the brethren are not our enemies!

If we can identify these enemies—Satan, the world, and the flesh—as a common foe and recognize the brethren as our supporting allies, it reinforces our brotherhood and we can, in effect, remove this part of the wall. Then prosperity and help would come to us in the form of having greater opportunities to both encourage one another and be encouraged by others as we share our individual experiences and testimonials of our battles with our common enemies.

Level 2

The second level is "Both Sides Must Really Desire Peace."

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

This sounds like it should be an easy layer of the wall to remove, but it isn't. After all, who doesn't want peace? Actually this part of the wall may be the most difficult of all to remove!

Anyone can say they are for peace yet harbor things in their heart that will never really allow peace to be made. Prejudice—prejudice for one or against another, holding grudges against others for things said or done in the past, resentment, jealousy, fear, pride, and the like—are often the real reasons for division and separation whether these are between individuals, ecclesias, groups, and even nations.

Words like prejudice, grudges, resentment, fear, anger, and pride are all matters of the heart, sometimes hidden or subtle, deceitfully wicked, and therefore the most difficult for us to deal with and to subsequently remove. These other three levels of the wall can for the most part be dealt with in a more open, honest, and almost intellectual manner. This one, however, has more to do with the heart of each individual. We could have every reason in the world for peace and every obstacle could be removed, but if there is something wrong with the heart and roots of bitterness are allowed to grow, then it won't matter. There will be no real peace.

What makes this part of the barrier even more difficult to remove is that it requires both sides to have this same heart desire. It will not work if only one side or party extends the olive branch. If only one is willing, all too often the offer is rejected over and over until the one reaching out stops offering. Anger, frustration, and a "who needs you anyway" attitude gradually sets in until they nearly forget there is anyone there to extend peace towards. The wall becomes a permanent fixture, adjustments are made, and, sad to say, people grow accustomed to separation. But if both sides really want peace, then this part of our wall can be removed also.

Level 3

Level three is identified as "Fair Compromise." Our scripture for this point is Philippians 2:3,4,

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

The message here is to consider the interests, the welfare, the rights, etc. , of others. It says we are not to demand our own way, our own ideas, or our own way of doing things.

Many people do not like the word compromise. To them it means that neither side gets exactly what they want and So neither side is happy. Actually, the root of the word *compromise* means *a common promise*. If our goal is not desiring our own way but rather our goal is peace and looking out for the highest spiritual interests of others, then a fair compromise is only the means to that end.

Most divisions are the
result of childish thought and actions

Compromise is definitely something we want to avoid where principle is involved. We never want to compromise with sin in any way, nor in anything that would dishonor God, others, ourselves, or the truth. After all, compromise with sin and error is the reason for Babylon's trouble, and we all know that Babylon is to be completely destroyed because of it.

Anyone who is active in a family or in an ecclesia knows what fair compromise is all about. It is simply a matter of settling differences by mutual concession.

An example of fair compromise in the case of Israel and Egypt involved the desire of both for the Gaza Strip. The compromise accepted was that Israel would keep ownership and control while Egypt would be allowed free use and passage. Determining what are negotiable items for compromise and what is a non-negotiable principle demands large degrees of the spirit of the Lord, patience, and wisdom.

The lack of the ability to find a fair compromise seems to be a major reason why brethren are separated, and separating, today. Certain doctrines are viewed differently and emphasis is placed on those differences. Compromise in the form of coming up with a new doctrine somewhere in between is not the answer. Neither is the answer never to discuss the points of difference. Compromise

might best be considered in the form of presenting your scripturally studied viewpoint, allowing others to present their studied viewpoint, and not demanding that anyone see it either way in particular. Personal study, prayer, and reflection is the best way to come to conclusions—not by force or coercion. Liberty should be the rule in such matters.

Brother Russell gives very sound advice on these things. Volume 6 in the chapter entitled *Order and Discipline* (pages 309-328) is especially to the point. "The Assembling of Ourselves Together," "Character of the Meetings," "Doctrine Still Necessary," and "Let Every Man Be Fully Persuaded in His Own Mind" are select subsections that I highly recommend all consider carefully.

I would like to emphasize that I am speaking in regard to terms for fellowship, not eldership. That is a topic by itself. Brother Russell was very broadminded in terms of fellowship. Another specific reference you may like to read is in Reprint 5284 entitled "Doctrines More or Less Important."

If peace is to be gained among us as individuals in the family, ecclesia, or in the broader Bible Student movement, each party's viewpoint must be examined for the purpose of finding ways to have a fair compromise or solution, something that will be fair to both sides without involving principle. Fair compromise means there must be communication, listening to and trying to understand one another. It probably will also involve a readiness for both parties to apologize for things said or done wrong in the past and a willingness to forgive one another.

Fair compromise will reduce another level of the barrier.

Level 4

Level four is the necessity for "Leaders with Courage and Vision."

"Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy." { *Proverbs 12:20* }

To the counsellors of peace is joy!

As is too often the case, leaders do not always reflect the desires and will of those they lead. This was brought to mind during the last election the United States held for the office of President. One of the primary reasons often given as to why a new president was

elected was the perception that the former president was out of touch with the common people!

When Anwar Sadat signed the peace treaty with Israel, it took great courage and vision. His Arab brothers considered him a traitor. He became a hated and hunted man. He was eventually assassinated because of what he did. He had been aware that something like that would eventually happen to him, but he risked his life because he believed strongly in the vision he had for peace instead of conflict and war and division!

To be a leader and/or example in our families or ecclesias or in any other capacity of spiritual duty you are obliged to perform, courage and vision are necessary tools for success. It takes these skills to be an example worthy of imitation in the art of peacemaking.

Sectarianism and party spirit often stand in the way to peace. Again, civil politics can be used as an example. In the United States issues are often voted on not according to the intrinsic value or merit of the proposal, but according to party lines. If the Democrats proposed it, Republicans oppose it, and vice versa. Perhaps it is this way here in France between the Socialists and Parti Republicans. Philippians 2:3 has already been cited, but other translations state it more precisely to our point: "Let nothing be done through strife [party-spirit]." This takes courage.

It also takes vision; not temporary vision or earthly-minded vision, but eternal vision. In other words, how might I view present conditions regarding walls and division in the light of eternity?

In regard to some of the divisions in the Bible Student movement, three questions I often ask myself to keep a proper perspective—and which I propose you also may wish to ask yourself—are:

1. Do I honestly believe that Brother Russell would come to such and such convention or not go to that other convention?
2. How about the Apostle Paul? Do I honestly believe that he would be party to one group at the expense of dis-association from others?
3. Based on those answers and, even more importantly, is it pleasing to the Lord how I treat some brethren?

In regard to leaders, the Apostle Paul says in Tit 1:7 that "a bishop [elder, leader] must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker." Other

translations for *striker* use the words *not violent* and *not ready to wound*.

Lest we get the idea that this is just a qualification for elders as leaders, later in this same epistle he says to us all: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." { *Tit 3:1,2* }

Other translations for brawlers use the words *not quarrelsome*, *one who doesn't pick fights*, and *not argumentative*.

The words *striker* and *brawler* are just the opposite of peacemakers. Modern day strikers and brawlers would be defined as those who breed controversy and generally cause division and trouble.

This, as stated before, does not mean that differing points of view are never to be raised for fear of causing trouble. It simply means that one would not bring up a certain topic for the specific purpose of causing division or stirring controversy.

There are many, many brethren who are both saddened and perplexed as to why there are two or three classes in many of our cities. Why are there conventions around our own areas that some brethren purposefully choose not to attend?

Again the Apostle Paul had a few things to say on divisions that should be mentioned. Two seem paradoxical, but apparently the Lord is over-ruling matters in such a way that it serves his purposes. Paul says divisions are: 1) carnal, and 2) necessary! Let's look at each of these briefly.

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife [party-spirit] and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" { *1 Corinthians 3:1-5* }

"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there

must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." { 1 Corinthians 11:18,19}

In my opinion, the condition of the Church today is similar in both respects. There is much carnality in our separation (i. e. , human weakness hinders our spiritual oneness in Christ). It is often, as the Apostle Paul states, a sign of spiritual immaturity. One definition for the word carnal gives the word *unregenerate*. In other words, most divisions are the result of childish thought and actions. Do you and I consider ourselves mature? Our attitudes on divisions will give us the answer.

Regarding the necessity of division in the Church, perhaps there are justifiable reasons for them. It would probably be a good idea to ask ourselves just what it is that separates us. Is it based on fallen, old creature thinking of carnality and immaturity, or is it based on matters involving principle?

Are you and am I courageous? Am I standing on principle or immaturity? Do I have the oneness of the Body in mind when thinking of different brethren from whom I am separated?

When I joined a Protestant Baptist church in my early twenties after being raised a Roman Catholic, there was a story told that might fit in well here. Perhaps you have heard it in another version. It goes something like this:

A Baptist dies and was taken to heaven where he was given a tour and orientation of his new environment. This Protestant was surprised to see a great wall. He asked in a loud voice, "What is this wall for?" The guide replied, "Shhh. Speak softly. The Catholics are on the other side and they are not supposed to know Protestants are allowed here!"

I hope we don't expect walls in heaven! Walls are made by men, not God.

If we then have a clear vision of living with our brethren for eternity, perhaps as we reflect on that vision we won't be so reluctant to spend a minute, an hour, or a day with them before eternity begins! Maybe also this portion of the barrier can be removed from our minds and instead of walls and barriers, let us find bridges and the things that make for true peace.

Conclusion

Let me close with three remarks:

1: Divisions among the brethren have always irritated and puzzled me. I am searching for solutions and answers too. My search doesn't end at the conclusion of this discourse. If you have any experiences where conflict has been resolved using these or other points, I would very much like to hear them. Mr. Sasson concluded one of his points by saying, "Someday our children may come to us and ask why we never achieved peace. I would like to tell them AT LEAST WE TRIED!"

2: I am not expecting that where there are multiple classes they will unite, however I am very hopeful for individuals to be able to resolve some of their differences by using such tools as these given. It would be wonderful if ecclesias could at least unite for fellowship, but I am not sure it will ever happen. However, there are some places where the walls of division are coming down. My suggestion would be that where this is happening, try not to keep rebuilding those old walls with negative words, actions, or attitudes. Encouraging division by making one side continually right and the other side continually wrong is to be avoided.

Peace is not an easy matter to accomplish. I have not meant to oversimplify the problems in the church today nor to suggest peace can come easily. It takes hard work and will require strong character. I have never been a part of an ecclesia that separated, yet I am sure there are scars and wounds that are still tender and painful in those who have experienced a separation. But try to remember Paul's words in Romans 12:18, "If it be possible [AND] as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Our Lord also said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." { *Matthew 5:9*}

To those of you who find ways to go around or over or through some of these existing walls, to those who find ways to associate or fellowship with brethren whom they do not meet with regularly, I support and encourage you. I highly recommend this course of action.

3: This matter of peace in our relationship with our brethren is only one question on our final exams as to whether we are to be acceptable members of the Body of Christ. However, I think it is a primary and essential one. A favorite text of the Bible Students is Hebrews 10:25,

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and So much the more, as you see the day approaching."

The next verse suggests just how important a matter this assembling of ourselves together is, for he says:

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

The point I wish to make is that if we tend to judge our brethren as not worthy or acceptable to fellowship with, we place ourselves in a very dangerous undesirable position with the Lord. The context is talking about second death!

Brethren, I believe these are issues that we would do well to consider as we tabernacle here in the flesh amongst the Lord's people. I am sure that there will even be occasions to think upon these very points while we are assembled here this week when challenges to peace and harmony arise. May these suggestions of *Praying for the Peace of Jerusalem* bring you closer to the brethren and usher you eventually into an abundant entrance with the Lord beyond the veil.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and may the Lord prosper you for it.

The Song of Moses and the Lamb-Bro. Cornel Brie, Romania

Dear brethren, it is a privilege for me to participate in this International Convention and a special honor to be in front of you. I express my gratitude and appreciation for your effort to organize this wonderful convention. Please receive the greetings of fervent love from your brethren in Romania and especially from the class at Cluj, of which I am a part.

The subject I want to present is entitled "The Song of Moses and the Lamb." It has as a basis, Revelation 15:2-4 where we read:

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy

ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

It is obvious that the Book of Revelation was given to the Lord's children with the purpose of knowing the "things which must shortly come to pass." { *Revelation 1:1*} A promise from the Lord is attached to the study of this prophecy:

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." { *Revelation 1:3*}

The Book of Revelation is marked by many symbols. It contains prophecies that describe the history of the true Church and that of the nominal one, the battle between truth and error, between a corrupt, false system on the one hand, and the true followers of Christ on the other hand. The last chapters of this book show the result of this centuries-long battle in which truth, right, and Christ triumph.

Returning to the prophecy cited at the beginning, it seems it has its fulfillment during the period after the appearance of the image of the beast parallel with the pouring out of the seven plagues of the wrath of God. As one may observe, we also have several symbols whose understanding is significant to this subject, for if we don't understand the symbols of beast, image of the beast, and number of his name, we cannot know who overcomes these things.

The first symbol is a "sea of glass mingled with fire." That the sea represents discontented, restless, turbulent people in a time of trouble is the view generally accepted by Bible Students. This view is supported by these scriptures:

"Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters." { *Isaiah 17:12,13*}

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." { *Isaiah 57:20*}

"The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitudes of the waves thereof." { *Jeremiah 51:42*}

These prophecies are on the way to fulfillment and its climax will be, in our view, in the near future. The fact that the sea is "as it were of glass" suggests the idea that the events which take place during the period of the fulfillment of the prophecy are understood, are clear and transparent like glass to an eye of faith enlightened by the holy Spirit. The prophet David, after describing the events of the present time, makes this statement:

"Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord." { *Psalms 97:8* }

In Revelation 4:6 we again find the expression "a sea of glass like unto crystal" [which is in front of the throne]. But this time it is not mingled with fire.

Though there are similar elements in these two prophecies, nevertheless they express different things. The text in Revelation 4:6 probably refers to the Great Company. Consequently "the sea mingled with fire" is a symbol of trouble, of destruction, showing the terrible judgments of the Lord and the difficulties which characterize this end of the age. The prophet Isaiah writes: "For by fire. . . will the Lord plead with all flesh." { *Isaiah 66:16* }

The Beast and Image of the Beast

The second symbol is "the beast." Revelation commentators agree that in scripture the beast is a symbol of a kingdom or government. In the book of the prophet Daniel we read:

"And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth." { *Daniel 7:3,17,23* }

In these prophecies we have a symbolic description of the four universal empires viewed from the divine standpoint. But now we are referring to Revelation 13 where it speaks about a "beast which rises up out of the sea," that is from the midst of the nations, "speaking great things and blasphemies. . . against God," false and arrogant pretensions. The "dragon gave him his power," meaning civil power, "and was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them." Over fifty million Christians were killed by this beast. And "power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" plus other specific statements which correspond to the great papal system which ruled ferociously about 1260 years. { *Revelation 13:5* }

The third symbol is the "image of the beast." The word image, or "icon" in this prophecy, seems to show a resemblance or a picture of something. Bible Students agree in principle that the image of the beast is the Protestant religious system. This system is now being rapidly developed and has papacy as its model for doctrine, expressions, and attitudes.

While on the one hand we recognize the contribution Protestantism has had in Bible translation, the cleansing of the sanctuary, and its energetic protest against the papacy, yet on the other hand, and regretfully, we realize it has not succeeded in eliminating heresies and unscriptural teachings. It has embraced methods and procedures of its "mother" in whose image it is. "As is the mother, So is her daughter." { *Ezekiel 16:44*}

Here are some observations concerning the "image of the beast."

1. Its energetic former protesting seems to have ceased;
2. It does not recognize that many of its doctrines are unscriptural including the holy trinity, the immortality of the soul, eternal torment, etc. ;
3. It does not accept the teaching of the scriptures which guarantee to all people a resurrection in due time to gain life;
4. It manifests an indifference toward the prophetic word and does not recognize the signs of the times;
5. It desires to unite with Catholicism and Orthodoxy and struggles toward that goal;
6. It boasts about its popularity and the number of its believers.

All these and still other facts prove that the present state of Protestantism is not the result of the Reformation, but rather shows its decline.

The fourth symbol is the "number of his name." These words bring to our mind the scripture which says:

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred threescore and six." { *Revelation 13:18*}

This enigmatic number refers to the "beast" which is the papacy supported by the "dragon" and by "his image." At the head of this great religious system is the pope on whose crown is inscribed with gems and in Latin, *Vicarius Filii Dei*—substitute for the Son of God.

These words clearly show the arrogant claim of the pope. The replacement of the letters on the pope's crown with their corresponding numbers gives a total of 666, "the number of the beast." Though some aspects of the prophecy had their fulfillment in the past, what can we say about the present and future aspects as they loom on the world's stage? In 1916 Bro. Russell wrote:

"The Bible points out that about this time the Nominal Church systems of the world will rise to great prominence again in connection with the Civil powers. . . . It will be during the power of this so-called 'queen,' for a little season, that the world will be under a great strain as respects any presentation of the Truth. And those found loyal to God and to principle will doubtless suffer therefor." (Volume 4, p. iii)

In harmony with this thought, I would suggest for your consideration these questions:

1. Is it possible that a new religious dictatorship might appear under whose ill-fated authority the Lord's people would suffer violence? Would this mean a final and crucial test for the last members of the Church?
2. Could the ten horns of the beast in Daniel 7:7 represent a coalition in a new hypostasis of strongly developed states that impose their will on the world?
3. Could the two horns of the beast in Revelation 13:11 represent politics and religion, showing their united and intense activity to preserve the old order?
4. This beast had horns like a lamb. Does this suggest the democratic and tolerant spirit stated by political and religious leaders while this beast imposingly and arrogantly operates "like a dragon"?

Dear brethren, it is difficult to foresee with exactness how world events will unfold. But we are living in a period of dramatic and rapid change marked by bloody inter-ethnic and interconfessional conflicts, and a degradation of moral life unprecedented in human

history. The activity of the forces of darkness and of extremist, nationalistic, xenophobic and anti-Semitic groups is on an alarming increase. The "sea" is really restless!

Do not these events show that the fire of anarchy is at the point of beginning its destructive operation?

The Harp and the Song

Dearly beloved, let us now consider these elements of the prophecy: 1) the harp; 2) the overcomers; 3) the contents of the song.

Note that on this raging sea, and forming a noteworthy exception, stand "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name." How do they "stand"? Patiently, undisturbed, and unworried about the terrible troubles and difficulties that exist in the world. Their attitude proves their great faith and understanding of the extraordinary events that characterize this period of transition to the glorious Messianic Kingdom. The precious blessing of the Lord maintains them on this raging sea.

The overcomers have harps in their hands. We believe these harps represent the Old and New Testament, the entire revelation of God. The strings of the harp could well represent certain fundamental truths of the divine plan.

And who are these overcomers? Evidently these overcomers are not nominal Christians and probably are not members of the Great Company since all these are slaves of false systems. These wonderful overcomers cannot be other than the faithful followers of the Lord, the little flock.

"And they that are with him, that are called, chosen and faithful, will also overcome." { *Revelation 17:14, Romanian Bible* } They are those that stood with the Lamb on mount Zion "being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." { *Revelation 14:1,4* } They are those who witnessed and proved their full commitment to the will of God, defending the honor of the great King Jesus. They are those who not only possess the truth, but are entirely different from the beast and its image in thought, word, and action. This makes them overcomers.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne."
{ *Revelation 3:21* }

Do we also desire to be accounted of the Lord to be among those approved by him? I think we do! This means, my dear brethren, that we all have something to do now while the "sea" is roaring and threatening us with its waves. The Lord wants us to not be frightened, to not stagger, but to live in his presence by faith and obedience of heart.

It is our privilege to uphold the truth, to intensify our zeal, to witness to our Lord's presence and Kingdom. Besides a full consecration, I think it is necessary to prove our deep humility and accurate knowledge of the Lord's word. United in the holy bond of heavenly love, we should be watchful and continue to hope unto the end. Thus, and only by the Lord's grace, shall we be able to overcome the beast and its image, and sing the most sublime hymn ever sung or ever heard: "The Song of Moses and the Lamb." The author of this great hymn is Jehovah God Himself.

Why is it called the "Song of Moses and the Lamb"? It is reasonably supposed that the first five books of the Bible were written by Moses. He was the mediator of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai. It is obvious that the sacrifices of that Law typified the "better sacrifices" through which atonement between God and man is accomplished. Moses sings the glory of God. Here is what he says:

"He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." { *Deuteronomy 32:4* }

It is called the "Song of the Lamb" because the great redemption and deliverance were offered to us by virtue of the sacrifice of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." { *John 1:29* } We read in Revelation 5:9,

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation."

How wonderful was the song which was brought to us on the occasion of his birth, how wonderful were his words and the works he performed during the 3 1/2 years, how wonderful were the witnesses of his followers throughout the Gospel Age!

So we can notice that the entire divine testimony is harmonious whether it is given by the Law, the prophets, the Lord, or by his

apostles. And this ensemble conducted by the holy Spirit reproduces the most beautiful and perfect song—"The Song of Moses and the Lamb"—the song of redemption and re-establishment.

The verses of this song are "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." Oh how few know sufficiently the plan of God to be able to sing these verses and admire the greatness of His works. The glory of the things of God cannot be admired except by the overcomers who by faith recognize and accept the due time, the time of the re-establishment of the people to Edenic conditions.

"Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Yes, we can sing now the justice, truth, mercy, and immense love of God in all His actions. We know that there will be a time of blessing for poor mankind, for the poor groaning creation. The overcomers rejoice in the privilege of proclaiming to others the ways of God which are always just and true.

"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Here is a finale as wonderful as the hymn! It refreshes and gives strength. But how small is the number of those who sing this song in every circumstance. In comparison with the great majority of so-called Christians who have false creeds, the overcomers sing with pathos the song of the re-establishment of all things:

"All nations shall come and worship before the Lord."

"When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." { *Isaiah 26:9*}

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." { *Isaiah 11:9*}

All the earth will become a vast garden of Eden, the everlasting home for the well-being and happiness of all mankind.

The overcomers hold harps in their hands. It is not enough to have harps, it is not enough to know the song. This alone does not bring victory. The overcomers in the prophecy under consideration were singing, that is, they had the force and courage to face the opposition of enemies for, strange to say, the song has its enemies who are all those blinded by the great adversary.

If there still are children of the Lord in the bondage of mystic Babylon who are sitting by its tumultuous rivers and sometimes weep when they remember Zion, we do well to urge them all to take their harps from the willows, leave Babylon, and take refuge in the full liberty and joy of the children of God.

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." { *Revelation 5:13*}

Blessed be the Author of this song, Jehovah the Almighty. Blessed be the overcomers. And blessed be the hearers of this most sublime hymn, "The Song of Moses and the Lamb."

Amen.

The Acceptable Year of the Lord and the Day of Vengeance of Our God-Bro. Ewgen Dowgan, Ukraine

Dear brethren in our lord Jesus Christ. I greet you with the words of our dear Redeemer: "Peace be unto You!" Please accept the greetings from the brethren of the Ukraine.

The topic which we have chosen to speak on is "The Acceptable Year of the Lord and the Day of Vengeance of our God." From the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1,2 we read:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn."

Our Lord read this prophecy when he came to Nazareth, where he had been raised. From the Gospel of Luke we read:

"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 brokenhearted, 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. " { *Luke 4:16-19* }

No "Day of Vengeance"

In the prophecy we have read, we notice that our Redeemer did not mention the Day of Vengeance. Why not?

First, because it was the beginning of his mission. It was the dawn of the Gospel Age, already mentioned as the acceptable year of the Lord. At this time the wheat had not yet been separated from the chaff as prophesied by John the Baptist:

"But he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." { *Matthew 3:11,12* }

When sending out his disciples, our Lord told them:

"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" { *Matthew 10:5,6* }

At that time Israel still had the special favor mentioned by the prophet Daniel:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." { *Daniel 9:25-27* }

Thus we see that when Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophecy, he did not mention the Day of Vengeance. It was only the beginning of his

mission, the preaching of the gospel, good tidings of great joy, and it would not have been proper to quote the prophecy with such a message.

In Ecclesiasties 3:1 it is written that there is a time to every season and purpose. And when we read the *Studies in the Scriptures* we find the thought that time is a very important element in God's Plan. Therefore when our Lord quoted or uttered any words, he was careful to draw attention to the time element. After the death of our Savior, Israel's favor lasted another 3 1/2 years. After that time, favor was given to the Gentiles. The first Gentile called was Cornelius.

But let us ask ourselves: Would that have been the proper time to mention the Day of Vengeance spoken of by the prophet Isaiah? Jesus said:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." { *Luke 21:20-22* }

These words were probably uttered by our Lord at the end of his mission. Again we might ask: Why, in this year of God's favor, did the nation of Israel have to be punished, to receive vengeance? In Matthew we read:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous. And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered

thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." { *Matthew 23:29-38* }

Besides being reminded by Jesus that they killed the prophets, the nation of Israel had fulfilled the measure of their iniquities when they rejected and crucified their Messiah. They said, "His blood be on us, and on our children." { *Matthew 27:25* } In Luke we read:

"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' " { *Luke 23:26-31* }

We know from history that in 70 ad Jerusalem was besieged by the Roman army. The city itself was destroyed, the Temple was burned, and about a million of her inhabitants were slain. Again the question arises: Was this prophecy about the acceptable year of the Lord and the Day of Vengeance of our God directed exclusively to the nation of Israel, or could it be applied to the whole Christian world?

As we have stated, the year of the Lord's acceptance is the Gospel Age. We know that the favor which the nation of Israel had, and which they lost 31/2 years after the death of our Lord, passed at that time to the Gentiles, since then called Christian nations. The Apostle Paul, known from his own statement that he was an apostle to the Gentiles, tells us:

"For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but. . . circumcision is that of the heart." { *Romans 2:28,29* }

This means that all true Christians from various nations are called by God to become spiritual Israelites. Therefore the prophecy foretold by Isaiah will have its fulfillment with reference to Christendom also. Is this not reason for joy, knowing that the year of acceptance is also for us, even if we are not the Israel after the

flesh? This wonderful favor of the Gospel Age covers a period of almost two thousand years.

But in connection with this, the question arises: Will the other part of the prophecy be fulfilled, the words referring to the Day of Vengeance? We answer: Yes, it will be fulfilled.

Vengeance Upon Christendom

We will then ask a similar question: Why should this Day of Vengeance come upon Christendom? As we mentioned before, Israel had to be punished for the blood of the prophets, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, and for crucifying their Messiah.

What is the reason for punishment upon present day nominal Christendom? During the persecution of the first Christians, Saul of Tarsus—later called the Apostle Paul—while going to Damascus heard a voice from heaven, from Christ, saying, "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?" At that time our Lord was in heaven, he was a spiritual being. How could Saul persecute him? According to the statement of our Lord, he who persecutes the followers of Jesus, persecutes the Lord himself. History proves this.

How many of God's true children, such as John Hus and many others, died at the hands of nominal Christians? When we look back and see what took place in the Middle Ages or when we read the second volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*, we can learn many facts which testify to the terrible torture inflicted upon those, who in their hearts were obedient to God's Word.

How many true Christians perished at the hands of the cruel inquisition, the so-called "holy" inquisition? Consider the torture and brutality perpetrated by nominal Christians in the Middle Ages. Compare these acts with the stonings of the prophets, for which the nation of Israel received their punishments. We will see that Christendom, particularly the religious system of AntiChrist, committed more terrible acts upon the Lord's saints than anyone else. Should no one be held responsible for such wrong doings?

The Prophet Isaiah tells us "the earth also shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain." { *Isaiah 26:21* } This prophecy is having its fulfillment today. All the terrible things happening in the past are being made known to the people. And this blood is also calling for vengeance, as did the blood of Abel and the prophets.

Again we may ask: Who will execute vengeance for the spilled blood and for the cruelties and persecutions committed? The children of God should not retaliate. The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans said:

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay,' saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." { *Romans 12:19,20*}

The *Comments* state that some people are ashamed of such behavior. The Prophet Isaiah declares, "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." { *Isaiah 34:8*} From the foregoing we can see that vengeance belongs only to the Lord.

Jesus, in telling his disciples the parable of the necessity of prayer, and of being strong, said:

"And shall 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." { *Luke 18:7,8*}

When we turn our attention to the book of Revelation, we find these words:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto everyone of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." { *Revelation 6:9-11*}

We understand that this killing is not literal. It is self-denial, and faithfulness, and suffering with Christ. Many religious denominations use these texts to support their belief that a man has an immortal soul, but they forget that the Bible speaks of blood as a soul. As the blood of Abel called for vengeance—for God's justice observes everything—similarly the blood mentioned before spoke by deeds; it was not something separated from flesh.

According to these words we see that there had to be a certain number of killed ones. And when that number was completed, revenge would follow. In the seventh chapter of Revelation we are told that the full number of the Church consisted of 144,000 members. In the 14th chapter we read:

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 'And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, 'Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 'And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." { *Revelation 14:14-20*}

In the prophesy of Isaiah (63:1-4) we have a description of similar events, that he who comes from Edom—our Savior—tramples all of them in his fury.

We return once more to the book of Revelation. He who sat on the cloud is our Lord during his second presence. These events take place during the harvest of the Gospel Age. We see that when the earth is reaped, the end of the harvest comes and the number, which was mentioned when we read about the souls slain under the altar, will be fulfilled. Subsequently the vine of the earth has to be gathered, or the tares as mentioned by our Lord in another place. The work of treading is during the time of trouble.

According to the prophecy of our Lord this trouble will befall nominal Christendom, so-called spiritual Babylon. In Revelation 14:20 we are told that the blood came out of the winepress, as high as the horse bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs. In the same book we notice that the specially designated time for the Church's persecution is described as a certain number of years: 3 1/2 years (time, times and half a time). The same period was shown as 42 months, which when changed to days is 1260 days.

Applying a similar conversion we will now change furlongs to fathoms.

According to the old way of counting, one furlong contained 90 fathoms. When we change 1600 furlongs to fathoms, we have 144,000 fathoms. This number is familiar to us. It is the number of the Church. This day of vengeance, as the scriptures state, is only for the Church.

Horses in the scriptures represent doctrines or teachings; bridles represent those who lead by these doctrines. This would mean that vengeance for the Church will reach the highest religious powers—the heavens of the present time are rolling together and being prepared for the symbolic burning. The Apostle Peter speaks about this in his second letter:

"Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." { 2 Peter 3:6,7,13 }

As we see it this Day of Vengeance is just before us. To us this is an evidence that the number of the Church is not yet filled, the high calling continues, and the door is not yet shut. Therefore let us not slacken in running for the reward, which is still before us. Let us work while it is day, because the night is coming in which no man can work.

Let us remember that after the dark night an everlasting joy awaits us, an everlasting convention, which we will never have to leave. I wish all of you this everlasting joy, that all of us may be found worthy to be there, that our Lord by his merit will cover our imperfections and receive us cleansed and fit into his everlasting mansions. To Him, our Father, and our Redeemer Jesus Christ, be the glory now and forever. Amen.

My Word Shall Not Return Unto Me Void-Bro. Randy Gowryluk, Canada

It has been ten years since we had the privilege to be here. Sr. Winnie and our daughters join me in saying we are happy to see all of you continuing faithful. Your brethren of the Metropolitan Detroit ecclesia and surrounding areas send you their warmest greetings in the Lord.

The Impact of the Harvest Message

In the late 1960's an American film actress came to the Dawn offices in New Jersey. She was doing research into the life of John Reid, a Seattle newspaper publisher and social activist. She asked a rather strange question:

"Can you tell me perhaps what message Mr. Reid could have heard from a preacher named Charles Russell in Seattle in the summer of 1911? That message may have changed history forever. Something Russell said caused this man to fight like a champion for the poor and the powerless. He went to Russia and became a chief propagandist for Lenin of the Russian Revolution over about ten years. Russian royalty ended. European royalty was removed from the scene and western society was plagued and harassed by communism for decades. Many poor people received new hope for a time. A whole new other voice was heard to try to address the needs of mankind. Reid is the only American to be buried in the Kremlin. Something he heard at that convention affected him greatly."

The brethren were able to say that Brother Russell preached about the great changes in the rulership of earth.

Brethren, do we often take the Truth for granted? Do we fail to remember the Lord's passionate concern for mankind and for his Church? Do we have full trust in the Lord's control over us and in earth's affairs? Do we believe the Lord through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 55, verse 11, when he said:

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The Lord has affairs exactly where he wants them. We need not slacken our efforts to put out Truth when politics and religion reassert themselves, not even when a few honorable social schemes are promised or put into effect by shaky leadership all about us. Some coming events will be delusions to all mankind and possibly even to the "very elect." Satan himself can become an angel of light and all Christians must test the spirits or messages carefully.

Present Truth did So very much to give Christians the world over a deeper insight into character development. It also did something the Lord wanted as well in modern times: the examination of the

immortality of the soul and other false doctrines has exposed the urgency of the problems on our planet. There are physical problems:

1. Death and dying; and
2. Improper planning for future generations.

Human problems the world over became as important as thinking about heaven. Truth people convinced millions that immortality is not automatic. It is only for a few and must be earned at the price of great dedication and sacrifice. Only God can grant it.

Truth people have discovered how Satan lied to Mother Eve saying, "Thou shalt not surely die." And from that lie sprang all the heathen religions of these past six thousand years since the fall into sin. Just after the flood, Satan was extremely active creating false hopes of inherent immortality in the lives of early leaders, most notably Nimrod. The black arts, sorcery, incantation, magic—all grew into a system of disbelief which flourished in ancient Babylon. Nearly all of it, we know, was rebellious to the Father.

The earth was savage outside Eden. Men chose to follow those leaders who would misrepresent God, teach hatred for the death penalty, and convince men they don't really die. Those who believed this had these views reinforced by Satan and were more able to march into battlefields because they were promised to go immediately into heaven when they died.

The Impact of Satan

To this day most in this world would be shocked to learn that they still serve a blood-thirsty god in Satan. Nearly all politics of the past and present is based on the warrior mentality and the survival of the fittest. Now that man has the possibility of total warfare and the total annihilation of the race, leadership (including Satan who is adjusting his tactics) is searching for a way to keep its hold on man. Between the year 1893 and 1993 popes and leaders of all faiths have worked feverishly to unite in a common front. They are caught in a dilemma: How do you teach men to prepare to leave the planet, this physical world, and also deal with the rising tide of ideas suggesting that co-operation and survival of the race should be mankind's main concerns?

Bible Students distributed Truth literature at the 1993 Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in keeping with a 120-year-old

policy of attacking the immortality doctrine not only because it is simply unscriptural, but because it allows for an attitude of neglect of the earth and its future.

Bible Students said a hundred years ago, and they say strongly in 1994: Look to a desire to cultivate a heart of flesh and to heal those who are warlike. Believe in the message of Ecclesiasties 3:19,20:

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts. . . as the one dieth, So dieth the other. . . all go into one place. . . all turn to dust again."

Yes, at the same time as the clear teachings of the scriptures were opened to feed the true Christians of 100 years ago, in 1914 a powerful secondary message went out to all mankind: Decide whether your efforts are earthly or spiritual. Timing is crucial.

In 1894 and in 1914 machines and knowledge made everyone think that peace and prosperity were near. Families struggled against poverty; doctors battled the curse of death and sickness; leaders fought against poverty and lack of world organization. Man's thinking and his institutions were centuries old. Men still trusted that their kings could lead them. Down the ranks of nobles, the financially rich and influential, to the ranks of poor people, everyone tried to continue trusting as they had before.

But Europe in August of 1914 was a powder-keg of armed nations declaring their desire for peace when one assassin's bullet in Sarajevo showed how very helpless the educated really were as all nations were forced into war. The old destructive ways had won out and 50 million died in four years. National debts grew many times greater than before. Soon World War II was fought to get revenge; then cold wars; then later came the threat of total nuclear destruction.

Human institutions, kings, and finances all failed. The Lord could have stopped it, but he didn't. He gave leaders a test of how prepared they really were to lead and to bless at a time when selfish money lenders and arms-makers were saying: make war, make money. Money was available for artillery but not for peaceful development.

In 1917 poor Russian peasants marched and sang hymns as they starved in the bitter cold. As they had done before, they approached the Russian Winter Palace begging for food, and expected to receive it. Inside royalty and nobility danced and ate.

The Czar and the army were nervous. Their decision was to trample hundreds of peasants with their horses and cut them to pieces with their sabers in the name of order. God and our Lord put the question to the poor: "Are your needs being met by those who claim to be managing my affairs on earth?"

From that one act, and other mistakes, world-wide revolution erupted. The church—so-called Christendom—and the royalty of Europe reaped years of threat and embarrassment. They were reminded constantly during those years that mankind was earthly and far less spiritual than they had hoped.

We believe that the preaching of the time attacking the immortality of the soul had many effects:

1. Institutions, especially the church, were "weighed in the balances and found wanting."
2. Crushing debt stopped most of the reform movements.
3. Wars, greed, and wild out-of-control chemical manufacturing damaged the ecosystem of the whole world.
4. Most men began to seek human solutions to problems. The spiritual leaders of the time were overwhelmed with problems of management and were bankrupt of ideas. If God allowed the kings to trample and kill the poor and needy, then in their mind, God and King were wrong. Millions lost hope in the God of the Bible. The religious elements began to melt with fervent heat. { *2 Peter 3:10* } Millions began to say that religious matters had no business in earthly matters, and atheism grew world-wide.

Yes, men like John Reid, the American communist, did much to change history, but recently even that strong ideology itself has faded. This shows that the Lord allowed a misguided cause—communism—to accomplish His purpose: to challenge and weaken the usurped leadership of the Adversary, to "spoil his goods" { *Mark 3:27* } and to begin to set up His throne for Jesus our Lord.

Today, fully in keeping with the Divine Plan, serious interest in the high calling has declined in most parts of the earth. The full number of the true Church is quickly being found faithful. Mankind's agenda is changed to a search for peace, harmony, and productive life, even if for survival alone, because life is short and precious. God's word is not wasted. It is prospering in the work it was sent to do: Change the world's agenda.

The Earth is in Peril

Scientific minds tell us that if we were able to stop all pollution tomorrow, it would still not stop the planet from dying. Only centuries of peace and renewal would help. Superhuman wisdom of The Christ is required now to undo the great damage.

John in Revelation chapter 17, verses 1-6, speaks saying:

"Come here; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters [many peoples of the earth]. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. . . . I saw a woman sit upon the scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns [that is, beautifully and richly arrayed—a system of world-wide religious and political power]. . . and upon her forehead was written a name: Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and Abomination of the Earth. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. . . and I wondered with great wonder."

In verse 7 we are told by the angel: "Why didst thou wonder [about the harlot and the scarlet-colored beast]?" (vs. 8) The beast "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder."

We read that those who support the revived beast "have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." (vs. 13) Verse 12 tells of ten kings who receive power as kings one hour with the beast, which means a short period of time.

Brethren, those familiar with verse 11 know that those with power will have seven, in fact eight different heads, eight different past experiences or styles of leadership, which is their collective strength to attempt to lead them through the crisis—a crisis which we are experiencing today. Yes, they will search for and copy the wisdom of Alexander, Napoleon, the Romans, and the Babylonian kings of old. What most interests us is the collective leadership style. The crucial question is whether the leadership now forming will, as its first priority, make careful provision to reverse the damage being done to the earth. Or will these leaders be caught up in their frustrations and hunger for power and empire and opt for yet another fit of economic and "chemical" madness, even genetic experimentation, which could remove all hope for mankind and for

continued life on the planet? Does this not fit the warning, "But as the days of Noah were, So shall also the presence of the Son of Man be." They knew not the time of their visitation.

Will "giants in the land" be benevolent or hurtful? John tells us that a peaceful environment will not exist for in Revelation 17:14 we read: "These [kings and the beast] shall make war with the Lamb [our Lord and the glorified Church] and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings."

We can be sure that some efforts by leaders may indeed be admirable and needed. Isaiah 23:17 does talk of Christendom's fornication with the kings once more: "Tyre shall turn to her hire and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms." But verse 18 brings out the fact that eventually, after troubles, "her hire shall be holiness to the Lord."

If there will be any good motive or good intentions in Tyre [Christendom], the Lord will eventually show the whole world how the wrath [mistakes of mankind] will praise Him, proof again that our Father and our Lord Jesus carry out their works with ease. Oh how well the holy apostle Paul described the Father's majestic character: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God."

So, brethren, we know the results of the conflict will be stupendous. This delights us and encourages us. How can the result be anything but glorious for the Lord?

False Church vs. True Church

We wish to ask another question, though, concerning Revelation 17:16. The language is unmistakable: "These shall hate the harlot and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." What causes this surprising bitterness and destructive nature in the ten horns and in the beast, this anger shown toward the harlot? In verse 7 the angel asks John, "Why didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery. . . [vs. 8] they that dwell on the earth shall wonder."

The saints are informed beforehand. We have that assurance that the Father's prophecies are not empty. We are also told why the ten nations and the beast hate the harlot so: "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree." (vs. 17)

We believe that the nations begin to see that Papacy's ways are false and selfish. She is no longer fit to lead the world into the 21st

century. Her ways will be shown plainly. She is eager only for power and is unable to show true love for mankind, incapable of nurturing mankind into the era of reconstruction of the Millennial Age. A whore does not make the best mother. We cannot forget the confrontation which must yet occur between Christian and Jew which will result in Jacob's trouble. How reasonable it seems that the fundamental error of anti-Semitism, hatred of Israel's favor, will disqualify Babylon from any favor.

Even though we are So insignificant, the Lord will use us to finish the harvest and carry out all his purposes.

Another example of the Father having made promises concerning a grand part of the plan, how it must prosper, is of course the development and exaltation of the Church. The Church is not conquered by persecution; in its encounter with evil it is developed and exalted.

The hopes of the Church and the ability of the Church to continue to witness are our concerns along with the time and circumstances of her delivery to be with the Lord. Another concern is for those of us who have doubts and fears about how to conduct ourselves in this period of violence and change in the world today. We are not without assurance. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 4:10:

"We both labour and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

We are assured of our daily needs and are promised the great spiritual assurances, but we are not without tests and deprivations. If we use them and claim them, the pieces of the Christian armor are ours too. In warfare, we know that soldiers will endure tremendous hardship when they believe in their cause and trust in their leader with all their heart and mind. The Father blesses those who have implicit trust in Him and in the Lord. If we stay in the Lord's house—the ecclesia arrangement—and feed on pure spiritual food, we are assured that we will be blessed spiritually: "Whose house are we [the Lord's family] if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." { *Hebrews 3:6* }

Yes, in life you and I will go regularly to the doctor who has always demonstrated his skill, his concern, and confidence in helping us. We learn best from the instructor who has skill and confidence, and we are at our best spiritually when we walk confidently with the proper assurances.

Sometimes, however, like Peter who just finished walking on the water, we at times begin to sink, and we ask: Lord, give us a direct blessing or encouragement.

Have we as Bible Students failed to see the blessings all around us? Has our old creature asked the new creature: Where are your assurances that the life of sacrifice is a sound idea? Does the new creature remember and take courage from our Lord in John 14:1,2 when he said,

"Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [vs. 11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for my works themselves."

In doctrinal and prophetic matters we are told directly by our Lord what to expect in the end times. Luke 21:24-38 says:

1 Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the Gentile times be fulfilled.

1 There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring. The best translation of the word "perplexity" means "no way out."

1 Men's hearts fail them for fear [far more fear than we have in our flesh because we are knowledgeable].

1 The powers of heaven shall be shaken. Who can look at the confusion of former Yugoslavia and fail to see the shame of strange Christians using artillery to convert their Muslim neighbors; the killing of babies and senseless destruction?

1 "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud [a symbol of troubles] and great glory." (vs. 27)

1 The saints receive their encouragement: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up [unbend your necks] for your redemption draweth nigh."

Perhaps the greatest encouragement in the verses following these is, of course, Israel's march on to the stage of world history. It is the fig tree among all the trees [all the other nations]. Tender shoots, we know, went forth in 1878 nourished by Zionism.

Remember the terrible struggle to reclaim the land, the payment to Arabs of ten times the value of the land, reclaiming of swamps, farming in the desert, millions dying in the holocaust, the victory in 1948, nationhood, the 1956 war, the 1967 war, and now the shaky peace of today. After So many fulfillments we should rejoice! If we asked for visible signs that the Father's words do not fail, we have many, many examples.

Our Lord says to us who are watching, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." We are enthralled in the works of the Lord. We have this sense of the inescapability of this adventure, and we are ecstatic as we take in these events. No wonder this struggle is compared to the pain and drama of childbirth. The Mediatorial Reign must be born. There is no going back. The Lord is speeding events as we speak. The Lord's children still choose that path which will give them the best possible outcome from this conflict and they look out for the highest welfare of their brethren as well.

There are many other examples of God's word accomplishing its mission. In 1890 Br. Russell wrote that some brethren then living would see the gathering storm of trouble, but that very few would pass through all the troubles. (Volume 3, p. 228) Matt. 24:20 urges us to make our flight before "winter," in other words, before the "dark night" or severest phase of the time of trouble.

Yes, the "great hail" of hard truths of our day is sweeping away the "refuge of lies," the saints are being sealed in their foreheads with an intellectual appreciation of God's word. It only remains for us to play the difficult role of the advance guard of the Army of the Saints to draw the fire and witness to the truth, and to prove our faithfulness in these evil days. We all have the freedom to be where we want. We choose to be here, drawn by the promises and assured by David in Psalms 46:4,5 that God's word will prosper:

"[the Church is] the city of God, the holy place. . . God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her."

Friends, one more strong encouragement is given to us by our Lord in Matthew, chapter 20, in the parable of the eleventh hour laborers. When we realize our consecrations are very late in the Gospel Age and our flesh is So imperfect, we may feel insignificant, that perhaps we are too late to make a contribution. Not so! The parable speaks to all of us today.

We remember the story: a vineyard owner hired workers early; again at the sixth and ninth hours others were urged to start work, and again even as late as the eleventh hour. The wages were not clearly stipulated, but all were promised an appropriate reward. They were even asked why they were idle.

We know it's not easy. There are professed Christians who don't fight the good fight of faith, who don't let us work in peace in the Lord's vineyard, and who don't encourage us to search for truth. Today some may even begin to see the accuracy of present truth, particularly how So many prophecies speak about the total collapse of earth's institutions. Sadly many are envious of, and even hateful toward, our system of belief. Yet let us humbly appreciate our great privilege of service and continue to prove our usefulness to the Father by seizing this tremendous opportunity. How like the Father to be So gracious to us who are new to the truth, who feel capable of only modest efforts at best. Even with us latecomers, the vineyard owner—our Lord—will finish the harvest and carry out all his purposes. Of this we can be sure.

Concluding Thoughts

Now let's sum up, brethren:

! God's truth since the Lord's presence—its awesome power—speaks to the Church and it also stuns the whole world and awakens it to try to deal with its problems until God, the Lord, and the Church will bring them out of their misery.

! Most of our modern search for justice had its beginnings in the Harvest Message. It is evident in films, writing, and politics these past 100 years and more.

! Spiritual and earthly leaders are forced to believe that man is mortal. No half-spiritual, half-earthly governments can stand because they are double-minded, and double-minded ones are unstable in all their ways, are unable to lead well.

! The earth and its oceans are in danger because of false leadership; deliverance from destruction depends totally on God and His Plan.

! If governments go counter to God's prophetic plans to bless Israel, they will fail miserably.

! The Lord gives us many assurances that the Church continues to be developed and prepared. We are even told in some detail how

the Church will finish its course. God will be in the midst of the Church to help it.

I We must never fear if we enter into kingdom work late and with only a few talents. The blessings will be great even for those who work only a short time serving the Lord.

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

May the Lord add his blessing and may each of you continue to receive a rich blessing here in convention.

The Sin Offering-Bro. Jérôme Gruhn, France

In Hebrews 13:13, the apostle Paul explains that the animals sacrificed in the Atonement Day type were sin-offerings whose bodies were burned outside the camp.

The distinctive features of the Day of Atonement were the sin-offerings. There were two sacrifices. The first was that of a bullock which was furnished by the high priest himself. Its blood was to be applied on behalf of himself and his house according to Leviticus 16. This pictures the death of Jesus and the first imputation of the merit of the Lord on behalf of the church of the first born.

The second sin-offering on the Day of Atonement was the sacrifice of the Lord's goat. This goat was not provided by the high priest but was given by the people. It pictures those coming from the world who accept the redemption of Jesus and consecrate their life even unto death in the service of the Lord during the Gospel age.

In Hebrews 10:8 the apostle talks about several sacrifices offered according to the law and that they were types of "better sacrifices." From his words we recognize the teaching that God from the beginning foresaw developing disciples who would be members of the body of the redeemer and who would have the same experiences as their master, going through sufferings, trials, and death. They would then be associated with Christ in his glory. They would have a heavenly, spiritual nature and be joint-heirs with Messiah in his kingdom.

According to the plan of God, Jesus is the high priest of this order. We are priests of a lower rank and are being trained like Christ who was trained for the very purpose of accomplishing the

wonderful work of the Millennial age. The church is now being trained to be able to accomplish the important work of regenerating human beings. This work will be assigned to her during the Millennial reign of righteousness of Messiah, her master. The Apostle Peter calls this class of disciples a "royal priesthood" { *1 Peter 2:9* } because Christ and the elect will be kings and priests.

The sacrifice of Jesus, the High Priest, was accomplished during the 3 1/2 years of his ministry on the earth and ended with his death. Forty days after his death, Jesus went into heaven there to appear in the presence of God where he offered on our behalf the value and merit of his sacrifice accomplished at Calvary. { *Hebrews 9:24* } He obtained a greater glory and was honored with the divine nature. He then applied the merits of his sacrifice to all who desire to become members of the royal priesthood. Christ and the Church sacrifice their human nature in devotion and faithfulness to God. They will obtain an exceedingly great reward which is a heavenly, spiritual nature and the kingdom.

So the Heavenly Father expects from us, His children who try to do "His will," obedience to His commandments, So that we may find grace with the high priest. { *Hebrews 4:16* } The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:1,

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The Privilege of Sacrifice

According to these words, one could conclude that God requires sacrifices from us. Bro. Russell writes about this matter in the first volume:

"[This text] means that we should consecrate to God's service every power and talent we possess, that henceforth we may live not for self . . . but for, and in the obedient service of, him who bought us with his own precious blood. . . . Paul shows that it is only because we are holy that we are acceptable sacrifices. We are not holy like Jesus, who knew no sin, . . . but we have this treasure in . . . earthen vessels, that the glory of our ultimate perfection may be seen to be of God's favor. . . . God has justified us freely from all sin, through our faith in Christ's sacrifice on our behalf." (A226)

The apostle speaks here about the opportunity offered to some to become disciples of Christ and joint-heirs with Messiah in his

kingdom. He urges them to grasp the value of the wonderful privilege offered by God to sacrifice themselves in His service by showing the richness of determination that will motivate all obedient listeners to lead a holy life conformed to the will of God. They will be able to demonstrate their faith by works and will show a burning desire to live a life of holiness. This is an exhortation to consecrate to the Lord. The body with its members is the organ of all a man's activity. So it must be consecrated to God for a witness of its thankfulness as a living sacrifice which consists of activity in God's service. This service is reasonable because God loved us and saved us first. God accepted us through the merit of His son which is imputed instead of actually being given to us. In Romans 6:3,4 the apostle writes:

"Know ye not, that So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even So we also should walk in newness of life."

Which means:

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
{ *Romans 12:2*}

How can we be transformed as the apostle suggests? By accepting the high calling during the Gospel age, by demonstrating our faith and our love to the redeemer, our master and Lord, all of which obligates us to share in Christ's suffering. "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered," wrote the apostle in Hebrews 5:8,9. Likewise, dear brethren, if he learned obedience through suffering, could we hope to obtain glory in an easier way? Let us be faithful unto death as was Jesus, our Redeemer.

Through the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement, the Lord teaches us that the consecrated benefit from a special imputation of the merit of Jesus for sins committed. And by being justified through this merit, they are qualified to become partakers with Christ in the glorious function of priesthood.

In order to benefit from the merit of Christ, we have to walk in Jesus' footsteps, we have to sacrifice our earthly rights and even our life. Christ's merit covers our shortcomings and allows us to be a part of his body, to be partakers in his suffering, to be a part of the "New Creation" and become members of the spiritual body of

Christ in his kingdom. However, for us to take advantage of these wonderful promises, we must respect the conditions of our covenant based on sacrifice and, as it is written, walk in the footsteps of our Lord and Redeemer.

Let us rejoice to be partakers of Christ's sufferings. Let us accept this participation and drink the cup with humility and obedience, knowing that it is the heavenly Father who gives it to us to drink. Every member of the future "spiritual heavenly body" must be partakers of the suffering of Christ because the Lord said on the evening of his death, while presenting the cup of suffering to his disciples, "drink ye all of it," which means "drink everything." Don't leave any of the sufferings for others. Let us not underestimate the great privilege we have to be partakers of the cup of sufferings of our dear Redeemer. Otherwise we could lose our reward.

It is common knowledge that there are many tribulations to endure in life. Hence the Apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 4:12-14, exhorts the brethren by saying:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

What a reassuring comfort! Regarding Saul's calling, the Lord told Ananias in a vision:

"Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." { *Acts 9:15,16*}

It is not surprising that this same man, who later became the Apostle Paul, said later:

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." { *Colossians 1:24*}

The Example of Paul

The Apostle Paul is a fine example for us. He suffered doing Christ's work and these sufferings prepared him for this great

ministry by making him compassionate and merciful. During his numerous trips, he faced many obstacles especially from the Jews. But he loved all his brethren in the truth. His sufferings enabled him to better understand the sorrows of his brethren whom he loved, as we read in Philippians 4:1,

"Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

So it is not surprising that the apostle could say at the end of his career, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." { *2 Timothy 4:7*} There is no doubt that this apostle provided the best example for those who want to follow in the Lord's footsteps and become sympathetic priests in the kingdom. All of us must have similar experiences and show a spirit of faithfulness to the Truth, a spirit of assistance, mercy, and love in the master's service—our time and our talents belong to the Lord.

Moreover, we find a certain strength in the advice the Apostle Paul gives us to make our calling and election sure, especially when he says, "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth So easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" { *Hebrews 12:1*} by following the narrow way during the Gospel Age. The apostle urges us to run with zeal So we might obtain the prize and receive an incorruptible crown. { *1 Corinthians 9:25*}

Our participation in the work of restoring the world depends on our faithfulness in suffering for Christ as the apostle writes in Romans 8:18,

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

It is then clear: the church members are partakers in the sufferings of Christ, but in no sense are they partakers in the Ransom. However, because they come from the world, they benefit from the ransom in being redeemed for a great price, { *1 Corinthians 6:20*} by the precious blood of Christ { *1 Peter 1:19*} through which they are also washed from their sins. { *Revelation 1:5*} Instead of receiving their part of the merit of Christ in restitution with mankind during the Millennial age, they benefit from the dispensation of the Gospel age, which the Lord opened to allow faithful ones who follow in the Lord's footsteps to be partakers of his sufferings, So they might take part in future blessings. For that we must sacrifice our rights to earthly restitution and life.

Honor, glory and immortality are promised to all overcomers. They will be joint-heirs with Christ { *Romans 8:17* } and will accomplish the work of restitution of all mankind. Let us read the advice of Bro. Russell in Volume 6:

"None accepting Christ as the Passover Lamb, and thus accepting the antitype as taking the place of the type, could any longer with propriety prepare a typical lamb and eat it in commemoration of the typical deliverance. The appropriate thing thenceforth for all believers in Jesus as the true Passover lamb would be the sprinkling of the doorposts of the heart with his blood. . . realizing their sins [are] propitiated through his blood, and that through his blood they now have forgiveness of sins." (F463)

"Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." { *Hebrews 10:21,22* }

And Bro. Russell adds:

"Thus to accept our Lamb, and So to commemorate his death for us, means expectancy regarding the promised deliverance of the people of God, and therefore signifies that those appreciating and memorializing intelligently while in the world shall not be of the world; but shall be as pilgrims and as strangers, who seek more desirable conditions, free from the blights and sorrows and bondage of the present time of the reign of Sin and Death." (F463)

Let us remember Christ's last words, "It is finished." May we discern that this means the accomplishment of his sin-offering on our behalf, that this would bring us healing and that he lives eternally to intercede on our behalf and to assist us in every time of need.

The Two Goats of the Sin Offering

In the type two goats are given by the people. They represent the two classes of the Church of the first-born. Aaron presented the goat on which the lots were cast for the Lord and made a "sin-offering" of it. This goat was sacrificed and treated the same as the bullock which was previously sacrificed. Only those who follow the master are a part of the sin-offering and will eventually be members of his glorified body. As we mentioned earlier, the bodies of these animals (the bullock and Lord's goat) were burned outside

the camp. The Apostle Paul writes in Hebrews 13:13, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." This means, "Let us separate ourselves from the world and suffer with him."

The type shows us that the church must follow Jesus' footsteps in the accomplishment of the sacrifices. Let us remember that the blood of the bullock was not applied for the people's sins, but only for those of the high priest [Aaron] and his house, which means for the sins of the Church of the first-born. The second sin-offering [the goat] was not offered for these same persons because it was not necessary that another sacrifice be made for them. It was offered by the high priest as a secondary part of his own offering for the people. We should keep in mind this essential point because otherwise we might easily fall into error. The merit that followed was applied for all the people So that the expiation was made for all. In the antitype, it is only the merit of the sacrifice of our Lord that confers any virtue to our sacrifice.

In the type, it was not the [under] priests who offered sacrifices, but the high priest. It was his sole responsibility. This means, in antitype, that the entire responsibility rests in the hands of the Lord. As his members, we have a part with him in the world's sin-offering. We are partakers of some sufferings which are counted as his sufferings. We ourselves could not, through our sufferings, expiate either our sins or those of anybody else. Everything is in the hands of Christ.

How wonderful is the promise given to us if we become partakers in the sufferings of our Master.

Our Lord accepts the consecrated individuals who are represented by the two goats. Those who have enough zeal are accepted as his members and offered as a part of his own sacrifice. When this work is finished and the Church complete, Christ will present the blood of the Lord's goat (i. e. , of the Church) as his own blood and will apply it for the sins of all the people. As soon as the Kingdom of Christ is established in power and great glory, then The Christ, head and body, will take charge of mankind to deliver them from sin and death and restore them to human perfection. The goal is to bless the world and bring it back into harmony with God.

The Lord's goat represented all of the Lord's "little flock" of faithful followers. They are all alike, and all come by the same narrow way. What is true of this company as a whole is true of every one of it, except that the body must be completed and the all

the sacrifices ended before the "blood" of the goat (representative of the entire body of Christ) will be presented on the "Mercy Seat" of Divine Justice.

Thus we see clearly that this entire Gospel age is an age of suffering and trials for those who sacrifice the human, earthly nature in order to become partakers of the spiritual, the divine nature, for the purpose of accomplishing the work of the regeneration of mankind. As soon as the sacrifice of Jesus on behalf of his "body" and his "house" was presented to the Father, the evidence of the Father's acceptance of that sacrifice was manifested in sending the holy Spirit at Pentecost on the faithful footstep followers, those already consecrated who had walked with the Master under his direction. They were waiting for the Father's acceptance of their sacrifices (acceptable in the Beloved) and of their begetting as sons by the Spirit of adoption.

As the goat filled up that which was behind of the sin-offering, in like manner does the "little flock" fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. { *Colossians 1:24* } Our share in the afflictions of Christ (our sacrifice being imperfect) would be without value if the merit of Christ were not imputed to us, if we were not first justified by the sacrifice of our Lord and by the grace which permits us to offer our "justified selves." So as members of his body, we are granted a share in the sufferings of Christ, that we may share his glory and in his future work of blessing all mankind in the restitution of all things. { *Hebrews 10:16-18* }

The day will come when the sacrifice of the last member of this "Lord's goat" will be consumed and the sin-offering forever ended. When the last members of the little flock will have completed the "body of Christ" beyond the second veil, in the perfection of the spiritual nature already begun in the new mind or will, which now controls their mortal bodies, they will obtain the promised higher reward, which is the divine nature. { *2 Peter 1:4* } Passing through the second "veil" means to the body what it meant to the head. The presenting of the blood of the goat holds the same significance as the presenting of the blood of the bullock. It is therefore a comfort that despite our weaknesses, our mortal condition, the Father accepts our participation in the "sin-offering."

O blessed hope! David spoke prophetically on Jesus' behalf in his psalm, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." { *Psalms 17:15* } How sublime for us is the promise in Romans 8:29,

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

John adds in 1 John 3:2,

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Dear brethren, how wonderful is the promise given to us through the word of God if we accept with joy the invitation to be partakers in the sufferings of our Master, to be partakers of the sin-offering as long as we are here.

Amen.

Humility-Bro. Ion Hosu, Romania

Blessed be god the father of our lord Jesus Christ, who has given us the marvelous privilege to meet together at this "Bethel" where we can partake of the joys of the new kingdom and where we can encourage each other by our faith.

We appreciate this new manifestation of love toward us as being a sign by which God gives fresh assurance that He will be with us 'til the end of the age, a fact which requires gratitude from us in all our prayers. We had greatly desired to be with you in 1992, but Satan hindered us and the Lord permitted it. From this we learned that we must be more humble and appreciate the will of the heavenly Father.

Dear brethren, on this occasion I thought I would speak about humility, knowing the great importance this virtue has in the formation of Christian character. To be received into the sanctified family, we must possess a measure of humility through which we recognize that we are sinners and that we need a redeemer. Many despise those who cultivate such virtues as humility, meekness, and patient endurance. They think that such lose their personality and are nai ve.

In 2 Samuel 6:20-22 we learn that David was despised by his wife, Saul's daughter, because he danced for joy before the Lord when the ark of the covenant was brought into the city of David. He said, "I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight."

Let's see what happens to those who cultivate the opposite of these qualities, e. g. , conceit, pride, superiority, etc. In Isaiah 14:13,14 we read:

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High."

This protecting cherub who had been created in such great brilliance did not appreciate humility. On the contrary he became puffed up in his heart and wished for a greater glory than the one in which he was created. For this he was thrown down from the mount of God and eventually he will be destroyed.

Here are some examples of those who humbled themselves due to circumstances.

1. The Israelites while journeying through the Sinai desert sinned greatly in the making of the golden calf for the purpose of prostrating themselves before it. So the Lord said to them through his servant Moses that He could not go up with them to Canaan because of their idolatry and their lack of faith. Upon hearing these words, the people became sorrowful and humbled themselves and put off their ornaments. { *Exodus 33:4-6* } The Lord appreciated their humility and at the insistence of Moses He did not leave them.

2. When Saul saw himself as small in his own eyes, God raised him up and made him king of Israel. { *1 Samuel 15:17* }

3. King Ahab after having been rebuked by the prophet Elijah because he had killed Naboth and stolen his vineyard, humbled himself before the Lord by fasting, walking "softly," and putting on sackcloth and ashes. God appreciated Ahab's humility and did not bring the promised destruction during his lifetime but during that of his son. { *1 Kings 21:27-29* }

4. King Hezekiah cried and prayed when the prophet Isaiah told him he would die. But when the king of Assyria threatened him with war, he rent his garments and clothed himself with sackcloth. { *Isaiah 37:1 38:5* }

5. The people of Ninevah were told by the prophet Jonah that in 40 days their city would be destroyed because of their degradation. Although the prophet gave no advice about what to do, nevertheless from king to servant, and even children and animals,

all humbled themselves, fasting in sackcloth and ashes. "And God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them" because they had humbled themselves. { *Jonah 3:5-10* }

6. The covenant people quickly forgot about God and worshipped pagan gods. By this they brought upon themselves the curse written in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. After oppression, pain, and various troubles they humbled themselves and cried unto the Lord for help.

Even in our day we find those who, having been overcome by enemies and difficulties, decide to fast for a time and pray in a state of humility. Though they may not be in covenant relationship with God, they receive the help necessary to go through their difficulties.

If we look at history with all its diseases, misfortunes, suffering of all kinds, and even, in the end, death, we see lessons of humility which will help mankind in the future. We have a hymn where the poet says:

"Lord, humble me So I can receive your grace. There is no goodness in me but that which is of your son, Jesus."

Paul recognized that the heavenly Father would not listen to his prayer for relief, leaving him with a thorn in his flesh So he would not be puffed up because of the many visions he was given.

The Importance of Humility in the Life of the Consecrated

To be useful in the service of the heavenly Father, the virtue of humility is necessary. Let us note, dear brethren, that Moses, a man of God, though he was taught in all the wisdom of Egypt and was called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, was not sufficiently qualified to serve God. He had to spend 40 years as a humble shepherd in Midian before he could be fully qualified to be the great deliverer of Israel, leading them out from Egypt and into Canaan.

A scripture teaches that if someone wants the honor God gives, he should look for it in His way, the way of humility. Only those who are truly humble are given such honor. If you want to be a vessel used by the Lord, humble yourself under the hand of God and He will exalt you in due time. { *1 Peter 5:6* } Don't think you can achieve honor quickly, but do whatever is put before you wholeheartedly and with all your strength. Begin and continue to clean

your earthly vessel So you may be found worthy for the Master's use.

Indeed, it is no easy thing to follow the path of humility, to always put away human ambitions and keep our sacrifice on the altar until everything is consumed. Only if we are humble and faithful can the Lord make us chosen vessels to carry His name to others.

The heavenly Father finds a way for us to pass through the exaltation of joy and the depths of suffering So that all the dross and any kind of impurity of the old nature will be removed. This allows us to become chosen characters of rare value: genuine diamonds!

Our Lord Jesus, although perfect and without sin, learned to obey and submit himself to the Father's will. He fasted 40 days, humbled himself, and was like a mute lamb before those who judged and mocked him unjustly. He humbled himself even to a most ignominious death, "a death on the cross." That is why "God hath highly exalted him. . . that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth." { *Philippians 2:9,10* }

Jesus did not exercise humility only on occasion: it was the essence of his entire life. In his earthly life, which was a total abnegation of his own will in perfect humility and submission to the Father's will, Jesus found perfect peace and joy. In his preaching he said to those who listened: "Learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart." { *Matthew 11:29* }

He never boasted that he had come to win glory as a martyr; he did not even allow them to say, "Good Master." At the end of his life Jesus did not even expect a reward for the sacrifice he had made for 3 1/2 years, but humbly prayed, "Father, glorify thou me. . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." { *John 17:5* }

Let us consider attentively how the prophet Daniel humbled himself to understand the visions he was given. He prayed and stood with his nation even though he had not sinned as many others had. He said: "We have sinned. . . our fathers, our princes, and all the people." { *Daniel 9:4-8* } The Lord heard and looked upon Daniel's humility, and by His angel strengthened him and called him a "man greatly beloved." (vs. 23)

Paul in *Philippians 2:3-5* tells us,

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

John the Baptist was told that Jesus had begun to baptize and make disciples and that many followed him. Full of holy humility he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." { *John 3:30*}

How can we esteem others better than ourselves? It is only by cultivating this virtue of humility. It helps us see in our brethren remarkable qualities which surpass our own and guides us to respect the interests of others.

Even though he was heir to the throne of Israel, Jonathan saw in David some chosen qualities such as zeal for God and His chosen people. He made a covenant with David and loved him with all his heart. { *1 Samuel 18:3*}

Let This Mind Be In You

I have read the Bible since childhood, but for a long time I never understood this verse in Philippians: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," which is to say, humble yourselves to the will of the Father. The apostles, although they had walked with the Lord for 3 1/2 years, did not learn this important lesson. They often argued among themselves about which of them would be accounted the greatest should they remain without the Lord. Others asked for the honored places in the kingdom, that is to say, to be on the left or right of the Lord.

The Lord warned that what occurred among the heathen—where The Great expect to be served—should not occur among them. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." { *Matthew 20:27*} In other words, let him humble himself.

Shortly before his crucifixion, the Lord wanted to impress this lesson more deeply upon their minds. When the supper had ended, he took a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. Peter protested, knowing full well that in Israel such service was done by servants. But Jesus told him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." { *John 13:8*} After washing everyone's feet, Jesus sat down at the table and asked,

"Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for So I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have

washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet." { *John 13:12-14*}

Or, in other words, humble yourselves before each other if you want to achieve perfect spiritual cleanliness.

The apostle Peter after long years in the Lord's service advises us in 1 Peter 3:3,4 to "let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Peter also says in 1 Peter 5:5,6,

"Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

My beloved brethren, if we carefully analyze the fruits of the spirit as well as the description of love found in 1 Corinthians 13, we will see that there is no pride in love. It does not seek its own; love does not boast. In true love there is humility, kindness, and self-control.

Humility is a precious pearl, a jewel of great price. It is a tiara that will shine from the head of the victorious. A humble man is not jealous nor does he even envy the position of anyone. He rejoices when others are honored and himself ignored because he has learned to say together with the apostle, "I am nothing."

I would like us to distinguish between humility due to specific situations, and humility as a feature of character for a child of God. The prophet Micah tells us:

"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" { *Micah 6:8*}

How can we walk humbly with God? Noah, full of holy fear, did what God commanded. The apostle tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. { *Philippians 2:12*} In the Garden of Gethsemane the Lord Jesus had a holy fear that he somehow might have left something undone. So we should always submit ourselves with humility, looking in our hearts for the Father's approval.

Beloved brethren, we need to pray more earnestly to the heavenly Father, and even fast, So we can better submit our old will and ourselves to this virtue of humility, without which no child of God will receive the promised reward. The poet writes, "The gift of the holy Spirit is in the valley of degradation. Blessed are those who look for the way of humility."

I thank God for the blessing He has given me to express this lesson, and I thank you for your attention. May God bless you.

Amen.

Be Thankful-In Everything Give Thanks {*}- Bro. Mieczyslaw Jakubowski, Poland

I am very thankful to God and the brethren for organizing this wonderful spiritual feast which can be described as a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God.

My subject is straight forward and simple, consisting of only six words. However, they are very important in everyday life. Thankfulness is a beautiful attribute of a person's character, and sometimes we find it in the brute creation. It is impossible to imagine how any human or angelic being who lacks this attribute can be pleasing to God.

We can be certain that in the eyes of God the degree of our approval depends upon the amount of thankfulness we have in our hearts which prompts us to obedience and self-sacrifice. A feeling of thankfulness in an intelligent human being is an element that comprehends God's love and goodness, and helps him gain and maintain fellowship with God. If God's goodness did not awaken any feeling of thankfulness in us, then God would likewise have no pleasure in bestowing His favor upon us.

The early forefathers, having within them much of the image of God, praised Him in various ways and showed their thankfulness through prayers and different sacrifices. With the passage of time, however, men became degraded and, being under the influence of Satan, began to lose the feeling of thankfulness. The Apostle Paul wrote about this in Romans 1:21: "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations."

This same apostle, when predicting the difficult end times of the Gospel Age, said: "Men shall be lovers of their own selves. . .

unthankful." { 2 Timothy 3:2} Inside every true and noble heart, however, a feeling of thankfulness is awakened because of the love and goodness experienced, which in turn encourages us to higher goals and noble deeds.

If human kindness or love awakens in us a feeling of thankfulness, should not this feeling be so much greater toward God and our Lord Jesus? When we realize that we were under the penalty of death, burdened by sin and weaknesses, and that God bestowed such enormous grace upon us that we became justified, accepted as sons of God, called to be joint-heirs with Christ and receive God's nature; how tremendously thankful we need to be for that goodness, which we don't deserve. The longer we remain in the service of God with this beautiful Truth, the more our debt grows. Thankfulness is a way of repaying the debt to righteousness, and a lack of it would imply ignorance without character.

The Debts We Owe

In addition to our tremendous debt to God, we have smaller debts to pay our neighbors. We will mention just a few examples beginning with some of our small debts:

1. We have a debt to the country where we live, and its government. We need to be thankful for a measure of freedom, order and safety. For the freedom of our country several hundred thousand Poles and 600,000 Russians gave their lives. Every government tries to provide peace, order, safety and good living conditions for its citizens, and we know well that even the worst government is better than one with no authority which results in anarchy. Without a government we, as people of a different faith, would be exposed to even more persecution and all kinds of violence. So we shouldn't criticize without mercy and condemn our governments, but to a degree have confidence in them and abide by their laws—so long as they agree with the Word of God and our conscience.

2. Next, a much greater debt we have is to our parents, if they are still living. We should be thankful for the gift of life, their love, their sacrifices on our behalf and upbringing. We need to keep in mind that there are thousands of children who are orphans, homeless or in orphanages, who don't know such words as "Mom" or "Dad," and have never felt the warmth and love of a family home. In Poland alone there are about 60,000 orphans. Should we not then value our parents, and especially if our home was Christian—without abusive language, alcoholism, fighting—and

that we had loving parents who desired our happiness? How can we show them our thankfulness? Should we get rid of them when they become old and deteriorate physically? Or should we place them in a home for the aged so that in loneliness and sadness, deprived of love and seeing their loved ones, they finish their life? Oh, no! According to justice, we should love them and care for them just as much as they cared for us, especially since God gave us a promise of a long life and prosperity as a reward for the love and respect we have toward our parents. { *Ephesians 6:2,3* } A certain man, when asked why he was purchasing three loaves of bread, replied:

"One loaf, is for me and my wife; with the second loaf I'm repaying the debt I have to my parents; the third loaf I'm loaning to my children, with the hope that they will return it some day."

There are other signs of thankfulness, even small ones such as hugs, kisses, letters, postcards from trips, gifts, and so on. They are also very much appreciated by parents. I was very touched not long ago when I observed how adult grandchildren were constantly hugging and kissing their 96-year-old grandmother.

3. Another debt we have, is to our spouse. Marriage is not just a commitment, but very often involves sacrifices of love, gratitude and thankfulness shown one to another. Should husbands not be grateful for the attentiveness of their wives, cleanliness of the home, care of the clothes, tasty meals, and a pleasant atmosphere in the house? And, when such thankfulness is accompanied sometimes by a flower or a gift, it not only stimulates the wife to more sacrifice, but it becomes for her a "fountain of youth." The thankfulness of a wife for her husband's care, for meeting her spiritual and earthly needs, is also very pleasant and appreciated. A family will not be able to feel the true warmth of a home without mutual sacrifice. This is especially true when raising children.

4. Thankfulness should also be expressed to the elders in a class because they unselfishly sacrifice for the brethren. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double Honor." Elders sometimes become discouraged, especially when they don't see much fruit in the class as a result of their labor. Thankfulness to them can be expressed by following their advice, speaking encouraging words, by friendship, a handshake, and a prayer.

5. The greatest debt, however, we have to our God and to Jesus Christ. The psalmist wrote: "Bless the Lord O my soul, and don't

forget His blessings." We also sing a hymn, "Count your many blessings, see what God hath Done."we should be thankful for earthly blessings such as the beauty of nature, flowers, and fragrances, because God has created all of it for our enjoyment. But most of all we should be thankful for our spiritual blessings such as the gift of Jesus Christ and his redemption, the high calling, and a spiritual family as well as many other noticed and unnoticed blessings.

How can we repay Him for all of that? Perhaps this will help answer that question.

One famous painter asked a Gypsy woman to serve as his model while he painted a portrait. In his studio he had a beautiful painting which he had prepared for an exhibition. The painting depicted the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The painter noticed that the Gypsy woman often studied this painting; he thought she probably did not understand its meaning since she was not Christian. One day he noticed tears in her eyes as she studied the painting again. When he asked the reason for her tears, she replied by asking, "Why did this man suffer So much?" After he explained the reason, she asked again: "Did he die for you as well?" "Yes," the painter answered. Then the Gypsy woman asked, "If he died for you, how have you repaid him?"

These words astounded the painter and he pondered them. This was the first time he thought about it. He decided to add this question to the bottom of his painting. At the exhibition the painting moved everyone, but it was perhaps not So much the painting as its inscription: "He died for you. How have you repaid him?" This question can be put to each one of us. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:14 helps us answer that, if he died for us, we should also die for him. Even though our death does not have the same value as his, through it we can best show him our thankfulness.

Accepting the Will of God

One way of displaying our thankfulness will be through happiness and acceptance of the will of God and His direction for us, even though sometimes it can be painful and sad.

A beautiful example in this area occurred with Pastor Gilpin who, during the reign of a queen called Bloody Mary, was sentenced to burn at the stake. "Are you going to thank God even for this?" sneeringly asked his executioners while driving him to the place of

his death. "Why would I not thank Him?" But at that moment the wagon turned over and this poor condemned man, while all tied up, fell out of the wagon and broke his leg. "Can you thank your God even now, when you see how little He worries about you?" asked his tormentors. "Even now," replied the martyr in great pain. "Let my soul praise the Lord." Since they did not want to execute him with a freshly broken leg, they took him back to prison, so that his leg could heal. Then at his execution he would be able to stand straight.

A few days later, however, Queen Mary, who persecuted the Protestants, died and her half sister Elizabeth, who was Protestant, became the ruling monarch. Immediately she stopped the persecutions. When Gilpin was able to stand on his feet again, he was freed. How thankful he was to God for his broken leg because through it his life was spared and he was free again.

To postpone something could mean never!

If you want to know the quickest way to contentment and happiness, you have to accept this principle: thank God for everything while being convinced that all things work together for good to those who love God. { *Romans 8:28* } Do not accept God's providence by complaint and discontent which would only show a lack of thankfulness.

Our thankfulness to God can also be displayed through our love and sacrifice for our brethren, because the Lord Jesus said "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." { *Matthew 25:40* } This thankfulness can be displayed also through our hymns and prayers. With the passage of time there should be more thankfulness and fewer requests.

Examples of Thankfulness

In the Word of God we have many examples of thankfulness and also the lack of it. One example in the New Testament of someone so full of thankfulness was Mary Magdalene. As a proof of her thankfulness for the mercy that was shown to her, she brought an alabaster vial filled with precious ointment and together with her tears she poured it on the body of our Lord. She also endeavored to be close to him and serve him.

Similar feelings of thankfulness we notice in another Mary—the sister of Lazarus—who also poured a very expensive perfume on

our Lord as a proof of her love and thankfulness for his beautiful Words of Life and for the raising of her brother Lazarus from the dead.

When we think about these incidents, it is good to remember the mistake many make, and that is to postpone our expressions of thanksgiving. We know our life is So short and frail. A Polish saying says: "To postpone something could mean never." Are we not sometimes caught by surprise when we hear that someone had died just as we were about to show them our love and thankfulness. It could happen that instead of buying a nice gift for someone we will need to purchase flowers for their funeral. Mary did not waste any time to show her thankfulness. Nicodemus, after the death of our Lord Jesus, anointed his body with 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes. However, it was already a dead body.

One event from the life of our Lord clearly illustrates thankfulness and its absence. This event is found in Luke 17:11-18, and it concerns ten healed lepers. Only one expressed his thankfulness, and he was a Samaritan. Perhaps he could represent a class of thankful followers of our Lord who show their thankfulness and praise God through their thoughts and deeds, while the majority forgets any feeling of thankfulness and directs their feelings toward things of the world.

As we mentioned at the beginning, this pleasant feeling of thankfulness can be detected even among animals. For example, dogs have a great measure of the instinct of thankfulness. When a dog is getting something to eat or is being petted, he expresses his thankfulness and attachment in various ways: he wags his tail, he's happy, he tries to be of service. This same instinct is present among some birds. In Siberia, at a temperature of 50 degrees below zero, a magpie would come to a window-sill and screech until it received something to eat. Later in the spring this bird found and brought all kinds of small glittering items to the window-sill, and once it brought a gold wedding band. This bird's thankfulness was truly amazing.

We will mention one more touching example of thankfulness and remembrance among animals, which was reported by a journalist. While on location in Africa, he found a baby elephant caught in a trap. He freed him and nursed him back to health. Ten years later, after he totally forgot about this incident, he was sitting on the side in a circus watching an elephant show. To his amazement, he noticed one of the elephants moving toward him, and before he realized what was happening, he was picked up by the elephant,

carried toward the stage, and placed on a seat in the first row, closest to the stage. The journalist concluded that it was the same elephant that he rescued long ago, but thankfulness remained in the heart of this animal. The first opportunity he had, he repaid the kindness in whatever way he could.

What gains result from being thankful?

1. It magnifies the gift or the deed. Without an expression of thankfulness, the giver might doubt that his gift made us happy or was appreciated.
2. It gives inspiration to further good and noble deeds.
3. It is the substance of lasting and happy friendships. On the other hand, if our giving is always treated as an everyday thing and does not awaken some feelings of thankfulness, then the relationship cannot be a lasting one.
4. It is a source of happiness in life. The secret to joyous living for Christians is to develop a spirit of praise and thankfulness to God, and others as well.

Do we have a spirit of thankfulness?

1. How often do we say "thank you" at home, at work, in the class, and to everyone that has done something good for us?
2. Do we acknowledge gifts and good deeds immediately, or do we postpone it until later?
3. How long do we remember something good that was done for us?
4. Do our prayers consist more of requests than of praise?

As is mentioned in the December 28th *Manna*:

"Let us, as we drink of the brook, take a lesson from the little birds, which, when drinking, repeatedly lift the head as though giving thanks to God. Let us continually give thanks to our Lord for every taste of life's experience, for every lesson, for every trial—appropriating them all to our spiritual development."

May the Lord our God bless us all and help us develop, cultivate and express this beautiful and noble feeling of thankfulness.

Being a Christian in the Family and in the Ecclesia-Bro. Piotr Krajcer, Poland

Dear brethren in Christ. the topic for our deliberation is "Being a Christian in the Family and in the Ecclesia." Brother Jeremiah Purwin in his previous deliberation presented many instructions from the scriptures pertaining to this question. I, on the other hand, would like to expand on these admonitions of the Bible and apply them to our daily lives.

The first question or problem which arises is: What is the difference between the life of a Christian and the life of a "common," good man? You will certainly answer that a Christian believes in God and His Son Jesus Christ. But, as the Apostle James said, "the devils also believe, and tremble." { *James 2:19* }

Faith alone is not enough because the same apostle said faith, if it has no works, is dead. Our Christian life is a witness of our faith. And though there are many atheists or people professing another set of values whose morality and family life evoke our admiration, nevertheless their motives are completely different.

In a Christian's set of values, the most important value is God; all other things and interests should be subordinate to this the most important one. But is this always true? Quite often what we declare is not in harmony with reality. Our family, job, children, career, and money often take God's place. Then our life begins to change and becomes the life of a nominal Christian. How can we recognize that a nominal spirit is creeping into our life?

First, we should look at our Christian life in the ecclesia. The Apostle Paul tells us in Hebrews 10:25, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." Am I always present at meetings? Maybe it is enough to go only for Sunday meetings because during the week I am busy. Weekly meetings could be attended by the retired brethren, they have the time, might be my excuse.

Don't you sometimes find that during a study or discourse your mind starts to wander; you see before your eyes the visions of the place where you work, you recollect the problems and the matters to be settled. This is the first indication for us that even though we are present, we are starting to abandon this common meeting. Sometimes a reason for this could be that when we come to meet

with God and the brethren, we are totally unprepared. We forget the admonition of the Apostle Paul:

"How is it then, brethren when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation? Let all things be done unto edifying." { *1 Corinthians 14:26* }

Let us notice that the apostle doesn't say this to an elder or a deacon only, but to every one of us. A class study might seem to me very boring, not too edifying, because although every one, like me, wanted to profit from it, they did not bring anything to it themselves.

Today we are used to having things done for us: fast food prepared by others; films, instead of doing research in books; comics and video tapes of Bible stories, So that parents will not have to spend too much time informing their children.

Another way this could be noticed among brethren is that many would like to hear only discourses and reduce the time spent on Bible study and other forms of worship where the participation of all the brethren is required.

Some may say, "Studies are causing different opinions and arguments. Would it not be better to hear a discourse, preferably by some traveling brethren, because the elders of our ecclesia like to repeat themselves?" Am I also of the same opinion? Now we know why the Apostle Paul praised the brethren from Berea because they searched the scriptures daily. { *Acts 17:11* }

Do I have anything to do in my ecclesia? Someone might say, "I have not been elected an elder or a deacon; I am too young or too old; no one has given me a specific function." This is only an excuse of the blissfully lazy because there might be someone sick who is waiting for my visit, someone who needs a word of consolation, or who is waiting to hear some words about Christ. Does this, and other such service in the ecclesia, have to have special authorization?

Then, perhaps we could look at the matter entirely differently. Maybe I am an elder and discharging more duties in our ecclesia than others, both spiritual and physical, and I don't see anybody who could do it better than I. I tried to delegate work to others, but they always did it their own way, not the way I would like.

But might it be that the Lord yet wants to employ at the eleventh hour some new workers, and I don't want to admit them into His vineyard? Let us remember the words of our Lord, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." { *Matthew 9:37* } There will be no shortage of work for anyone, but we may prove ourselves slothful workers who do not find for themselves suitable work in the Lord's Great Harvest.

What is my attitude to those who are working for the Lord with me? Would it bother me if someone is less educated than I? Do I separate the brethren as older and younger, some more noble, and discriminate between the Polish, French, German etc. , or as to the group to which they belong, and show them my cordiality and brotherly love accordingly? Sometimes we may forget that where we hope to be, there "is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." { *Colossians 3:11* }

With whom among my brethren am I the most friendly? Perhaps, oddly enough, it So happens that those I meet with socially or with whom I mostly converse have a similar social status as mine. It might seem that we have So many important things in common like how to finish one's house, where to invest money, where to go for a vacation, what kind of automobile we should buy. Or, perhaps not being So well off, I am ashamed to ask the brother, who is better off, to my modest two-room house, falsely pre-judging him of pride and haughtiness.

How should a Christian conduct himself when someone in the ecclesia has a different opinion or viewpoint? Should such a person not be allowed to speak or be ridiculed? Should he be told that no sensible man would think that way, that he shouldn't dictate to God, or that it might be better not to discuss any controversial matters, or to discuss only such matters by which we can show our opponents and other brethren how wrong they are? How often we forget the words from the letter to the Romans:

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." { *Romans 15:1,2* }

In Philippians we read:

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." { *Philippians 2:3* }

Christianity in the Family

Now let us try to look at our family. The family life of Christians is such a broad topic that it is impossible to exhaust it in such a short deliberation. Therefore I would like to turn our attention to some of the more important matters.

The family begins in marriage, when two people, man and woman, are united together. How these two conduct their marriage will be reflected in the future in the life of the whole family. Therefore it is important what they believe, how they treat each other, how they behave, what they talk about, and what they cherish and appreciate most in their life.

The most important thing is how much time in their married life, and then in their family life, is devoted to God and His service? Is the role of God confined only to the time before noon on Sunday when we go to the meeting, and to the verses displayed on the walls?

Sometimes we can deceive ourselves when we declare that we devote a lot of time for God in our family, but the reality is different. We should remember that besides God, who knows our hearts, there is someone who is able to see it as it is. Do you know who that is? Maybe the brethren in the ecclesia? Yes, they can see a lot, but not everything. They don't always see us, So we can hide some things from them.

But there are those who cannot be deceived, and these are our children. They see everything. We don't even try to hide things from them because we tell ourselves they are small and don't understand much. They are our most severe judges. They can see whether we pray before meals every day, or only on Sunday, or only when we have guests in our home. They see whether we gladly attend meetings, and what we talk about when we come from the meetings. Do we have time to read the Bible? Do we talk about God at home? They notice how we behave when our neighbors and friends come to our home, and how we behave when we are visited by brethren. They hear what we say about our brethren, whether we show them respect or disrespect.

Let us remember one more thing: our children will learn from our example, from what they see, but not from what we want them to learn. Children, even the youngest ones, have very good memories. Sometime when we return home late from work, putting everything out of our mind, and start to eat a meal, we may hear a

child's voice, "Daddy, you forgot something today; you forgot to pray." But, you may be sure, you will never hear these words if you will pray daily, and not only on holidays. Here we touch an important problem. As our Christian family takes notice, So will the ecclesia, which is made up of our families.

God doesn't require very much from us; He doesn't need our money, homes, or automobiles. As one brother said, "all the money in the world belongs to Him." From us He wants only one thing: our time for prayer, time to communicate with Him, time for reading the words given to us on the pages of the Bible, time to tell our children and our friends about Him.

Remember that nobody can replace us in relating the knowledge of God to our children. Children's classes or seminars for young people will not do that. They can supplement, or broaden, but they can never replace the words of fathers, mothers, or grandparents. Children want to hear about God, and it depends on us alone as to how much time we will find for them.

Who knows our hearts? Who sees us as we really are? Our children. . . see everything!

Many Christians also make a mistake in not taking their children to meetings and conventions. They say they don't understand much. The comments of some brethren may, to some extent, contribute to such a feeling, as they are somewhat annoyed by the presence of children. But even if children do not understand many things, the atmosphere of meetings and conventions will remain with them in later life, and all the while, during their lifetime, the holy Spirit will act upon them, through us. Our Lord Jesus said:

"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come to me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." { *Matthew 19:14* }

Up to this day I myself have vivid impressions of meetings and conventions when I was only four years old, and of my grandfather's words, telling us the story of Joseph.

We also have to answer the question: What type of family would we like to create? There are some Christians who consider the natural family to be the most important. The family is their whole life. All their affairs revolve around it. They look at others, to discern what influence they will have on their family, whether for their good, or for their harm.

Family matters sometimes take precedence over ecclesia matters. The life of such a family is concentrated around their own problems, and their small group of close friends. They will not permit the intrusion of others in their joys and sorrows. Such a family fits the English proverb, "My home is my castle." I wouldn't like to judge whether that type of family is good or bad.

There is still a different type: the open Christian family that lives not only for itself, but also for others. Such a family has an interest in other brethren, it tries to understand their problems and troubles, and to help those who need help. Their spare time is devoted to fellowship with the brethren, even when it could be used differently for their own profit. For after all, you yourselves will admit, there is nothing wrong in taking a vacation, going for a short trip with just the family.

You will at once recognize an open home when you enter it. You seldom will be the only guests. Many brethren visit such homes. The brethren love to visit there. Quite often meetings are held in these homes.

Surely you remember the Biblical married couple Aquila and Priscilla. They had exactly such a home. Wherever they lived, the life of the ecclesia and the Gospel work was concentrated there. { *Acts 18:2,3 Romans 16:3-5 _ 1 Corinthians 16:19* } The Apostle Paul lived in their home and conducted his work of making tents.

I presume that every one of us thinks that they are hospitable. But is it really so? Are you glad when brethren unexpectedly come to visit you? And if so, would you be glad if such a visit was quite late in the evening? Or if you were in another city late at night, would you decide to visit your brethren, or to spend the night at the station or in a hotel?

Probably you would answer, "We would spend the night with some brethren, but not with everyone. We wouldn't go to some of the brethren even during the day without letting them know first." But maybe it is my family whose peace the other brethren are afraid to disturb.

Do you remember the Lord's parable where it is said that one man came to his friend at midnight to borrow some bread for his friends, who had visited him during their journey? { *Luke 11:5-9* } That man didn't care about convenience; it was very important to him that his friend was in need.

The apostles also admonished us, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." { *1 Peter 4:9*} "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." { *Hebrews 13:2*}

There are some who, in being very zealous in the service, forget their own families. In teaching and serving others they neglect their own homes. Such behavior is not pleasing to God.

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." { *1 Timothy 5:8*}

Someone once said that the life of a Christian is to serve God by serving others. Everything we do for the brethren, wife, husband, children, we do for Christ and in his name. We love our brethren because we love Jesus, and he loves them. It should not be an obstacle for us when sometimes we do not like their human traits and deficiencies. We should love them and serve them for they, like us, belong to the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus once said, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." { *Matthew 25:45*} This should always be in the mind of every Christian.

Now you will probably think, "This brother really knows what transpires in our homes and ecclesias," but you are mistaken because I was mostly talking about my own problems and temptations.

Amen.

Rejoice in the Lord-Bro. Adam Kubic, Poland

Dear brethren, I have great joy in my heart, because this is my third time with you at an International Convention. I think that everyone present in this hall would like to convey his feelings to the others. Since I have joy in my heart, I would like to talk with you (as much as the Lord permits me) about this feeling, about joy.

The motto of my considerations are the words of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians (4:4), "Rejoice in the Lord always." It is natural that we all were waiting with joy for this brotherly meeting at the International Convention. We have been experiencing the joy of waiting. Now, having met each other in this beautiful hall, we have the feeling of gratefulness to our God that he brought us to this place. We are rejoicing also.

Joy is delight, bliss, a rejoicing. But to feel joy we must have a reason for joy. If we look at those around us, we probably will see a lack of joy. Notwithstanding the wonderful developments of technology, where we see great accomplishments of human minds in almost every walk of life, and notwithstanding the fact that man's life is easier now, that he has at his disposal the most modern automobiles, and almost illimitable systems of communication for the exchange of information etc. , yet man has lost the feeling of joy. Being completely absorbed with the thought of securing for himself material possessions he is unable to enjoy even that which he has. So, it is really hard to meet joyful, smiling, and happy people.

Dear brethren, are we always joyful and happy? I think that no one amongst us can say that he has never experienced a feeling of joy in his life. This feeling accompanies us in life alongside our various griefs and sorrows. Yet if we even would put aside the spiritual aspect of our lives, I believe you would agree that we have a reason for joy.

We are happy if in our natural life we are successful, if everything goes the way we wish, if we have a good family, are rich and have good friends. And what is very important is that if we can appreciate what we have, we should not have a reason to be sad. We should be able to rejoice in small things.

Our Lord Jesus gave us an example of a woman who found a lost piece of silver. This story is described in Luke 15:8,9. The joy of a man who found his lost sheep is also described in the same chapter. The common theme of these parables is that those who recovered their loss shared their joy with others; their neighbors and friends rejoiced with them also. I think, dear brethren, that many of us have felt a similar joy when discovering a lost article. Quite often we rejoice when we are among friendly people if peace, cordiality and understanding prevail in our homes.

The feeling I have been talking about thus far is a joy that everyone experiences. But the basis of this joy is prosperity in life, wealth, approval of others; in other words, when everything is going well. But in the heart of man there might arise a different feeling of joy. In the present world we may meet some people who rejoice in another's misfortune, are glad that his neighbor has pain. This is a false joy, a satanic joy.

Beloved brethren, we should have a different feeling of joy, the feeling that flows out of love for our neighbors. Therefore I would like to talk to you about this different feeling of joy, a joy that has a different foundation than that of good living and wealth on this earth.

You Belong to the Lord

One Polish version of our key verse { *Philippians 4:4* } reads: "Rejoice always for you belong to the Lord." Rejoicing because we belong to the Lord! Then everything changes. The foundation of our joy changes the reason and motivation for our joy. It is a joy regardless of the circumstances in our lives. Then even prosperity in life will not allow us to forget that everything we have is from the Lord! The Lord gave us what we have, So our joy will come from our faith.

We have this joy because we belong to the Lord. This faith, that we belong to him, compels us to show thankfulness and joy for everything that will happen to us, not only good but also evil. To be joyfully thankful when we are bothered by pain, we need to understand, even though it is difficult, why the Lord permits such trials and difficulties to befall us. Natural man is not able to understand this, and every failure in his life will cause a great sadness.

Dearly beloved, we came here from various places on the earth. Many of us are seeing each other for the first time, and yet there are smiles on our faces, affection. More than that, there is brotherly love. I think—I am sure—that what we see on your faces flows from the heart.

What is the reason for our joy? It is not this lovely hall that makes this meeting a happy one. Were it not for one God, one Lord Jesus, one faith, one hope of our calling, could the meeting itself be a reason for spontaneous joy? Probably not.

The reason for our joy here is fellowship with each other, and if we have fellowship among ourselves, we have fellowship with our Heavenly Father and His Son. It is this fellowship which compels us to rejoice, to love, to raise our hands for those who are preparing themselves for heaven, to life in heaven.

Thus we see the reason for our joy is different from that of the people around us. So what reason do we have for our joy? I think that one of the reasons is the knowledge of the Truth. Our God in

his mercy revealed himself to us, he gave us the knowledge of his plan of salvation for all mankind, assured by the death of His Son—Jesus. He gave us to know the way leading to Him, the way to eternal life. The joy which comes from the knowledge of Bible Truth would be an evidence that we really appreciate that which we have received by the Lord's grace.

Truth can't be just the knowledge of the scriptures, the knowledge of prophecies, the knowledge of the Plan of God. The Truth that we have obliges us to lead a life according to we would be Christians in name only. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians—which many Bible readers call "the letter of joy"—wrote as follows:

"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." {*Philippians 1:25*}

Joy flows out from faith! If our faith doesn't make us a happy people, then it doesn't give us anything. It is a dead faith. A small child is always happy and cheerful, for it has trust in its parents, it believes fully in their care, and that they always will come to his aid. Then there are no problems. But when he grows up, his happy childhood ends, parental care ends; he has to care for himself and contend with the problems of life alone.

The joy that we have here is only a small portion of the joy that awaits us.

We, by our faith in Jesus Christ, are the children of our Father, who is in heaven. Do we always remember how great our Father is? If we have a very strong faith, then in difficult moments we will remember that there is someone who is always ready to listen and to help us.

In our natural life we have friends, and I believe we are glad if we can count on the help of people close to us. All the more we should rejoice in the words which are written in the scriptures, that God So loved us that he gave His Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. {*John 3:16*} For us there is someone greater than a friend: there is God himself, God, before whom we were So dear that he gave His Son on our behalf. We have to have a faith So strong that, it will cause us to smile, to rejoice. A faith that brings peace to our hearts.

Prayer Brings Joy

Let us turn to the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:4, "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." There is a joy which comes from the privilege of prayer. Can we imagine even one day in our lives without prayer? We should ask ourselves whether we appreciate properly the privilege of prayer. Do we rejoice that our Lord Jesus taught us to pray to our Heavenly Father? He has shown us also that in every matter of our life we can come to him.

I think that we as Christians have a proper understanding of the value of prayer. After all, it is a conversation with God in which we can glorify him, honor him, and give thanks for everything that we have, and to ask for help in time of need.

All these things are possible for us if we are in a proper attitude of heart. How poor is the man who can not pray to God and who doesn't feel it is necessary. I read about a nurse who helped sick and suffering people. Among those people was a man who couldn't pray. In his heart there was an emptiness. Being saddened by his poor health he couldn't tell anybody about his misery. The nurse, seeing and helping him every day, told this sick man that just as she was helping him in his sickness, there was someone who heals not only the body but the soul also. She told him about God, in whom she believed, and of the possibility to communicate with God through prayer. She told him about the joy which could result from prayer.

While taking care of the sick man, she changed his whole life, and this man became a happy and cheerful man. The greatest part of her work that the nurse performed was by the use of her hands, and she used the hand to illustrate her way of praying. Each of her five fingers was used to represent something. The thumb reminded her of a prayer for those close and dear. The first finger reminded her of a prayer for teachers; the second for leaders in all spheres of life; the third reminded her to pray for the sick and suffering; the fourth, and the smallest finger, reminded her to pray for herself.

This was the nurse's way of telling the sick man, "If I didn't know how to pray, it would be as if I did not have fingers on my hands, and therefore I wouldn't be able to help you in your sickness. But if I help you with my fingers, So you too can help yourself and others by your prayers."

Beloved brethren, we always experience the feeling of joy when we have helped someone. Then we have a feeling of satisfaction for properly discharging our Christian duties. However, we can't

help everyone physically. Therefore we have the privilege of prayer in which, before the throne of grace of our Heavenly Father, we can mention all those whom we love.

Fellowship Brings Joy

Let us read further the words of the Apostle Paul in the letter to the Philippians. Our joy comes from oneness, from brotherly fellowship. We recall the words of David in Psalms 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." There is nothing more beautiful than when a family is bound by love, and there is nothing more beautiful than the Lord's ecclesia whose members create a true fellowship.

At one time it was a joy for King David to go to the house of the Lord. He wrote, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Beloved brethren, are we enjoying the fellowship of the brethren? Let it not be that we enjoy going to an International Convention to meet our brethren, but neglect to meet them in our own ecclesia. First of all it is in our ecclesias, in our weekly meetings, that we should build our fellowship, and know how to enjoy these brotherly meetings, and bring into them a spirit of joy.

The joy flowing from fellowship based upon the feeling of like-mindedness is a wonderful thing. It is wonderful if we bring joy and peace to our ecclesia. It depends on us what kind of ecclesia we will have, whether we will be happy and joyful there. If our hearts are full of sadness, bitterness, anger, then our fellowship will be deprived of joy.

There is no peace where human relationships are broken. If in our meetings we strive to create a unity resulting from faith in Jesus, if we continue in him as new creatures, then we will have true fellowship. We will have a joy from our thoughts and feelings. So, dearly beloved, rejoice, because we have received So much, by the grace of God.

Sharing Our Joy

We have a wonderful Truth—faith in the words contained in the Bible—but do we carry this joy to others? At the beginning of our deliberations I mentioned that both the man who found his lost sheep and the woman who found her silver piece shared their joy with their neighbors and friends. Are we able to do that also, to

carry our joy to others, in this time when prophecies are being fulfilled, in the time of the second presence of our Lord Jesus, in the time of the establishment of the God's kingdom on the earth?

As much as possible we should try to carry to those close to us, our neighbors and friends, this joy of the Gospel, the joy of the establishment of God's Kingdom in the near future. Let us appreciate that we live in a time when the Gospel, good news of great joy, is being proclaimed the world over. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians:

"What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice." { *Philippians 1:18*}

Let joy fill our hearts as we see the fulfillment of prophecy and the preaching of the Gospel for a witness unto all nations.

Dear brethren, I think we have many reasons to rejoice. I have mentioned only a few. I think that we all rejoice when we hear good news about our brethren. We have great pleasure when we can entertain our dear brethren in our homes. I think that it is a great joy because we belong to the Lord.

Joy Even in Trials

I would like to pause for a moment to consider yet another reason for joy. Let us read from the letter of James 1:2, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

Count it all joy when we fall into temptations? Is it possible? I think it is very hard to feel joy while there are tears in our eyes, to have this peace always in our hearts, every not rejoice during his trials and difficulties. We recall the words written in the scriptures:

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. . . Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." { *Hebrews 12:7,11*}

Do we have such a strong faith, do we have such a strong desire for salvation, that through our suffering and pain we can see the glory that awaits us? If we have, we will, with joy, accept anything that God permits to come upon us. We will be able to smile through tears.

Now, beloved brethren, to sum up, consider the joy granted: joy from the knowledge of the Truth, joy from a deep faith, the privilege of prayer and brotherly fellowship, the joy from the precious promises given by God himself!

I believe that even if sadness sometimes comes into our hearts, there always will be someone who will be able to cheer us up, and we ourselves, who belong to the Lord, will be able to enjoy each day of our life.

The joy that we have here is only a small portion of the joy that awaits us. On one occasion our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full." Full joy! I think, dear brethren, that we are longing for a condition where we will have fullness of joy in the Lord, when we will meet him and see him, and will drink of the new cup in his Kingdom.

But someone might say, we want to keep this joy for ourselves only. Then let us read some words written in the scriptures, the words by which the birth of Jesus was proclaimed. A long time ago, these words sounded in the land of Palestine:

"Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." { *Luke 2:10* }

The shepherds who heard these words did not understand them, and today's Christians do not understand them either. Therefore we should proclaim this joyful news, this announcement, that for the poor world there is also an assurance of joy. This joy, was the basis of the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Because of the fact that our Lord Jesus lived in Palestine, died, and was resurrected, there is the guaranty of restoring all people to a new life, to a joyful life.

The Kingdom of God, mentioned so many times by Jesus, is very near. And in this kingdom there will be joy, peace and justice as the Apostle Paul also wrote. The days are not far away when the words of the prophet Isaiah will be fulfilled. We read:

"And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among

the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he has done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." { *Isaiah 12:1,2,4-6* }

Glory be to our God and Jesus Christ for the promised joy for all.
Amen.

An Offering for Sin-Bro. Jerry Leslie, USA

SISTER SHARON AND I REJOICE TO HAVE shared the fellowship at every previous International Convention. Our bonds of fellowship now circle the earth. We greet you with Psalms 20:1-3. This text speaks of your sacrifices and burnt offerings. Sin Is the Problem

Our subject today addresses a sacrifice that has bound every generation of Christians with a common cause for more than 1,900 years. All Bible Students know the Ransom is the PENALTY-PRICE to pay for the guilt of Adam and in him the whole race.

"The man, Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." { *1 Timothy 2:5,6* }

This provision is based on the Law in Exodus 21:23,24: "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye."

It is evident that this price has not yet been paid over to justice on behalf of Adam and the race, for Adam is still paying the price in the tomb and his family is still dying. We do not yet see the full effect of Jesus' sacrifice, but we do see the provision that will result in the release of all mankind. Paul adds in this connection in Hebrews 2:8,9,

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. . . But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

But the PENALTY is not the problem, it is only the consequence. SIN is the problem. This must be cured. All know that to rehabilitate a criminal, he must first be released from his cell; then a group of counselors can work with his condition.

As a basic definition, we will say the Sin Offering removes the effects of sin in humanity. The Ransom does not do this. It will remove the guilt and penalty alone. The Sin Offering is often explained as the reason for Jesus giving three and a half years of his life and the 1,961 years since. This Hebrews 2 context continues in verse 10:

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Continuing Paul says,

"Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." { *Hebrews 2:17,18*}

His sufferings qualify him as a high priest to help the "US" class of Hebrews 9:24, "now to appear in the presence of God for us," the spirit begotten New Creatures. At this moment there was not an actual transfer of merit for Adam by which any one could actually be released from the curse and stand guiltless before divine justice. Instead his merit is held in reserve as a guarantee for us on the condition that we will in due time fully relinquish all use of this reckoned justified human nature, at which time the actual payment on behalf of Adam can be made.

The Church, delivered with her head, will then uplift humanity back to perfection under the mediatorial work of the New Covenant. { *Romans 4:24,25 6:3-5 Galatians 3:11,27,29*}

Let me give you an earthly example: Suppose a business failed because of poor management and all the employees suffered loss. Then a young man may see great possibilities for this business if the problems could be corrected. He may come with price in hand and a proposal to purchase this business venture. His father, as a wise counselor, may put some questions to his son to assure a wise investment, even beyond his son's ability to buy the assets and pay the debts. These would then be answered by the son:

1. What evidence can you present of your deep understanding and commitment to the needs of this company?

2. How can you demonstrate your qualification to redirect and correct the practices to the advantage of the employees?

Let us now draw a parallel between this son and Jesus. What evidence did he give of his compassion and dedication? Turn to Isaiah 53:3-5.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed."

This passage tells us two things:

1. That Jesus was willing to submit to the humiliation and abuses from the fallen beings he came to save.
2. But it speaks of another dimension. . . of carrying our sorrows, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, with his stripes we are healed.

How can this be? It tells us he bore the results of sin that justly belong to the condemned. He bore the experiences which fallen mankind suffer due to sin. By having felt the sinner's distress, he has prepared a remedy.

"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin [a sin offering] unto salvation." { *Hebrews 9:28*}

His second coming is not with another sacrifice for sin, but with majesty and authority to bless mankind as a deliverer and a good physician.

When he was on the cross, Jesus was taunted to deliver himself. { *Matthew 27:40*} However, if he had sought his own rights and vindication as a perfect man, he could not bear anyone's penalty. It is for this matter of inequality that we can be relieved by his bearing what was due us as Adam's children. Therefore Peter could say,

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness by whose stripes ye were healed." { *1 Peter 2:24*}

And Paul could say,

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." { *2 Corinthians 5:21*}

He was treated as a sinner and experienced a sinner's punishment. He felt this even before the cross. When speaking the truth, he received the wrath of the Pharisees and Scribes. He ate with publicans and sinners and received their stigma. Finally he submitted to the betrayal of his companion Judas. He accepted all the scoffing and defamation attached to fallen humanity.

In all this and more, he was an offering for sin, for the sin of the human family. In So doing he offered evidence to the Heavenly Father and heavenly hosts of his unwavering commitment to the needs of the race.

The Sin Offering

This is the first requirement of the Sin Offering. It must address the needs of sinners. It must compassionately relate to the dilemma. What better way than to share the human drama!

But what of the second question, the qualification to correct the problems of the human race? It is an accepted conclusion that the price sufficient to pay the penalty is provided in the Ransom. But how then is SIN, the human tendency to miss the mark, purged and cleansed? If the debt is canceled, will they repeat their mistakes?

The services of a qualified party must be developed and offered for the purging program. This Jesus manifested by his obedience in the midst of sufferings:

"Son though he was, he had to prove the meaning of obedience through all that he suffered." { *Hebrews 5:8, Phillips*}

It was for sin, for its correction, that he gave himself over to the most strenuous circumstances and thus provided the second requirement of the Sin Offering. The evidence consists in manifesting himself to be supremely qualified to redirect and correct a flawed human genealogy. This was shown not only in his obedience under temptation, but in his sharing the affliction of the

needy. A true physician must be intimately acquainted with the disease So as even to feel the pains of his patient.

This was realized to some extent by the pioneers in medicine who contacted yellow fever in 1900 while researching the mosquito as the carrier of this dreadful disease. Their sacrifice brought some human relief. The principle was appreciated in a small way by the Belgian missionary Damien when he went to Molokai to relieve the leper colony, only to contract and die of leprosy himself.

It is a rule that the one who offers to heal must feel the situation of his patient. This is the meaning of Hebrews 4:15 and 5:2,

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity."

"In all their affliction he was afflicted." { *Isaiah 63:9* }

The crowds followed and drew on his readiness to heal,

"Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see."—Matt. 15:31

When he was tired and weary he retreated to a ship or quiet grove to refresh his strength and then return to those who needed him. After healing ten lepers, one returned to give him thanks and he was a Samaritan. Then comes that heart-searching question, "But where are the nine?" { *Luke 17:11-18* }

But I propose that if he had sought and achieved his own praise, if he had been advanced in public and political circles, that would have been his reward in accepting the best man could give. { *Matthew 6:2,5,16* } However, by being denied, he waited for the Heavenly Father's reward and proved worthy to repair the human breach from a future heavenly vantage point.

There is an Old Testament parable in Ecclesiasties 9:14-16,

"There was a little city and few men within it and there came a great king against it and besieged it and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor

man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard."

The "few men" well illustrate the depraved human race, in contrast to the hosts of holy angels. The wisdom of the despised one was gained through experience and could refer to the Messiah.

"He shall see his seed [the human seed of salvation when he will be acknowledged as their everlasting father], he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." { *Isaiah 53:10,11* }

The Sin Offering removes the effects of sin in humanity; the Ransom does not.

Jesus was content amidst his stressful experiences because he knew there would be future relief for the suffering race. This was the hope that was before him. Therefore, he was not bruised against his will.

"I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." { *John 10:17,18* }

His life was not forfeited by any fault of his own, but voluntarily laid down that mankind might live and that he might assist in their recovery. Consider Romans 5:17,19

"The gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ . . . So by the obedience of one shall [the multitude] be made righteous."

Notice: "Righteousness" shall reign. Redemption is the basis of this chapter. But the Sin Offering goes beyond payment of the penalty. It proceeds to the correcting of the condition, to the making of humanity whole and righteous.

Requirements on the Sinful Race

As there were two evidences required of the Redeemer, we think there are also two evidences required from the sinful race in the Sin Offering.

1. For some evidence of their ability to acknowledge their undone condition and need for help.

2. For some example of deep-seated commitment and selfless motive if they are to be given an opportunity to reform.

Without these two further assurances, the purchase price and qualified deliverer could still result in a lost investment.

The Church drawn from the human family provides these two evidences. A remnant from Jews and Gentiles provide this testimony before God, the holy angels, and ultimately before all mankind. { *Ephesians 3:9,10*}

How is it possible? Well, under the white robe of justification, the Church is allowed to accept forgiveness from Adamic guilt and give up even the prospect of earthly restitution So that the human race might have this opportunity.

When completed, their lives and death will be a universal testimony of the sufficiency of the redemptive merit and of the fullest response, even under the present dominion of darkness and evil.

For over 1,900 years a class unknown to mankind, yet from among the fallen race, have been offering the evidence of gratitude for salvation by offering their all. If we respond now, this becomes an assurance that humanity will later respond to the New Covenant program of rehabilitation when a highway will be opened, when the stones are gathered out of the way, and Satan bound.

So it is that we are allowed to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." { *Colossians 1:24*}

* He provides the merit and mediator qualification.

* We provide the evidence of selfless submission to the Redeemer and self-sacrifice for the Kingdom cause. In So doing, we are being developed to be associate under-priests for the New Covenant. { *2 Corinthians 3:5,6*}

If the Church give this evidence under temptation, it is certain that the rest of humanity will respond when opportunity is offered to them free of temptation. We cannot give this testimony without being denied, without suffering indignities, or while holding onto the flesh and mammon.

Ultimately it is for the dead and dying world that we persevere in our consecration vows. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:29,30,

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? . . . I die daily."

When finished, your sacrifice will be like Jesus' in some ways:

* There will be some persecution for righteousness, not only for your mistakes.

* There will be self denials and temporal denials.

* There will be a laying down of life's energies for those walking this way "because the servant is not greater than his Lord."

Ours is not a second or different offering. Since we are bought with a price, we are not our own. It is his life that flows in us and he offers us as he wills. { *1 Corinthians 12:12,18,22,26,27* }

While Jesus is not unsympathetic, yet he shows us what must be endured to follow in his steps just as he showed Paul how great things he must suffer for his name's sake. { *Acts 9:16* } Later Paul would say,

"I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: If we deny him, he also will deny us." { *2 Timothy 2:10-12* }

We will not be fully offered if we continue to demand our own rights, or separate ourselves from the fellowship and needs of our brethren, or fearfully retreat from the world's scorn, or cling to worldly possessions. It is not likely we will achieve worldly acclaim or fame. It is likely the Lord will keep you small in the world's eyes and even despised; because you are being prepared for a loftier purpose: to lift the 6,000-year effects of the curse.

When a young man consecrates, he may wait for independence from home when he may give his all with more zeal. Then he says, "When I finish my college, I will have more choices." With his first Job comes great responsibilities and he waits for calmer days to live his vision of full commitment. Soon marriage and children seem to be a great responsibility. "When the children are grown, I

will have more time for the Lord." But when the children are grown, his own parents have special need of his care in their older years. "When I retire from work, all of my time will belong to the Lord."

So soon most of life's opportunities are past! When will we give our all? We must not put off opportunity for another time. It may never come. We all have responsibilities in the flesh. But let us beware lest the flesh asks us to delay our vows. We must not delay our commitment to the vision. Later our eyes may be too dim to respond.

The skills of a great surgeon must be learned and developed by years of retreat, study, discipline, and practice. He may be urged to leave his studies after a few years of school to enjoy some of life's pleasures. But if diverted, he will never achieve the master's degree required to become a specialist prepared to correct the source of many ills. And so he endures a few more years for the vision of loftier goals. So it is with the School of Christ.

For what purpose is our training and our part in offering our lives? Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 1:3-7,

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, So our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. . . And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, So shall ye be also of the consolation."

How full of meaning is this expression "of the consolation." This ultimately points to the world's consolation in the Kingdom New Covenant. Only what we learn now, will we be able to give then. This is why Paul said,

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" { *1 Corinthians 6:2* }

And:

"Through your mercy they also may obtain mercy." { *Romans 11:31* }

The mercy in dealing with Israel will be extended to all. And it will be through YOUR MERCY. This is only one of many qualifications we are now learning.

But the reconciliation to come from the Sin Offering waits for the death of the testator. { *Hebrews 9:16,17* } In Jewish custom, covenants were secured by the death of a covenant-making animal. In dying with Christ, we share in his mission to guarantee a New Covenant for mankind. So now the whole world still groans and travails, waiting for the deliverance of Christ's body members. When the Church are all fully sacrificed, the New Covenant can begin. What an incentive for faithful endurance unto the end! Our fleshly end will be the world's beginning. If our burdens seem prolonged, let us think about the reason. It is to train us to be ministers of reconciliation.

When the Sin Offering is complete, then Christ will use his own Ransom value to cancel human guilt. Then the cleansing from the sin condition can begin.

"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. . . . Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." { *Hebrews 10:16-18* }

Looking back to the Hebrew type we can see the reason that the Bullock was taken from Aaron's flock on the Atonement day:

- * That it was a prime, fattened animal.
- * That its fat and vital life-supporting and blood-purifying organs were burned on the brazen altar.
- * That the meat and hide were burned amidst the camp.
- * That its blood was taken into the most holy, preceded with sweet incense and the blood sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant.

Now we see more clearly why a goat was taken from the flocks of the camp to follow the pattern of the Bullock.

- * That its blood was also sprinkled before the Ark.
- * That its carcass was also burned without the camp and the smell was a stench to the people.
- * That only when all was completed, the camp of Israel was blessed and re-instated to favor for the next year.

"All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." { *1 Corinthians 10:11*}

"[Brethren] Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." { *Hebrews 13:12-15*}

Summary

1. The Sin Offering addresses the sin condition of depraved humanity.
2. The Sin Offering requires a perfect human who can be touched with the needs of the race, and includes others who are also touched with the fall, and represent man's desire for atonement.
3. The offering class must experience the denying of earthly comforts and compensation and ultimately of human life itself, So as to be able to bring these to the human family. For only he who has truly known loss, truly knows how to give.

Brethren, if we are faithful, we shall share in the prophecy of Isaiah 58:10,12,

"If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity and thy darkness be as the noonday. . . And they who come of thee shall build the wastes of ages past. And as for the foundations of generation after generation, thou shalt rear them up. So shalt thou be called a repairer of broken walls, A RESTORER OF PATHS LEADING HOME."—(vs. 12 from *Rotherham*)

May our hearts be bound together in this common mission and hope.

"Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you." { *2 Corinthians 13:11, NIV*}

Amen.

Jehoiada-Bro. Régis Liberda, France

To those of us who study the Bible, it is not necessary to demonstrate that the Old Testament with its prophets, its kings, and, in a general way, the story of the chosen people of Israel, is a source of numerous figures and lessons. These lessons are not only of historical interest, but are equally useful for the edification of the New Creature by what we learn of the characters, works, and deeds of different people. Hence the stories even of some of those not well known prove to be rich in lessons. Today's study concerns one of these lesser known men of the Old Testament: Jehoiada.

Perhaps his name means nothing to some of you. This man certainly did not have a major role in the plan of God, but his life offers several interesting lessons which I would like to share with you.

The Idolatry of the Kings of Judah and Israel

First, let us place Jehoiada in historical context. To do this, we will start with Solomon. We know that this king, the mightiest of all Israelite kings, began his reign with God's full trust in him. Having asked the Almighty for wisdom sufficient to rule his people, he received it in abundance, and even obtained that for which he did not ask: the enjoyment of riches and glory.

Nonetheless, near the end of his life, basking in luxury he turned to idols under the influence of his numerous foreign wives. God punished him for this and divided his kingdom in two.

DOUBLE CLICK TO SEE REIGN OF KINGS CHART See image 00001

His son Rehoboam, heir to the throne, would have to be satisfied with dominion over only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This is what the Bible calls the Kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital. The ten other tribes organized themselves as the Kingdom of Israel, with Samaria as its capital, and headed by Jeroboam, an old lieutenant of Solomon who eventually became his sworn enemy, and whom God specifically raised up against Solomon at the end to punish his idolatry. These two kingdoms at times lived in peace and at times fought one another.

But it is important to notice how quickly these two kingdoms distanced themselves from God. The books of Kings and Chronicles succinctly describe the kings of Judah and Israel who succeeded one another. They introduce them by saying they did "that which was right in the sight of the Lord" or that "they did that

which was evil." Those who are described as having done evil are all the idolatrous kings who turned toward other gods. When we examine the succession of the kings of Judah and Israel, we see that those who did evil in the sight of the Lord are more numerous than those who did what was right. In the figure, the good kings are represented in white and the evil in gray.

What do we find? Of the 39 kings in the two kingdoms, the majority—30—are in gray! We find the few good kings in the Kingdom of Judah. The kings of Israel beginning with Jeroboam are all declared to be "evil" with the exception of King Jehu who struggled against idolatry but who stands out for his wanton cruelty. So it is not surprising that the Kingdom of Israel, deprived of the temple at Jerusalem, rapidly descended into idolatry and ended up being invaded and taken into captivity by the Assyrians. On the contrary, in the Kingdom of Judah, we find some good kings who fought the idolatry instituted by their predecessors.

The Error of Jehoshaphat

We are going to focus on one of these good kings of Judah: Jehoshaphat. In 1 Kings chapter 22, as well as 2 Chronicles chapter 17, he is described as a pious king, an adversary of Baal, and reigning for 25 years. His piety gained him the favor of God, who subjected the neighboring peoples to him. His only error was, it seems, to want to make a covenant at any price with the king of Israel: King Ahab.

Ahab was known for his godlessness, for the matter of Naboth's vineyard, and especially for the influence exerted over him by his wife, the idolatrous Jezebel. She was the one who persecuted the prophet Elijah. Ahab and Jezebel had three children, one of which was a girl named Athaliah. Jehoshaphat had accepted Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, to be wife to his son Jehoram. This alliance with Ahab had been criticized by the prophet Jehu in 2 Chronicles 19:2: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?"

This alliance by marriage was to prove catastrophic for the Kingdom of Judah. Indeed, we read in 2 Kings 8:18 that Jehoram "walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the Lord." There is perhaps a lesson for us in this behavior of Jehoshaphat. Like Jehoshaphat, we have favor with God as long as we remain faithful to him. Why should we seek compromises with the world which can only result in our spiritual death?

But let us return to the account which will illustrate this danger. During the eight year bloody reign of Jehoram, and because of the influence of Athaliah, idolatry became prevalent once again. At Athaliah's death, their son Ahaziah, who ascended the throne, followed the same path.

The Reign of Athaliah

Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram and Athaliah, reigned only one year. But this was sufficient for the Bible to tell us in 2 Kings 8:27 that he "walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD."

This king was killed in battle by Jehu, the only "good" king of Israel, who fought against idolatry. So Athaliah, mother of Ahaziah, determined to seize power. To do this she had to kill all of Ahaziah's children in order to cut off any remaining descendants of David, even though they were her grandchildren. As she was a faithful worshipper of Baal, she did not want anyone in the line of David, who might again be obedient to God, to ascend the throne of Judah.

So were all her grandchildren killed? No, because we are told in 2 Chronicles 22:11,12:

"But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years."

Here we are introduced to two people who will play a key role in what follows. Jehoshabeath was the daughter of Jehoram. Was she also the daughter of Athaliah? The Bible is not precise on this, but we will assume that she was because she was the wife of the key person in this study: Jehoiada. Jehoiada was the high priest in the temple at Jerusalem. His name means *Jehovah-knows*. He held second place in importance in the kingdom after the sovereign. We are reminded, for example, that the one who was closest to David was the high priest Zadok.

Here, however, the most important religious person was Mattan, high priest of Baal. As for Jehoiada the Bible tells us that he was a man deeply committed to Jehovah; it is not surprising that his

righteous influence aroused similar sentiments in his wife Jehoshabeath, even though she was the daughter of idolatrous Athaliah. Let us note that Jehoiada and Jehoshabeath had a son, Zechariah, who will also play a part in this lesson.

Jehoiada's Conspiracy

Joash was thus raised in secret, in a room adjoining the temple. This is because the temple of Jehovah was probably poorly attended, even abandoned in preference to that of Baal. But when Joash reached the age of seven, Jehoiada decided to take action and put an end to the idolatrous Athaliah. The account in 2 Kings chapter 11 and 2 Chronicles chapter 23 gives us the details of the high priest's conspiracy.

We notice that Jehoiada began by telling his scheme to five captains who brought faithful Levites from throughout the land into the temple. He gave them arms which were stored in the temple. Then he crowned Joash as king, with protection from the armed Levites. The shouts raised by the people, who recognized a descendant of David, attracted Athaliah to the temple, where she dared not enter with her armed guards. This was precisely what Jehoiada had hoped she'd do. Isolated and without protection, she was arrested, brought outside the temple, and finally executed, while the high priest completed winning the people to support their new, legitimate king.

After the death of Athaliah, it was said that "Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, the people, and the king, that they should all be the Lord's people." { *2 Chronicles 23:16* }

First Lesson: The Character of Jehoiada

Before going further into this lesson, we can already appreciate several character traits of Jehoiada. He was, according to the evidence, a courageous man who did not hesitate to risk his life for his faith in God, although surrounded by leaders of the kingdom who worshipped Baal. He took into his confidence and his conspiracy the captains of the kingdom without knowing whether one of them might reveal everything to Athaliah, which would have resulted in failure of the conspiracy, plus his death and the death of young Joash.

We should also emphasize that he waited until a favorable time to implement his plan, a time when the new king would be old enough to speak and to have enough reasoning to understand that

henceforth he must represent royalty even though he was not yet reigning.

Such behavior represents many of the qualities God wants to find in us: loyalty for His cause, courage in the face of adversity and, at the same time, keen insight regarding everything that pertains to His service. God asks that our consecration to Him be complete. He does not want us to compromise with the defilements of the world, the flesh, and the devil, although it is not always so easy to do this. May we be filled with similar zeal for our Heavenly Father.

The edification of the New Creature is sometimes full of zeal, sometimes troubled by the worries of the world.

Jehoiada and the Reign of Joash

The fact that Jehoiada established a covenant between himself, the people, and the king shows that from that time forth he committed himself, as well as the young king Joash, to serve God and God alone. This young king could not reign alone at this age and needed someone to act as regent until he was of age. Jehoiada was well suited to become counselor and mentor to the young king. Additionally, it was he and his wife, Jehoshabeath, who had raised Joash in the temple. Joash was like a son to him.

Perhaps some strain might have occurred when the young king became an adult and wished to "fly with his own wings," no more to be under the guardianship of the high priest, whose job, after all, was not to be governor but to be occupied with the service of the Lord. How did Joash's transition from youth to maturity proceed? We don't know exactly, but the Bible assures us that Jehoiada did everything he could to influence the young king to serve God. We read in 2 Chronicles 24:2,3 a statement which magnificently sums up the work of this high priest:

"Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters."

Although this scripture is a simple statement, how eloquently it speaks of the actions of the high priest. May we all merit such approval from God when our life is appraised.

Jehoiada Repairs the Temple

The long period of idolatry under Jehoram and Athaliah had led the people to profane the Lord's temple. The state of the temple, preserved under the good kings of Judah, was in disrepair. There is even a strong possibility that stones from the temple were used to build the temple of Baal, because in 2 Chronicles 24:7 we read that Athaliah had "broken up" the house of God; and used all the sacred things for Baal. It became necessary to find funds to pay for the needed repairs.

"And it came to pass after this that Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord." { 2 Chronicles 24:4 }

The Bible is precise in saying it was King Joash who gave the order to repair the temple. This demonstrates what great zeal he had for the Lord at this stage of his life (Hebrews was then undoubtedly an adult). The fact that he himself initiated this step shows how assertive he had become.

Let's look at how this repair work was done. The main problem was, as always, money. At the start, Joash directed the Levites to collect money from different cities in Judah and "see that ye hasten the matter," he told them. But the Levites did not show the necessary zeal. The king, in fact, reproached Jehoiada in 2 Chronicles 24:6,

"Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness?"

It seems that the people during all this period of idolatry had doubts about how the money they contributed was being used, which might have resulted in meager collections by the Levites. So Joash had another idea: he placed a box at the entrance of the temple forcing everyone to pay when he entered. It is one thing to give money when one is in a distant province, and another thing to give when seeing, with one's own eyes, the temple of the Lord in disrepair. This time there was a good result to the collection, and the donated money went to pay the workers who repaired the utensils, structure, and walls of the temple.

The theme of repairing the temple has often been used to illustrate the edification of our New Creature: sometimes speedy, full of zeal and enthusiasm; sometimes indifferent, troubled by the worries of the world impairing our growth.

The lack of zeal on the part of the Levites would have proven fatal to the renovation of the temple, So a reminder by means of an edict of the king was necessary to make the repairs possible. From time to time, through signs and experiences, God similarly admonishes us to serve him better; it is up to us to understand them and to renew the edification of our New Creature.

Jehoiada's Work Illustrates the Gospel Age

Jehoiada has been mentioned in Biblical commentaries as a type of our Lord. Let's see how his action, when placed in a wider yet limited context, pictures the Gospel Age.

The Gospel Age, from the divine point of view, has as its objective to select an elect class who will reign with Christ because "God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name." { *Acts 15:14* } But the "taking out" of this people is going to be done in the midst of difficulties. A good number of these difficulties will come forth from the scheming persecutions of the Apostate Church—AntiChrist.

This Apostate Church was to rise after the apostles fell asleep. It would increase in power, renounce the true faith, take over the worship of God, wage war on the true saints, and finally, collapse at the coming of the Lord, as we are told in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." We find precisely in our lesson an illustration of these events.

The reign of Jehoshaphat, a pious king, can represent for us the beginning of the apostolic era when the pure gospel was being dispensed. When he died, the idolatry of Athaliah underhandedly gained the upper hand. Likewise, apostasy after the death of the apostles turned Christianity away from the true faith. Athaliah not only revered Baal, she thought she exterminated the entire royal family. Likewise we are told that the apostasy "made war with the saints and prevailed against them." { *Daniel 7:21* } The true, persecuted Church is symbolically exiled "into the wilderness", { *Revelation 12:6* } to the same condition as young king Joash who was raised secretly in the temple. Joash can here represent the true Church.

DOUBLE CLICK TO SEE FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS
CHART See image 00002

During the time Athaliah sacrificed to idols, symbolically the apostate church promoted itself to God's place in Christian worship. Jehoiada, who we have said represents Christ, does not supplant Athaliah whenever he pleases; he waits until the time when Joash has attained "semi-maturity." In the same way Christ does not destroy AntiChrist before the appointed time, but, as we previously read, "with the brightness of his coming." { 2 *Thessalonians 2:8*}

So what did Jehoiada do? He crowned Joash, the only remaining member of the royal family. In the same way Christ accepts the Church as an associate in his glorious reign. But will this king rule as a high priest? Will the Church be above Christ? Surely not, and in the picture we note that Joash was too young to really reign; it was Jehoiada who was the true head of the kingdom, the regent, So to speak. And if the Bible assures us that Joash did that which was right in the sight of God during the lifetime of Jehoiada, it was Jehoiada who exercised real spiritual authority over Joash.

Finally, the fact that Jehoiada made a covenant "between himself, the king, and all the people" admirably illustrates for us the New Covenant that Christ and his Church will establish with humanity during the Millennial Age.

Here we stop making parallels between Jehoiada and Christ because in all Biblical types or illustrations, we can never include all the historical details in an extended application to the Gospel Age. But we can rejoice in that even in this apparently insignificant episode of history, God gave us a shadow of good things to come. We rejoice also that Christ with his Church will reign with wisdom and strength for the good of humanity, just like Jehoiada.

Faithfulness Poorly Rewarded

We previously mentioned that King Joash did that which was right in the sight of God during the life of the priest Jehoiada. But after his death—the death of the one who had raised him privately, taught him to obey God, and counseled him as a father—King Joash turned to idolatry. The Bible tells us in 2 Chronicles 24:17,18:

"After the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols."

We can judge the beneficial and important influence Jehoiada had over King Joash, counselling him wisely to walk in the ways of God. When Jehoiada died, King Joash gave himself over to practicing evil, influenced this time by the chiefs in his kingdom. Why was there such an inexorable tendency to worship idols? We know that idols attract, that the unbridled morals which are tolerated, even encouraged, by the pagan religions were an ever present temptation for Judah. It was So easy for them to turn away from God!

But, in fact, can we really say this risk is gone today, when on every side unbridled temptations assail us to lead us far from serving God, to whom we have already consecrated our all? This ease to listen to the call of the chief advisors of Judah—which for us might be characterized as the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the adversary—does not surprise us, certainly if over the years we have demonstrated our faithfulness to God, as did Joash during the life of Jehoiada.

Joash Stones Jehoiada's Son in the Temple!

But the worst was yet to come in the kingdom of Judah. We read in 2 Chronicles 24:19-22,

"Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord. . . but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it."

Zechariah, who, we would suppose, had been raised with Joash, is stoned by order of the king because he wanted to bring the people back to God; and he was even stoned in the temple! Zechariah was the one to whom our Lord, long afterward, paid homage by saying that his blood was shed "between the altar and the temple", { *Luke 11:51* } and he compared the generation of his time with that of Joash's, which killed the prophets who wanted to turn them from idols! "Woe be unto you," said he to the Pharisees whose heart was not right in the sight of God, just as Joash's "Pharisees"

assassinated the son of his teacher. For us it stands as an additional warning not to allow ourselves to be entrapped by sin.

God did not permit the crime of Joash to remain unpunished. He caused him to meet with a severe defeat at the hands of a small force of Syrians who, after killing his advisors, tortured Joash before leaving. Finally he was assassinated by two of his servants. Because of the transgressions at the end of his life, he was not buried in the sepulchers of the kings. God "looked upon it, and required it."

Concluding Thoughts

What can we say about Jehoiada, a man after God's own heart, considered an equal to the kings of Judah? He walked with integrity in obedience to the divine law without deviating, without compromising. He used his position to influence his king in God's ways; he taught and preached by his own conduct. As we have seen, he is a type of Christ. He thus sets an example for us to follow.

Our French playwright Racine devoted a tragedy to him which he titled *Athaliah*. I'll only quote a few lines of the full poetic declaration that Jehoiada addresses to Joash prior to crowning him king, to motivate him to embrace justice, goodness, and piety toward God, remembering that he had been orphaned and raised humbly while hidden in the temple:

Promise on this book and before these witnesses, You shall be hard on the wicked, but a refuge for the righteous. Between the poor and you, you shall let God be the judge, Remembering, my son, that hidden beneath this linen, Like them you were once poor and like them, an orphan.

May we always, in following the example of this character from the Old Testament, walk in God's way and not turn aside, and have faith and unshakable zeal for our Creator.

Amen.

Parallels Between Jehoiada and the Gospel Age

Works of Jehoiada The Gospel Age

Jehoshaphat, a pious king Pure Truth in the Apostolic era

Athaliah, an idolatrous queen { *2 Chronicles 22:3*} Apostasy takes control { *2 Thessalonians 2:3*}

She worships Baal { *2 Chronicles 22:3*} The apostate church usurps "the place of God" for worship { *2 Thessalonians 2:4*}

She [almost] exterminates the royal family { *2 Chronicles 22:10*}
Apostasy persecutes the saints { *Daniel 7:21*}

Joash is raised in hiding in the temple { *2 Chronicles 22:12*} The true Church is "exiled into the wilderness" { *Revelation 12:6*}

Jehoiada Christ

He waits until Joash is seven years old { *2 Chronicles 23:1*} He waits for the appropriate time (of his coming) { *2 Thessalonians 2:8*}

He executes Athaliah { *2 Chronicles 23:14*} He destroys the AntiChrist "with the brightness of his coming" { *2 Thessalonians 2:8*}

He crowns Joash. . . { *2 Chronicles 23:11*} He elevates the Church. . . { *Revelation 3:21*}

. . . but is the kingdom's true regent. . . { *2 Chronicles 24:2*} but reigns as its head { *Ephesians 1:22*}

He makes a covenant between himself, the people, and the king { *2 Chronicles 23:16*} He establishes the New Covenant with humanity { *Galatians 3:8*}

Man Doth Not Live by Bread Alone—Bro. David Lightfoot, England

First, some background information. "The Words"—*Haddebrm*—is the Hebrew title of the book of Deuteronomy. "The Words" is a title which comes from Deuteronomy 1:1,

"These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness."

Moses had worked for 40 years with his God judging Israel and well knew how easy it would be in the future, after his death, for Israel not wholly to follow the Lord. Therefore Israel needed "The Words" at that time in preparation for entry to the promised land. "The Words" were also recorded for their future instruction—and ours!

In the Lord's providence, we have "The Words" preserved for our learning. Therefore we should take careful note of these "words" since we want wholly to follow the Lord in each step of our pilgrim way, yes, and into our promised land where nothing out of harmony with our Father's character can enter. No lesser standard is acceptable.

The Old Order Was Passing Away

Let me just remind you of the situation surrounding Moses delivering his farewell message to Israel before they passed over Jordan into the promised land. Deuteronomy 1:3 tells us Moses started delivering "The Words" to the people on the first day of the 11th month of the 40th year. He had been trained for 40 years in all the wisdom and learning of Egypt. Then he had fled to Midian where he had received a further 40 years training, under the Lord's overruling, while keeping Jethro's sheep. As a shepherd, he had much time to meditate on the purpose of his life. When 80 years old he had now become the meekest man in all the earth. { *Numbers 12:3* } The Lord always prepares His ministers carefully for their service. Indeed, He So prepares each of us for our ministry now and beyond the veil.

By the hand of Moses the Lord led Israel out of Egypt with mighty signs and wonders. During their two-year journey to the promised land the men who were brought out of Egypt tempted the Lord ten times. { *Numbers 14:22,23* } Their final rebellion against the Lord, whom they had promised to obey, { *Exodus 19:7,8* } was that they would not enter the promised land, { *Numbers 14:4* } thus refusing the whole purpose of their deliverance from Egypt. Therefore, except for Joshua and Caleb, all over the age of 20 were forbidden entry to the land and sentenced to die during a further 38 years of wandering in the wilderness.

By the time Moses gave his farewell message to the people, all of Israel's unbelievers had died. Indeed Aaron had also died and been replaced by his son Eleazar. Now Moses himself was soon to view the promised land from the top of Mount Pisgah before he died. { *Deuteronomy 34:1-7* } He was not allowed to enter the promised land because of his sin at the waters of Meribah. { *Numbers 20:10-12* } This also teaches us that the Law cannot give entry to our promised land, but only the Savior as symbolized by Joshua.

We can imagine with what depth of feeling Moses exhorted the people before they entered the promised land, after such extensive

experience with their waywardness. They had seen the Lord's wonders in Egypt and how He let His people go. They had experienced His provision for their needs and His judgments following the ten times that they tempted Him on the way to the promised land. Even after those over 20 years old were denied entry still there are a further five recorded incidents of their complaints and rebellion to confirm the decision of the Lord that they should die in the wilderness. These incidents range from the rebellion of Korah to the mixing with the Moabites in whoredom and idol-worship at the instigation of Balaam. It is no surprise that Moses commands them to:

"Remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." { *Deuteronomy 8:2,3*}

So He deals with us, dear brethren.

These Things Are For Our Learning

Paul tells us:

"All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." { *1 Corinthians 10:11*}

Time is too short today to cover every incident which happened to Israel in the wilderness. Now my desire is to draw lessons for us from the ten times that Israel tempted God which resulted in their being denied entry to the promised land. In Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 we are told that the Israelites failed to exercise faith; failed to believe that whatever their God permitted, He also had the solution to any problem troubling the people. The epistle to the Hebrews tells us:

"Take heed, brethren, lest their be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." { *Hebrews 3:12*}

In that context, "departing" means not believing His promises and not acting in accord with that belief. Hebrews 4:11 admonishes us to "labour . . . to enter into that rest [of faith] lest any. . . fall after

the same example of unbelief." We have been granted the gift of faith. We have experienced the benefits of His love and care to strengthen faith as we follow in the steps of our Leader. By faith in the Greater than Moses we have left the dominion of the Adversary and are traveling to our promised land. I pray that these thoughts on the Israelites' experiences of "The Words" of God and their application to us and our lives may bring us all a blessing. Let us now consider the tempting of God by Israel ten times.

Incident 1: Fear of the Egyptians

The account of the first incident is found in Exodus 14. Here we see that the Lord directed Moses to lead the Israelites into a place hemmed in by the sea to tempt the Egyptians to give chase. When the people saw the Egyptians behind them and the sea in front of them, "they were sore afraid and. . . cried out unto the Lord." { *Exodus 14:10*} Moses encouraged them with the words, "Fear not. . . see the salvation of the Lord. . . The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace." { *Exodus 14:13,14*}

If we are ever apprehensive at the threat of coming trouble, let us remember "The Words" of the Lord by Moses: "Fear not. . . see the salvation of the Lord." We could also read the whole of Exodus 14 and thus renew our belief that he "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." { *Ephesians 3:20*}

Let us fully learn that man doth not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Incident 2: Murmuring at the Bitter Waters

For the first three days after Pharaoh and his army were vanquished in the Red Sea, the Israelites traveled into the wilderness of Shur but found no water. At Marah there was water but it was bitter and undrinkable. They complained to Moses because of their thirst. The Lord showed him a tree to sweeten and heal the waters So that they might drink. { *Exodus 15:22-25*} Peter says:

"Christ. . . suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. . . who his own self bare our sins in his own body, on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." { *1 Peter 2:21,24*} The felled tree is thus symbolic of the sacrifice of Christ which sweetens life's waters because he acquiesced to the will of his Father even unto death. This is the very opposite of murmuring and complaining. This is not

bemoaning our lot but constantly seeking the Lord's will. God's promise was:

"I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." { *Exodus 15:26* }

To receive this promises they must diligently hearken to "The Words" of God, do what was right, and keep His statutes.

Having been called out of the Egypt of Satan's dominion we too need this healing water. "Bless the Lord, O my soul. . . who healeth all thy diseases." { *Psalms 103:1,3* } The spirit of Christ heals us and invites us consistently to follow in his steps of self-sacrifice, living by his "words."

Incident 3: Hunger and the Bread of Heaven

A month after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, their stocks of food were dwindling.

"The. . . children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and. . . said. . . Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt. . . when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth. . . to kill this whole assembly with hunger." { *Exodus 16:2,3* }

But they were murmuring against the Lord. Yet the Lord did not intend them to starve in the wilderness. The same evening they gathered quails, and the following morning their first blessing of manna was available.

The continuing miraculous feeding of 600,000 men with their families has particular relevance to the fact that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. He humbled them, and made them to hunger, that He might give them the bread of heaven. { *Deuteronomy 8:3* } But they would not take that bread in faith. As Paul commented, they "did all eat the same spiritual [food]" yet "with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." { *1 Corinthians 10:3,5* }

Jesus doubtless remembered Israel's wanderings in the wilderness when he quoted to the Devil, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" { *Matthew 4:4* } to refute the suggestion that he should please himself in the use of his God-given power. We, like our Master, desire the

true faith which is obedient to God's will and lives by His every word.

Incident 4: Disobedience Spoils Blessings

Having received manna, Moses told the people not to leave any of it until the morning. This was the specific instruction of the Lord to test whether or not they would obey Him. Some of the people disobeyed. The leftover manna bred worms and stank. { *Exodus 16:4,19,20* } Their disobedience made Moses angry. Why? Keeping some manna overnight seems a fairly trivial thing. But the Lord said He was proving whether the people were really intent on pleasing Him or not. They had failed yet again.

This is a searching lesson for us. Are we determined to bring even the seemingly insignificant things in our lives into captivity to the will of God? Romans 12:2 tells us His will can only be discovered by experience and by constant searching. We have to conform ourselves, not to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds; and then we shall prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Incident 5: Disobedience With Sabbath Rest

Every Sabbath there was a miracle. There was twice as much manna the day before and then the Lord preserved it through the Sabbath So that they might not have to work. Notwithstanding a specific instruction not to, "There went out of the people on the seventh day to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" { *Exodus 16:27,28* }

The provision of this Sabbath rest should have taught them and does teach us of that rest of mind which remains for the people of God. Hebrews 4 warns us it is not particularly easy "to enter into that rest." We are tempted not to trust our Father in all aspects of our lives. But faith firmly trusts Him come what may. "The Words" of God, setting before us the example of Jesus Christ, are discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart. { *Hebrews 4:9-12* } These are the searching "words" which root out every trace of the disobedient spirit and bring life and inner rest to those who love them.

Incident 6: Meribah—Is the Lord Among Us?

Again the people murmured against Moses because there was no water to drink when they arrived at Rephidim. There was, of course, nothing wrong with asking the Lord to make provision to quench their thirst. But they had an attitude problem when they tempted God by asking, "Is the Lord among us or not?" They lived with daily miracles, such as the supply of manna and the pillar of cloud and fire! As God instructed Moses, he struck the rock in Horeb and water came out. { *Exodus 17:1-7*} Psalm 81:7 has "words" for us on this:

"Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah."

Let us not fail under these tests. Let us never doubt that the Lord is still with us and will provide for all our needs, though not necessarily all our wants! We must all be proved whether it really is by the Lord's "words" alone that we live.

Incident 7: The Golden Calf

After all the Lord's loving care of them, how could Israel make and worship an idol? But Moses was away up Mount Sinai receiving the Law. They needed something they could see. They said to Aaron, "Make us gods. . . as for this Moses. . . we wot not what is become of him." { *Exodus 32:1*} At the very time God was giving Moses the laws which were to regulate their whole lives, they rejected their faithful champion. No wonder Moses said, "This people have sinned a great sin." The Lord did not excuse them and "plagued the people." { *Exodus 32:31,34,35*}

But the relationship we have with our Father is more intimate and brings greater responsibility. Our experience of His care makes it unthinkable that we should put other things before Him. But Paul warned the Corinthians:

"Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them. . . Let him that thinketh that he standeth take heed lest he fall." { *1 Corinthians 10:7,12*}

We live in an idol-worshipping world as Israel had done in Egypt. We have been called from such idols as wealth, fame and possessions as they were from the idols of Egypt. Psalms 106:23 refers to Moses' zeal for God's good name being so great that he was willing to have his name blotted out of God's book. Oh that

we might always be So zealous for the honor of our Father's name.
This is living by His "words."

Incident 8: Israel Complained Again

Nu 9 and 10 record how the cloudy pillar of the Lord's presence was Israel's constant miraculous travel guide and evidence of His protecting presence. { *Numbers 9:16-23 10:33-36* } Yet the people complained again. Numbers 11:1 records that "it displeased the Lord. . . and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp." This fire was quenched when the people cried to Moses and he prayed for them. { *Numbers 11:2* } They needed to know that their "God is a consuming fire" cleansing evil from their midst. { *Deuteronomy 4:24* } But He had also provided a mediator to pray for them.

The lesson for us is that we have one who speaks for us, who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." { *Hebrews 4:15* }

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." { *1 John 2:1* }

Meditation on "The Words" of the watchfulness and love of our Father and our Savior is the antidote to the sin of complaining.

Incident 9: Manna Despised, Lust for Flesh

Here is the record of this incident:

"The mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick; but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." { *Numbers 11:4-6* }

What an example of gross ingratitude! They despised the food of God and again craved the food of this world. The anger of the Lord was kindled greatly and Moses also was So displeased that he asked the Lord to kill him. The Lord answered by showing that an abundance of this world's food brings death, whereas His provision of the food of heaven had been life. You will remember how the Lord gave them such abundance of quails that they stood two cubits high upon the earth round about the camp a day's journey in each direction. What abundance!

"[Yet] while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled. . . and the Lord smote the people with a . . . great plague. And. . . there they buried the people that lusted." { *Numbers 11:33,34*}

What a lesson to us to "be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee." { *Hebrews 13:5*} But the Word also assures us that should we begin to desire things which are not the Lord's choice for us, He will surely show us the wisdom of His will.

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" { *Hebrews 12:5*}

"The Words" of the Lord are life. Jeremiah said:

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." { *Jeremiah 15:16*}

How we echo those words!

The Lord will provide for all our needs, though not necessarily all our wants!

Incident 10: Refusal to Possess Promised Land

They had arrived at Kadesh, on the border of the promised land. { *Numbers 13:26*} How could they fail to obey the Lord after coming this far with Him? The 12 men sent to spy out the land had reported back. All but Joshua and Caleb discouraged the people with an evil report. But Caleb, in faith, said, "Let us go up at once and possess it." { *Numbers 13:30*}

"[But] all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? . . . And they said unto one another, Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt." { *Numbers 14:2-4*}

Moses and Aaron were very distressed, and Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes and pleaded with the people not to rebel, but to realize that the Lord was with them. For this the congregation came near

to stoning Joshua and Caleb. The Lord intervened by showing His glory in the tabernacle. { *Numbers 14:10* }

This tenth provocation proved that the unbelievers were not fit to enter the land of promise. The Lord threatened to kill them all and make a greater nation from Moses. But again their Mediator pleaded for them, reminding the Lord that other nations would think Him unable to bring Israel into Canaan if He killed them in the wilderness. The Lord pardoned them but said:

"Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." { *Numbers 14:22,23* }

Only Joshua and Caleb and those under 20 years old would enter the land. The rest were to die in the wilderness whilst a total period of 40 years elapsed from their coming out of Egypt.

What lessons there are for us in these happenings! We too have covenanted to obey the Lord's commands and leadings. We do not desire to return to the Egypt of this present evil world, but the Lord does expect us to believe that He will give us the strength to achieve whatever He gives us to do.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we maintain the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." { *Hebrews 3:12-14* }

Was it not belief in God's promise of the land that kept Joshua and Caleb going through the next 38 years in the wilderness? We too have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise. { *Hebrews 10:36* }

Concluding Thoughts

Let us return to Moses addressing the children of Israel before they entered the promised land. We can imagine with what depth of feeling he exhorted them after such extensive experience with their waywardness. He said:

"All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord your God led thee. . . to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no."

"And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, So the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him." { *Deuteronomy 8:1-6*}

Moses knew the Lord both as merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, and as a consuming fire. So do we. They traveled to an earthly promised land. We are come unto "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all." { *Hebrews 12:22,23*} How much the more should we give heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." { *Hebrews 2:1*}

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." { *Hebrews 12:28,29*}

"He is like a refiner's fire. . . and He shall purify the sons of Levi . . . that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." { *Malachi 3:2,3*}

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Amen.

The Dual Personality of the Christian-Bro. Daniel Mlynek, Switzerland

The purpose of the next hour is to analyze and understand the dual aspect of our being, because in fact we are New Creatures begotten within a living vessel that is imperfect and perishable. Would you put a jewel, or something you cherish very much, into a receptacle

or container of sorts that is perishable, where, consequently, your treasure would neither be protected nor secure? Such is the case with our New Creature.

Everyone who consecrated may have felt this begetting the day of his baptism. For some it may have been to the point where they almost felt like another person, as though washed, regenerated, one might even say, sanctified. Try to remember brethren. Was it not like this? At least for some of us, perhaps it was.

We will try to analyze and understand the goals of the New Creature, the ways they can be reached, and the barriers encountered along the way to perfection. We will break down our study into describing the manifestations of the dual aspect of the Christian and the specific actions which have as a primary objective the growth of the New Creature. By So doing we will see that there is nothing particularly difficult or scientific in this endeavor. A bit of Christian common sense and especially some good will on our part are quite ample.

Know Yourself

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" { *1 Corinthians 10:16* }

To this scripture we add Brother Russell's comment taken from the April 12th *Manna*:

"It is one cup, though it be the juice of many grapes, even as it is one loaf, though it be from many grains. The grains cannot maintain their individuality and their own life if they would become bread for others; the grapes cannot maintain themselves as grapes if they would constitute the life-giving spirit; and thus we see the beauty of the apostle's statement that the Lord's people are participants in the one loaf and cup. . . . There is no other way that we can attain the new nature than by accepting the Lord's invitation to drink of His cup and be broken with Him as members of the one loaf, and to be buried with him in baptism, into His death, and thus to attain with Him resurrection glory, honor, and immortality."

It is interesting to note that both the apostle and, after him, Pastor Russell insist on the fact that we must forget our own individuality and our own life as soon as we talk about consecrating. And they add that we must be broken with the Lord and even buried with

him if we want to give the embryo within us a chance to live later. This is where we see the first manifestation of the dual aspect, dear friends. The new will tries to destroy the body, the intentions, the fleshly activities. The old will try to find all sorts of good reasons to live and enjoy whatever we possess.

So we ask, what is the first thing one can do So as not to neglect this first manifestation? The answer is clear: we should know ourselves very well. It is necessary to correct ourselves to fit the ideal of Christ. How could we be broken with him if we don't know what to break despite our good intentions to do so? Let us go back to the beginning, dear friends. Let us try to concentrate on the following—please, really try to do it.

Sanctification

At our consecration we sincerely sacrificed everything. We said, "I don't belong to myself anymore, may thy will be done." Remember? This is correct, isn't it? So what happened? How far did we get? Do you remember all those times when instead of doing His will, you were eager, I say eager, to do your own will, not giving the Lord even a chance to help you in the action?

We cannot now interrogate those who would like to testify about this because there are too many of us here. But if we talk to each other intimately during the intermissions, I am sure we will recognize an important lesson of this first introspective step. The lesson is that of humility.

Thus a training work takes place within ourselves. We realize that this work will be long and difficult. We already begin to talk about sacrifice. But I ask myself, brethren, if correcting one's own mistakes is really a sacrifice or not, because the *Manna* comment says we should become bread for others and not for ourselves.

There is in addition the cup, a voluntary sacrifice marked by total self-denial, where a Christian suffers silently for God, for Jesus, for the Truth, for the brethren, and, to a point, So that the New Creature stays unspotted and alive within us. Then and only then, brethren, can we talk about sacrifice.

Here too, humility is required. In our own mental appraisal we always see too readily and too intensely our sacrifice for the brethren or the Truth. In most cases we should not be talking about sacrifice but about obligation, pure and simple, to help others and especially our brethren, to ease misery, especially that of a brother,

particularly moral misery. This is the application of the commandments that Jesus gave us, and it has nothing to do with sacrifice. Let us read some scriptures:

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." { *John 20:22,23* }

At the time when these words were uttered, the apostles could only receive the Spirit through Jesus' direct intervention, and this is what he actually did. {†} But the point that struck me was the fact that the Lord said: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

You have to admit that these words are surprising to a Christian, especially because we heard that we should love even our enemies. Wouldn't the second manifestation of the dual aspect be the activity of the holy Spirit within us, manifesting itself by our purification and sanctification, without which it would not be possible to see the Lord, as the apostle mentions in Hebrews 12:14? This Spirit is given by God to every true Christian who offers himself to Him. But for what purpose? This Spirit will not be at peace in an evil and weak body. It will want to react, and its action will come from inside.

Don't try to serve the Lord primarily with external activities, but let the Spirit first take effect from within. This is the second action to be taken.

"Seeing" the New Creature

We recall that Stephen, when he died so very young in the truth, showed he was pure and well versed in the truth. You need only reread what he said when the Jews were stoning him. (Acts chapter 7) The Lord's words mentioned earlier can be applied directly to Stephen when he prayed before dying that their sin be "remitted." { *Acts 7:60* }

A good way to know if the Spirit is working within us as a constant purifying agent is to ask someone to frankly offer criticism about us (constructively, of course) by telling us what he doesn't find right in our character or behavior. This is possible only if we know ourselves truly well, and if we have a deep respect for our brother or sister, all of which is, by the way, a proof of maturity. Thus we will be able to measure how much ground has been covered, how

much still needs to be done, and evaluate those flaws we possess which are not as obvious to us as they are to others.

Such an evaluation should be performed at home or within our ecclesia. Don't ask this sort of thing at this convention from brethren who may be acquainted with you, but who live in another country or other area. Ask those from your ecclesia especially if you were given the honor to serve it! You'll see dear friends. You'll learn humility!

In short, the problem is to discern the working of the holy Spirit which, we have seen, first takes place from within. On the other hand, the holy Spirit manifests itself externally first by forgiveness. This is the third manifestation of the dual aspect, the presence of the New Creature. We find ourselves forgiving freely, keeping our cool and our courage; we appear as someone intensely virtuous, calm in decisions and in difficulties. Some brethren may be surprised and come to us asking advice or admiring our serenity in sickness or in afflictions. If this happens to you, brethren, it is a proof of the strength of your Christian character. It means you are broken, you have become food for others, your sacrifice is an example to your neighbor. This is the thought of 2 Corinthians 7:1,

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The third action to be taken becomes clear to us. It is in fact a double action: to confess our sins and separate ourselves from the world and its "filthiness." The word of God confirms this:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." { *1 John 1:7,9* }

We learn now that we must be faithful and just to forgive or not, the sins of others. Just having the Spirit is not enough as the previous text { *John 20:23* } seemed to suggest. This implies the existence of a strong and living faith that will easily find a place in our heart which has been purified and emptied of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Such a Christian will seek one thing only, which is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 6:17,

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

We now reach a crucial point, dear friends: the effective separation of the New Creature. How difficult it is to follow this rule, to separate ourselves from material things and earthly attachments, and to keep ourselves pure and separated So that God can receive us.

This third action (separation) is long and tiring, wherein a Christian persists in distinguishing the new from the old, first in himself, then in his actions, in his spirit, and in his way of thinking. Remember, we are talking about a Christian who made the effort of purification and sacrifice, who has a deep faith, who is advanced in the Truth because he studies extensively, who already has had to forgive others So much. Now he is asked to cut off everything that has nothing to do with the New Creature.

Think about those among us who are mothers or fathers and have no consecrated children. These parents understand the value of the Truth and somewhere in their conscience they make a separation between themselves and their children. Think about those who are married to someone unconsecrated, who are unequally yoked. Think about those who give up a brilliant career So they can save their New Creature. These few examples from our lives show the difficulty to separate ourselves from everything. How much humility do we need brethren!

But in being cut off from the world and evil things, how can we demonstrate and especially prove to ourselves that the holy Spirit is active within us? Let us read the Apostle Peter's words found in 1 Peter 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."

Brother Russell adds in the *Manna* comment of September 2nd:

"Knowledge is to be highly esteemed in the church, and to be regarded as an evidence of progress, of growth; for none can grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might—in grace—unless he grows also in knowledge."

Dear friends, it is essential to grow in the Truth, to recognize within us an obvious as well as constant progress in the knowledge

of the Word of God because this is proof that the Lord blesses and helps us. Brother Russell also adds in the same *Manna* comment,

"We properly esteem most highly those whose love for the Lord and for His Truth are evidenced by zeal in the study of His Word, and whose favor with God is evidenced by their being guided more and more into the deep things of God."

Unfortunately this fact is often misunderstood by brethren, So those who know more, in all humility to be sure, are criticized and envied. (This is sometimes even seen among elders who should, nevertheless, be servants.)

As you listen to me now, brethren, some of you are probably thinking that these words are easy, that they concern perhaps those new in the truth, but surely not me. OK, but then measure your progress in the knowledge you have attained since the last International Convention at Poitiers. How much ground have you covered? Answer for yourself, but in sincerity. God hears you! Realize how lucky you are, how much God has blessed and protected you. You have this opportunity again, some of you. So how far are you in your knowledge? In the display of your ardent love for the brethren? In the display of your forgiveness toward others? You see dear friends when we sincerely go deeply into things, it is not So easy. Here again, how much humility is needed!

The Consecration of the Priests

Let us try to find in the types of the Old Testament the application of these principles. The scriptures concerning the consecration of the priests are found in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. It would be good for those who don't know these scriptures to study them at home to improve their foundation in the Truth. We find many events and specifically assigned actions which have special meaning for Christians. Let us look at some of them.

Moses washed the area and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein. Then Aaron and his sons were washed. After this when Aaron was dressed with the clothes of glory, he was also anointed by Moses. We see again brethren, sanctification and purification as a first action guided by God's authority, here represented by Moses. Let us notice that the tabernacle and all that was therein were also purified and sanctified.

We are in a holy place, the convention is holy, my brethren are holy, I am separated from the world and ready to be considered

by God Himself as a member of the body of Christ, being reckoned perfect because I am covered by the Robe of Righteousness of the one who is righteous: Jesus Christ. But where is there room for my earthly will, my fleshly aspirations, my selfish reactions, my human judgments? There is no room for them, they don't exist in this picture. Can you sense, dear friends, the seriousness of the situation if, for one reason or another, we introduce the flesh into this pure and holy state?

Let us now consider the three sacrifices made during the priest's consecration. First a bullock was sacrificed, its fat was burned on the altar and its blood was placed on the horns of the altar. This sacrifice was called the sin offering. Then a ram was killed. It was burned on the altar as an offering made by fire, or burnt offering. Its blood was sprinkled upon the altar round about. Finally, a second ram was sacrificed, the ram of consecration. Its blood was used to anoint the tip of the right ear as well as the thumb of the right hand and big toe of the right foot of the priests. The remainder of it was sprinkled upon the altar round about. But some other consecrated parts were burned and the remainder of the ram was eaten by Aaron and his sons.

The importance that God gives to our consecration is already shown in the number and precision of all these activities. Our total consecration is shown when Moses put blood on the tip of the right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and toe of the right foot of the priest. All of our functional being is thus given for the service of God. For example, the fact that Moses took the offering that was being waved from Aaron's hands { *Leviticus 8:27,28* } clearly shows us that it is God's authority that determines and controls our activity. We are consecrated unto death; all depends on God and not on ourselves. Here too, brethren, I look for some pretext for my earthly nature, but find none.

Let us recall the last part of these ceremonies. Moses took some anointing oil and some blood which was upon the altar and sprinkled it upon Aaron's and his sons' garments. { *Leviticus 8:30* } Then he told them to cook the remainder of the meat, to eat it at the door of the tabernacle, and to remain there for seven days.

Notice that a bullock was sacrificed by Moses every day; the altar was being purified by this atonement and sanctified by the anointing. { *Exodus 29:36* } Is this not a proof of the great importance, better still, the extreme seriousness of the event? Let us not toy with our consecration, brethren. Let us be aware of the

importance of the step and eliminate everything that does not pertain to this state of priesthood.

There is another point that corroborates our bond with God himself and the action of the holy Spirit: Aaron was told to burn some sweet incense on the golden altar in the Holy. { *Exodus 30:7*} The ingredients of this perfume are mentioned in *Exodus 30:34,35*. There are five ingredients, one of which is pure frankincense. This shows us that in our prayers (sweet perfume) there are several elements such as reverence, gratefulness, thankfulness, supplication, praise, etc.

Dear friends, are we able to appreciate the gift of prayer? Think about the content of your secret or private prayers. Do we find in it a lot of supplication but little worship? Do you think of venerating God with simplicity but sincerity, as David knew how to do? The more I have the privilege to study, the more I am surprised by the depth of Truth! There is no more question of ourselves. Baptism buried us completely. We are in the hands of our high priest, Christ, who is the one officiating at our sacrifice. So, if the flesh revives, it is as though we were offering the priest a blemished sacrifice, one forbidden by the law.

The Unity of the Spirit

Let us now look, brethren, at some texts from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians. We read: { *Ephesians 1:4*}

"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. (vs. 13) In whom ye also trusted. . . in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. (vs. 22) 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."

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and 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." (*Ephesians 2:19-22*; September 26 *Manna*)

"I therefore. . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. . . endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. . . There is one body, and one Spirit,

even as ye are called in 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." { *Ephesians 4:1-6* }

These words reveal to us clearly the preconditions for the Spirit to act among God's people. The apostle insists on the unity of faith and one's belonging to God, by virtue of our being fellowcitizens with the saints, built upon the foundation of Jesus and the apostles. Here we find the fourth manifestation: the preservation of the unity of the Spirit. The apostle doesn't talk about unity of understanding or action, but he insists on the unity of the Spirit. Which spirit? Ours? That of our ecclesia? The spirit of our loved ones? No, dear friends, it is the unity of the holy Spirit. Let us try now to understand what constitutes the unity that characterizes those who possess this Spirit. When we will have understood that, we will clearly see the fourth action to undertake.

We will be united in Spirit only if we forget the "me" and "I," and put ourselves at the service of the brethren and the Truth.

First, the unity of faith is asked of us because we can no more be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. { *Ephesians 4:14* } As the apostle says, the body of Christ will be coherent and organized only if faith is undivided and strong, present in the actions and behavior of all those called, and who desire to be among the best disciples of the Lord. But brethren, the more we advance in the Truth, the more important spiritual knowledge seems to become, the more difficult it seems to achieve this unity required by the Lord. The more our viewpoints differ, the more our biblical discussions become impossible. So the question arises: Where is this unity?

I know that some of you will tell me that we have the freedom to differ in our opinions on many points, but that we need to agree on the fundamentals only. That's true, but we disagree even about fundamentals. I don't want to lead a polemic on this subject during this hour, but it is a fact that we have differing opinions on many very important points of understanding of the Bible and its prophecies.

So, let us reiterate the question: Where is the unity? Should we, rather, look for it elsewhere? And if so, where? When we read Ephesians, we find advice such as this:

*" put on the new man" (4:24);

*" let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (4:26);

*" let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you" (4:31);

*" walk in love" (5:2);

*" walk as children of light" (5:8);

*" see that ye walk circumspectly" (5:15);

*" submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (5:21).

These verses tell us to forget the "me" and the "I," and put ourselves at the service of the brethren and the Truth. Only thus will we be united in Spirit. These scriptures remind us to submit ourselves one to another, to have nothing in common with selfish and empty works—which make us feel good, and by which we think we are doing well—but, on the contrary, to do the works which glorify God and the Truth, works that shine forth and make us the light of the world! The Apostle John confirms this. We read:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." { *1 John 1:7* }

Let's take a test now brethren. We are here at the International Convention, happy and satisfied. Is there true fellowship between us? Can we feel it? Do we need it; are we looking for it? I fear I see again little groups, what look like cliques, albeit friendly—always the same, by the way. Most of us make little effort to improve this fellowship, even though our Father gives us the opportunity to do so here. Scrutinize your behavior here. Don't try to save face by saying I'm too busy, I don't speak the language, I'm too shy, they don't like me, I don't have anything to say, etc. Where do we expect to find unity of the Spirit if not in a place like this?

True and edifying fellowship of the Christian proceeds from love for one's neighbor. 1 John 3:14 reads, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The Apostle John adds the other part of this verse, and how important it is: "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

If your love is sincere toward one person, reserved yet still present toward another, but withheld from a third, know that you are on the

way down, the easy way that leads to death and not life! Those are the apostle's words, not mine.

Concluding Thoughts

Let us conclude now, brethren. We no longer belong to ourselves. We have sacrificed our person, our desires, and aspirations on the altar, saying, "Lord, I want to do thy will." We have an inner battle which overpowers and perturbs us, the battle between the New Creature and the old man.

We must particularly pay attention to the New Creature by helping it discern in our behavior the signs that prove the manifestation of the holy Spirit in our understanding. These include the will to destroy our body, purification, sanctification, confession of our sins, separation from the world, understanding of our sacrifice, our consecration as a royal priesthood and, finally, the tireless search for the unity of the spirit in order to prove to ourselves, to God, and to the brethren that we are one body with one faith.

I end, solemnly, with words easy to understand yet as cutting as the blade of a sword.

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." { *1 Peter 4:17* }

Amen.

Conditions of Discipleship-Bro. Franciszek Olejarz, Poland

Dear brethren in the lord. we have gathered in this place because we have a common goal which is to receive the crown of glory, honor, and immortality. The way to this goal is through Christ who is also our pattern and teacher. If we desire to be disciples of Christ, we must fulfill certain conditions. These conditions were laid down by Jesus himself. Let us read our Lord's words as found in Matthew 16:24,

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

In this text our Lord outlines the conditions which must be met by his followers: self denial, the carrying of one's own cross.

Self Denial

Our Lord directed these words to the disciples, to those who walked with him and obeyed him. Similarly during the Gospel Age, these words do not apply to people in general—the whole world—but only to believers and those who have become "disciples," who recognize the Lord Jesus as their teacher.

These words were directed to the followers of our Lord who have already passed two steps: 1) they have attained justification as a result of their faith in Christ as their Savior, a justification which permits them to be reckoned perfect; 2) they have consecrated their lives to the Lord.

Just as the disciples not only recognized our Lord as their teacher and master, they also decided to follow him. Similarly we too at first recognize our Lord Jesus as our Savior, then we decide to follow in his steps. We declare the words, "I desire, O Lord, to do thy will." Then we hear our Lord's reply: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

Consecration leads us to sacrifice. The sacrifice or offering of ourselves marks the third step in the following of our Lord, which has been called "self denial." The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans (12:1) writes:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The apostle here appeals to brethren to actively fulfill what they have promised to sacrifice. This includes everything we possess: our thoughts, words, acts, life, time, talents, and financial means.

If we truly "present our bodies as a living sacrifice" and not just talk about it, at that time our high priest, the Lord Jesus, presents us to God the Father and imputes to us his merit. Only then, and not before, does our sacrifice become "a sacrifice holy and acceptable to God."

Carrying Our Cross

Let us examine the second condition—carrying one's cross. Our Lord tells us that it is possible to follow him but not to carry our cross. We read in Luke 14:27,

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

This means that we can confess our Lord, yet not be his disciple if we do not carry our cross. What does it mean to carry one's cross? Some claim it is sufficient to wear a figure of a cross around one's neck, that that represents carrying one's cross. Others pin a cross to their clothes and think that means to carry a cross. And we sometimes hear it said that problems between husband and wife can be a peculiar form of cross bearing.

Did our Lord refer to these as cross bearing? To properly understand this, it is necessary to take our Lord Jesus as an example and learn what kind of cross he bore. It was not the literal cross he carried that was meant, but the cross he bore for the 3 1/2 years of his mission, from baptism in the river Jordan until his death.

Our Lord Jesus, because of his faithfulness to the truth by testifying of the kingdom which he was to establish and the conditions of membership in that kingdom, drew upon himself the hatred of those learned in scriptures and the Pharisees. These people defamed his name, opposed him, plotted against his life until they finally killed him.

Note that those who hated our Lord at that time were not the ordinary people, but belonged to the chief class of the Jews. These were the Pharisees and Sadducees. If our Lord had cooperated with them, we can well imagine they would have recognized him as a "respectable" person and would have granted him many titles and honors. He would have had many followers.

But our Lord took a stand separate from all existing religious sects and social parties. This brought anger, hatred, and persecution from them. This was the cross which he had to bear daily. His followers can expect similar experiences in similar circumstances, as the apostle Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 3:12,

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Today we see the masses uniting themselves into groups—professional, political and social—setting ambitious goals for themselves from a human standpoint: the improvement of living standards and the restraint of degradation of nature and society in general.

Churches are uniting in bundles. Federations of churches and unions are uniting under the motto: "Let us not look at what separates us, but at what unites us."

If true followers make every effort to maintain their faithfulness to the Lord and his truth and at the same time remain independent of all political and social parties and religious groups, they may expect persecution in all its forms. All trials which come as a result of our faithfulness, such as from the world and our surroundings, are counted to us as daily cross-bearing. The words of our Lord recorded in Luke 9:23,24 bear witness to this:

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

If we are victorious in our trials, a great reward awaits us, about which our Lord speaks in Matthew 5:11,12,

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Drinking the cup means giving up, without reservation, our life to the Lord, the truth, and the brethren.

There are other conditions, about which our Lord spoke in Matthew 20:20-23,

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

The apostles longed for the kingdom of God and expected that it would be established at the time of our Lord's first advent. They lived with the hope of sharing in that kingdom. James and John had the special desire to obtain positions and places as close to Jesus as possible in the kingdom. That is why they asked our Lord if one of them might sit upon his right and the other on his left in his kingdom. To their request our Lord answered, "Ye know not what you ask." In other words, "You cannot imagine, you cannot comprehend, what it means to share with me in my kingdom.")

The Lord asks further: "Can you drink of the cup of which I will drink?" This question, although directed to his disciples, refers also to us. This is what the Lord is asking me (and you brother and you sister):

"Do you want to consecrate your life, without reservation, just as I did? Will you be able to do that, even though someone attempts to take your life unlawfully, just as they did to me? Are you ready to suffer shame from the crowd where you once enjoyed acceptance? Will you be able to suffer ostracism from your people as I did? { *Matthew 27:41-44*} Will you be able to stand the loneliness I endured in Gethsemane? Are you able in difficult trials to pray for the brethren just as I did for you? Will you be able to forgive your persecutors, slanderers, traducers, and transgressors, and pray for them? Are you able to do the will of God under all circumstances, pleasant or unpleasant? Do you want to be faithful, even though communion with the Father might for a moment be broken as was my experience? Do you wish to suffer all these things in your own strength or are you ready to ask God for help earnestly, with tears, as I did?"

Our answer to the Lord on all these questions is: "Lord, we are ready, but by thy grace and help." Our Lord drank his cup of suffering with thanksgiving. Let us remember, that if he gave us this cup, it was so we might drink of it. Each has his own cup which God fills. However, our Lord lends his help so we might drink all of it. This cup abounds with blessings as well as with trials and difficulties.

The Cross

After this the Lord asked, "Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Our baptism must be the same as the baptism of our Lord Jesus. It was a baptism unto death. The immersion in water by John the Baptist was only a symbol.

We must decide on the baptism of submitting our own wills into the will of God. This means ridding ourselves of earthly hopes, desires, and ambitions and is described as the real baptism—a consecration of the heart. Symbolic baptism is necessary, also, through immersion of the flesh in water. Such an immersion represents a symbolic death; the raising up represents resurrection.

Baptism in water is a symbol, or picture, of the true baptism, the real baptism. Some claim only one baptism is necessary, the one of the heart. But here are the words of the eunuch to Philip, recorded in Acts 8:36: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" What stands in the way of water baptism? Let each answer this question for himself. Whoever hesitates will not be fully a pupil of Jesus.

The accepting and fulfilling of the conditions extended by our Lord must accomplish in us the act of transformation. This transformation will be outwardly visible. Our work will be specially on ourselves and our characters to approach perfection. In 1 Peter 1:15,16 we read,

"But as he which hath called you is holy, So be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy."

The apostle writes, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Conversation here has a wide meaning. The definition by the apostle Paul is "all manner" and can be applied this way: In whose company will we long to be—brethren of the same precious faith or with other groups? It will affect our conversations with others, on the topics we speak. In our discussions will we heed the apostle Paul's warning in 1 Timothy 4:7,

"But refuse profane and old wives' fables and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."

It will affect our contact with other individuals, having in mind the words recorded in 2 Corinthians 3:2,3,

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."

This means that our conduct, our life, should be regarded and recognized by others as Christ's epistle. Our Lord uttered the words found in John 13:35,

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Can people who observe us notice that we have brotherly love for each other? Let us look into our hearts and ask ourselves: Does brotherly love characterize my acts? Does it prompt me to look on a brother's weaknesses with leniency and understanding? Am I willing to serve others without complaining? Do I accept humbly a brother's admonition?

As we consider these points, let us remember that everything else will pass away. Only love will remain. In 1 Corinthians 13:1 the apostle Paul writes,

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Let us remember, brethren, that denial of oneself means sacrifice, which follows consecration. It means that we must always be led by the will of God. At the same time we are ridding ourselves of earthly ambitions and aspirations, our hearts should be directed to things noble and praiseworthy, the spiritual phase of the kingdom.

Cross-bearing means trials, which come to us as a result of faithfulness to the Lord. These trials come from outsiders, from our surroundings in which we live and abide; it refers to trials, persecutions, and disappointments.

Drinking the cup means giving up, without reservation, our life to the Lord, the truth, and the brethren. The cup which we are to drink is poured by the Father Himself, and our Lord watches that our trials are not too great for us. The apostle Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 10:13,

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

Our Lord drank the cup alone: "none of the people were with him."
{ *Isaiah 63:3* } We have our brethren who will help us through their

sympathies and their prayers, and we also have the help our Lord gives us.

Baptism into Death

It is necessary to be baptized following the example of our Lord, both actually and symbolically. Accepting the conditions of discipleship should produce a transformation in us. We should be sure we lead a holy life.

Dear brethren, let us be sure to fulfill the conditions of discipleship So that we "bear much fruit." If we bear fruit, we may be sure of being united with our Lord, our teacher, and be granted an entrance into that grand kingdom. This is my desire for the brethren and for myself.

Amen.

Have We Put on the Whole Armor of God? -Bro. Henri Peau, France

The life of a Christian is a daily battle. When we hear the words of Ahab, king of Israel, in 1 Kings 20:11, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off," we realize it applies as much to each new recruit in the army of the Lord as to all those who have not yet come to the end of their earthly pilgrimage, and for whom the battle of faith is still in progress.

The enthusiasm shown at the beginning of the race is perhaps only a spurt of growth from the shallow ground of a heart that receives the truth with joy, but keeps it for only a short time. Lacking persistence, such a heart finds occasion to fall when affliction and persecution arise. Such will not be able to endure the severe tests of the "terrible day" in which we live and of which we read in 1 Corinthians 3:13, "And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

In 1 Peter 4:12, the apostle Peter informs us saying, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." All those who would desire to be part of the elect church must be thus tested. Blessed is the one who endures to the end! The sure prophetic word shows us that the history of the Church will end in severe trials and difficult testings.

Elijah, a type of the body of Christ, finished his earthly career by being caught up in a chariot in the midst of a whirlwind—a powerful symbol of trouble and great affliction. John, another type of the Church, was put in prison and beheaded. We are therefore forewarned of the great necessity of putting on the whole armor of God if we want to stand in this evil day.

It is necessary for one who aspires to the prize of the high calling to fortify himself So he can face the greatest struggles and the greatest trials of faith and patience that could suddenly come upon him without warning. In the battle of this day as in all other battles, the enemy seeks the advantage of surprise and through treachery tries to crush the people of the Lord. The only effective preparation for this is to be clothed with the whole armor of God—the truth and the spirit of the truth—constantly to be vigilant and diligent in prayer. We would like to title our subject, "Have We Put on the Whole Armor of God?"

Consider Ephesians 6:10-18. Verse 13 corresponds particularly to the time of the Harvest of this age and calls it a "day," designating it the "Evil Day." This is when trials are operating among the people of the Lord. They enable the development of those who love the Lord with all their heart, all their mind, all their soul, all their might, and their neighbor as themselves, and serve to demonstrate the worthiness of these faithful to participate in the kingdom. These trials also reveal those who are lukewarm in their love for the Lord and the brethren, who are overcharged with the cares of this life or the beguiling aspects of riches and who, as a result, are surprised by this "Day"—our Day. A similar thought can be drawn from 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6,

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

Those who trust entirely in the Lord, who voluntarily submit to his will and his discipline, who greatly appreciate the blessings that he provided in "due season" through the channels that he chose—in particular the wise and faithful servant who was set up over his house with a precise goal in mind, according to Matthew 24:46—are among the watchers who recognize the hours struck by the divine time clock and, as a result, are not surprised by the day in which we live nor by the events which occur therein.

That this is truly a peculiar, terrible, and formidable day, we are well aware. The apostle Paul invites us therefore to put on the armor of God for it is absolutely essential to us. The apostle warns that it will be difficult to resist the assaults of this day and that, as a result, few will remain standing. But let us not be discouraged because the Lord foresaw the equipment which we now need. He prepared the armor himself. We must therefore buckle it on—not only the shield of faith, not only the helmet of salvation, not only the breastplate of righteousness, not only the sword of the Spirit, not only the sandals of peace, not only the girdle of Truth—but we must put all of it on because we need it all and will need it still further if we want to resist the attacks that await us in this evil day. We must do all of this with the object of standing firm. Sadly, we probably do not all realize the full importance of this armor which God has recommended by the mouth of the apostle.

Can we be conscious of the time in which we are living if we are not watching carefully, if we are lacking in zeal for increasing our understanding of the scriptures or for putting on the armor in view of the battle before us? If we are in this condition, we risk being overcome in that evil day. Let us be on guard so that we can avoid such a fall and deception. We have at hand all that is necessary to become strong and firm. It is up to us, therefore, to use all our talents and our time for our development.

What then is our task during this period of darkness? Will we live in sin while our hearts love justice? In Romans 6:15 the apostle Paul informs us that we must not live in sin. So let us cast aside all that is displeasing to the Lord. Let us clothe ourselves with all the weapons of light as we read in Romans 13:12, "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." Let us put on the whole armor of God and be assured that this is not a useless weight but is rather indispensable protection in the day of battle.

No one puts on armor unless he intends to fight. For a soldier of the cross, "the sword of the Spirit" is the principal weapon by which he can prove his faithfulness and his strength. The brethren need to edify one another in the most holy faith, fighting the good fight and demonstrating their loyalty to the Lord and Truth according to Jude 20, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit," and 1 Timothy 6:12, "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."

Those who succumb to the influences of darkness demonstrate their unworthiness of the new order and cannot hope to have a place with Christ in his kingdom. They can expect to be rejected by the Lord because they are unworthy of him. As for those who trust in the Lord, let us remember that they are kept from the hour of temptation that is coming upon the world to try all the inhabitants of the earth according to Revelation 3:10 where we read,

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

During this evil day, Satan uses all his wiles to seduce if possible even the very elect. This is why the apostle tells us of an armor that can withstand all the trickeries of Satan. This armor is not for the flesh but for the mind, for the New Creature. God is the designer of it by means of human agents. His Word, His Message and His Truth constitute the measures he took to provide it. No other armor is as effective in this evil day. The complete armor henceforth is necessary, though in earlier times perhaps only a portion of it was needed. We understand, therefore, why the Lord provided us with "meat in due season" because our trials are of another kind than those of the early church.

In analyzing this armor, we realize that it is not only an armor of knowledge but, in a larger sense, an armor of faith in which all the parts are maintained and knit together by love which is its main component. Let us analyze each part of this armor.

The GIRDLE for the Loins

Our text in Ephesians says: "Having your loins girt about with truth." The apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:13 invites us to gird the loins of our mind. He says:

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

In ancient times those who were clothed with flowing garments always wore a girdle. It served to keep their clothing in place so they would not look unkempt, and it kept them from tripping. In addition, these girdles were useful to support the loins during hard work permitting it to be done with the least amount of fatigue. This

second reason seems to be the image suggested by the apostle Peter.

Just as the loins are a part of the body and play an important role, So it is with our spirit, our mind. We need courage and strength to avoid all weariness. We gird up the loins of our mind when we choose to be active. From that moment on resting is out of the question. We are engaged in an important work which requires all our energy. We, the consecrated, indeed have a great work before us: that of offering our lives to the service of the Lord, accomplishing all that we are capable of doing according to the opportunities given us by the Lord.

Let us not forget that the Lord will ask us to render an account of our activity. May we be able to say: "You gave me two talents, I have gained two more. You gave me five, I have gained five more."

Tabernacle Shadows indicates that the girdle represents service; whoever wears one is a servant, in other words one who is active. The girdle for the loins can therefore represent consecration to the service of God. The apostle exhorts us to check whether we are in fact in the service of the Truth and not of error. Let each therefore examine his girdle, make sure it is one that fits, and let him gird it and become a servant of the Truth, energized by the spirit of service attached to it. This girdle represents our consecration to the service of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren. We put it on at the moment of our consecration. All down through the Gospel Age, this girdle has been worn by every true Christian.

The BREASTPLATE of Righteousness

The breastplate of righteousness (or justification) is mentioned next by the apostle because it constitutes an essential part of the Christian's armor. In fact, those who do not discern or recognize the principle of the Lord's justice or who reject his merciful arrangement of justification by faith in the precious blood of Christ cannot be accepted as soldiers of the cross. Moreover, what would our breastplate be without the element of love?

We see that the death of our dear Redeemer constitutes our breastplate, that his love furnishes the redemption which covers and protects us, and that it is our appropriation of his love as well as our reciprocal love for him, for the Father and for the divine law that leads us into a full consecration of ourselves to his service. It is behind this breastplate of righteousness—of which the love of

God and our love for Him and the Lord Jesus are the main components—that we are safe, justified by faith in the precious blood, and considered righteous by and through the love and mercy of God. So this breastplate represents our justification which has been identified with the robe of righteousness with which every Christian is clothed from the beginning of his walk in every period of the Gospel Age.

The SANDALS of Peace

The text in Ephesians tell us: "And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." We find here two important terms that mark the character of a Christian: "zeal" and "peace." Every soldier of the cross who fervently desires to be active in the service of God must be accompanied by the peace of God. Otherwise he will end up doing less work and having more difficulties than the one who desires to be at peace and to live in peace with all, in every way possible without compromising the truth. Each one must therefore, be energized by this spirit of peace which emanates from God. These sandals are prepared in view of the contact with the world and for the purpose of enduring the ruggedness of the way. They are, therefore, indispensable.

It is true that pride and egotism could permit us to travel a considerable distance among great difficulties, but the Lord designed the narrow way in such a manner that selfish ambitions will not be able to bring us to the end of it. On the contrary, only love for the Lord, for his flock and his Truth will protect us and prevent us from being drawn aside no matter what the discouragement. These sandals signify that we are going to walk, which means being active, working, carrying the message of the Gospel, and if we are going to be heard and understood we must be energized by a spirit of peace and love. We must be messengers of peace, the makers of peace according to Matthew 5:9 and Romans 12:18 which we will not read now. This part of the armor has been necessary in all times.

The SHIELD of Faith

Is it not the love of God, the mercy of God and of our Lord Jesus, that constitute the basis of our faith? We should not have confidence in our works or our knowledge to gain salvation because in these areas our inability is evident and renders us unworthy of divine favor. We must have confidence in God's love and in the loving sacrifice of our Savior. This shield can only be

appreciated and used perfectly by those who have received God's love as well as a measure of knowledge.

This shield is indispensable for protection from the fiery darts of the adversary: skepticism, evolution, and demonism. Skepticism is a doctrine that attempts to cast doubt on a goodly number of affirmations which Christians have accepted by faith. One starts by doubting certain points which appear to be of little importance. Then gradually the doubting grows to include more important truths until finally everything is in doubt. Let us be on guard that we do not fall into this trap of the adversary. Our only defense in such situations is our faith—our shield. Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him" and 1 John 5:4, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," show clearly the necessity of developing faith. We can say that this shield has been necessary for every Christian in the past but is even more so now in face of the new strategies of Satan and the powers of evil.

The HELMET of Salvation

Does not this helmet signify an intellectual knowledge of the Lord? This is not a knowledge based on things seen but rather on things unseen. Our helmet is knowledge by faith. The basis of this faith is an appreciation of the love of God which surpasses all understanding. God began a good work in us, not only in our redemption but also in the sanctification of our hearts. The love of God for us and our love for Him are bound together in this helmet. Whoever dons it, thus protecting himself, must certainly acknowledge the divine law and have a love corresponding to this law in himself.

This helmet represents the appreciation or the intellectual understanding of the divine plan. Obviously, this helmet was not as necessary in the past as it is now. Presently, during the time of harvest when the adversary is furiously attacking the truth and transforming everything educational and scientific into weapons of destruction, the helmet is indispensable for protection against the traps and illusions of error. Now, and only now, is it provided in size and shape so that even the humblest soldier of the cross can wear it. In former times, the Lord curbed an assailant's influence to the limit offered by the shield of faith because this piece of armor was sufficient. But now in our day we have the complete armor available to us and we can feel its usefulness and necessity.

The SWORD of the Spirit

The sword of the spirit, the Word of God, is part of a Christian's equipment and the only offensive weapon at his disposal. We must not make use of the weapons of Satan such as anger, hatred or malice. To possess this sword, one must carefully study the Word of God while being guided by the holy Spirit. The Truth must be preached in love, in the love of the Truth, appreciating it as being the great revelation of God himself and of His plans. If selfishness, in whatever measure, is combined with this love, in this same measure the sword becomes dangerous for the one wielding it. Love, stemming from a pure heart, is the only valid and permissible condition under which his sword can be used. Our captain, tempted in the wilderness, left us an example in his "good fight" against the adversary, saying: "it is written" and such must be the battle cry of his disciples.

In the battle of this evil day it is absolutely necessary that we rely on God's Word—"it is written." Our Lord did not attempt to argue with the adversary. When an evil thought was presented to him, he promptly resisted. Satan has a good knowledge of the scriptures. He cited certain texts to lead our Lord into error, hoping Jesus would choose a wrong course. The Lord did not bend to the argument of Satan just because the quotation came from the scriptures. On the contrary, he immediately analyzed the point in question and demonstrated how the adversary had deceived himself.

This is how we should react. We understand now just what this sword is and how we must use it. It is then up to us to make the necessary effort to learn how to wield it skillfully. If all down through the age this sword has been the offensive weapon of the Christian, we see that at the present time it is even more so because of our environment.

The apostle Paul invites the people of God to put on all these essentials that we have just analyzed and which constitute the armor of God. They are indispensable if we are to resist the wiles of the devil. His statement seems to imply that resistance would be impossible without divine help. The Lord, who supervises the affairs of his people, takes care to provide opportunities to put on the whole armor to those who trust completely in him. Let us not devote to foolishness the time we could be spending in making use of this armor which God has prepared for His people. The Lord has so arranged matters that if we were not to use our time properly, we would not be able to resist the fiery darts of the Adversary.

Except for those who are fully consecrated to his will, no one will be able to stand firm.

The Lord gives assistance to those who trust in him So that all things work for their good. His grace is sufficient for those who know him and have consecrated themselves to his service. His grace can be obtained by reading and studying the holy scriptures, by a service rendered, or by a hymn. His protection will always be granted in accordance with the objectives of the truth. Let us realize also that if we lose the sword of the Spirit, we lose our only protection against error. It is up to us, therefore, to secure our standing in the Truth, to cultivate sincerity, simplicity, the fruits of the Spirit, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints. { *Jude 3* }

Those who have such a frame of mind come with respect to the Holy Word to ascertain the will of God and the way they must follow. They desire to walk according to divine instruction and receive, in return, the armor of God which was prepared in advance to protect all those who would carefully wear it from the fiery darts of the enemy. Without this complete armor no child of God can be saved in this evil day. This evil day in which we now live is also the day of the Lord when the work of each one is tried So as by fire. It corresponds also to the perilous times spoken of by the apostle to put us on guard—particularly perilous times for the Christian faith because of the many forms of error that have arisen, with the purpose to obstruct the progress of the Truth.

What God has in store for the saints is proportional to the circumstances of this perilous time. Never before was it possible for the saints to put on the whole armor, nor was all of it necessary. The Lord has given us this armor piece by piece. He has invited us to put it on, to get accustomed to it, to feel at ease with it. The time has come when it is more and more difficult to resist without it. Let us, therefore, be attentive to the advice of our master. Let us pray to have this armor.

Brethren, have we put it on? Let us not be content with the idea that we can continue like our fathers with only a part of the armor. The time has now come to have it all. If we don't, we will surely fall. The parts of the armor available to the saints in the past were sufficient for their time and for their trials. But a much greater trial of faith in this evil day necessitates more complete protection. We need the whole armor. Let us hurry, therefore, and not waste time putting it on. Some among us have been wearing this armor for a long time and can help others put it on. Let us not try to wear any

other armor. The one the Lord gives us is marked by the scarlet seal of his precious blood: it carries the sign of the cross. Each piece of this armor is engraved with this sign which makes everything fit together.

After putting on this marked and well-fitting armor, let us stand firm, that is, upright. Such a position suggests an attack. The attack will certainly come, and on some it has already come. Are we ready to perform a good service as watchful soldiers of the cross of Christ? To stand upright! Not to flee! To stand firm on this basis and fight for the Truth! It is true that a part of God's plan is to allow some to fall in this evil day and others to stand firm. Powerful errors have been permitted to seize all those who take pleasure in injustice and who believe not the Truth. They are unworthy of the Truth and sooner or later they will fall. They are condemned, unworthy of the communion of Christ.

Let us be conscious of this danger and pray fervently that no one among us may thus fall. The time is drawing near when the last member of the body of Christ will be changed. This is why we should expect these trials to increase until all those who are unworthy are removed as we read in Matthew 13:41,43

"And they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend [those who take off the wedding garment of the imputed merit of Christ, etc.], and them which do iniquity [those who practice sin, those who are not fully in accord with the principles and ways of righteousness as brought out in the word]; Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

If we wish to escape the errors of this evil day, let us make sure that we love justice by our actions and in truth, that we receive the truth with humility, that we keep it with humility and works of grace, and that we are engaged in its service with zeal and energy. Let us, therefore, work while there is still time, while it is still day, according to what we read in John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." We are awaiting this night. Are we ready to confront it? Let us not fear but let us trust in the Eternal and He will help us resist, to stand firm unto the end of our pilgrim journey. Amen.

**Being a Christian in the Family and in the Ecclesia-Bro.
Jeremiasz Purwin, Poland**

This is a broad subject. for this reason, i will attempt to highlight what I think are the most important points. We know that the father of the family is God himself.

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." { *Genesis 2:18,21-24*}

Appropriate Superiority

The Apostle Paul confirms the importance of such a union:

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." { *1 Corinthians 11:3*}

Does this verse tell us of the superiority of one person over another? It certainly does, but only on the special condition outlined by our Lord Jesus:

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." { *John 17:21,22*}

Would that such a oneness existed in every Christian marriage because even though our Lord God speaks of a certain hierarchy, it is in the spirit of oneness and mutual need.

"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even So is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." { *1 Corinthians 11:11,12*}

When we speak of the place of a Christian in the family So that a marriage truly be considered as of God, rejoicing under his protection and favor, it must be centered in God. The Apostle Paul draws our attention to this:

"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." { *1 Corinthians 7:39*}

This was already illustrated in the Old Testament when God forbade the Jews against joining themselves with any other nation:

"Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: So will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." { *Deuteronomy 7:3,4*}

Every Christian marriage, especially in the Lord, should conduct itself in all affairs with mutual honesty and mutual tolerance even in matters applying exclusively to the flesh. A lack of mutual understanding, respect or tolerance in matters of the flesh quite often casts a shadow over the spiritual life of a family. The Apostle Paul warns us of this:

"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." { *1 Corinthians 7:2-5*}

Within the family we must submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God. Every marriage, after all, should be a picture of "the great mystery" which the Apostle Paul mentions in his outline of the mutual relationship between husband and wife:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; this is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular So love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence [*Polish Bible: fear*] her husband." { *Ephesians 5:25,32,33*}

What sort of fear is this? Is this an ordinary earthly fear? The Apostle Peter explains this thought saying it does not mean an outward show, but:

"chaste conversation coupled with [*Polish Bible*: godly] fear, whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." { *1 Peter 3:2-6*}

On the other hand, we read:

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (vs. 7)

Oneness in Families

If, then, in our homes we strive to be of one mind, equal sharers of trouble, lovers of the brethren, compassionate and kind, not rendering evil for evil, nor rebuke for rebuke, then our prayers will really be pleasing to our Lord, and we will remember that our Lord called us in order to inherit a blessing. In such a family this blessing will also be shed on our children, who should remember the Apostle Paul's words:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." { *Ephesians 6:1-3*}

If we strive to be of one mind, then our prayers will really be pleasing to the Lord.

Experience has repeatedly proven these words. All those who did not respect their parents tasted much bitterness, and more than likely shed many tears later when they became parents themselves. This statement of the apostle is true for our whole life even when, and perhaps more so, when our parents become old, grumbly, and embittered. When they criticize the habits of the young, let us not make them feel that perhaps they are no longer needed.

After they have fed us, raised us, denied themselves things in order to give to their children, when the times come as Solomon says,

"which are not favorable for me," are we to say, "let them die quickly"? This would not show our respect for our parents. That is how the world does things, but not a Christian. After all, the grandfather and grandmother are extensions of every Christian family. If we would desire for ourselves a peaceable old age with the esteem of our children, then let us, as children of our old parents, grant them the same peace today.

Also, let us endeavor from a tender age to bring our children into close association with the Lord, as King David did. Solomon later expressed his thanks for that. We read:

"For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many." { *Proverbs 4:3-10*}

Let us remember however, in the process of raising our children, not to treat them as objects, or thoughtless creatures. The Apostle Paul points this out in his letter to the Ephesians:

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." { *Ephesians 6:4*}

In this respect, aged men in a Christian family can be of great help, of whom the scriptures speak, saying they should be:

"sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." { *Tit 2:2-5*}

"But if any widow have children or grandchildren, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God." { *1 Timothy 5:4*}

We must remember that, most of all, we must care for "our own."

"But if any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." { *1 Timothy 5:8*}

Christianity in the Ecclesia

Such a Christian family is completely prepared to serve its ecclesia and is a good example in their midst. What kind of service must we render to our ecclesia? Time will not permit us to mention all the details, but we will mention some of the most important ones:

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." { *Proverbs 3:9,10*}

Solomon develops this thought in the 19th chapter, verse 17, saying, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord." Let each answer the question for himself: Does my family contribute toward the needs of our ecclesia? Is my family mindful of what God desires of each one of us?

"For the Lord your God is God of gods, and lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: he doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment." { *Deuteronomy 10:17-19*}

Do we love widows, orphans and strangers? After all, in almost every ecclesia there are such individuals.

"Charge them that are rich in this world. . . that they do good. . . ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life." { *1 Timothy 6:17-19*}

We believe that these words refer not only to the rich, but also to us average brethren, that we may always be instant in "distributing to the necessities of saints; given to hospitality." { *Romans 12:13*}

Does my family gladly, and without murmuring, welcome brethren as guests?

"Use hospitality one to another without grudging." { *1 Peter 4:9*}

"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." { *Hebrews 13:3* }

If this be so, do we remember perhaps only those who are most prominent and let somebody else take care of the more unfortunate?

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus. . . with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment [how would we conduct ourselves]?" { *James 2:1,2* }

Everything we have mentioned above are situations that we find in almost every ecclesia. But in order to live with these problems, and to know all about them, we must be a regular member of that ecclesia. Therefore, let us:

"not forsake 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 10:24,25* }

Let us remember that since in the eyes of the Lord husband and wife are one flesh, So also in the eyes of the Lord, the ecclesia is one body.

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." { *Colossians 3:15* }

Therefore, the best of all the good principles that we practice in our homes, and all that is praiseworthy, should cause us to bring that perfume of thankfulness, and desire to serve to the ecclesia:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. . . which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." { *Ephesians 4:12,15,16* }

Just as in the example of a Christian marriage, love must be evident—the love which never ceases but continually grows—so also in our ecclesias through faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, and godliness, we must reach true love and brotherly kindness, about which the Apostle Paul also writes:

"Love suffereth long and is kind, love envieth not, love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; love never faileth." { *1 Corinthians 13:4-8*}

"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." { *1 Corinthians 13:13*}

Amen.

The Ransom-Bro. Zenon Rozwarski, France

Dear brothers and sisters who are sanctified in Jesus Christ, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." { *1 Peter 1:2*}

Having this privilege to be with you, I would like to speak about a most important subject which encompasses the whole of biblical doctrines. Every scripture is linked to this fundamental doctrine. The Apostle Peter continues by saying:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." { *1 Peter 1:3*}

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his spiritual son:

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." { *1 Timothy 2:3-6*}

This last verse will be the basis for the few thoughts which will illustrate our study of the ransom. Jesus gave himself a ransom (a corresponding price) for all. This ransom gives and guarantees to all the possibility for another opportunity to obtain eternal life. Let us look more closely at the role Jesus played in the plan of God concerning the recovery of mankind.

We know that God created man in His image, according to His mental and moral likeness. Man was perfect but lacked a

knowledge of good and evil. He did not possess the faculty to distinguish by himself between that which is good and evil. So God chose the method of experience, which is the best method there is even today, and one greatly appreciated by educators. However, before the first man Adam transgressed God's law, the Creator had foreseen in His plan a way to assure salvation. Eve was deceived by Satan's deception but Adam sinned voluntarily. "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." { *1 Timothy 2:14*}

God had foreseen this weakness of man and did not want to leave him without hope. We are given a very beautiful picture in the lamb. This animal symbolizes submission and gentleness, and God has appropriately introduced into His plan this symbol which is so full of meaning.

"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 a 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." { *1 Peter 1:18-20*}

We find an illustration of this sacrifice in Abraham and Isaac.

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son." { *Genesis 22:9-13*}

Seeing the great faith of Abraham, God chose to put him to the test. He permitted him to feel the pain of a father bringing his own son to be offered as a sacrifice. Abraham thus obtained a promise:

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, 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. . . because thou hast obeyed my voice." {
Genesis 22:16-18}

Returning to Adam, we notice that after the transgression of divine law, God pronounced this sentence:

"And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." { *Genesis 3:14-19*} We see that the serpent was cursed first. Then God gave a promise concerning the seed of the woman. It wasn't the son of Eve nor, later, the son of Abraham. The prophet Isaiah gives us a more precise clue:

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." {
Isaiah 7:14}

Then, after all the precautions concerning the future recovery of man had been taken, God pronounced sentence. This condemnation to death was a just sentence against sin. But how serious have been the consequences! This sentence of death, accompanied by sickness, suffering, and affliction, has through heredity also come down upon all the progeny of Adam.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." {
Romans 5:12}

Adam was not an angel, nor an archangel. Rather he was a man whose nature was a little lower than the angels. He was a sentient being, capable of feeling, perceiving, and thinking. He was required to maintain his life by eating fruits from the trees of life. It is, therefore, because of his fall into sin and death that the

condition of man is now So far from its original perfection.
Adam's suffering lasted 930 years.

What is a Man Worth?

When we study human relations over the ages, we see that the value of a man has varied according to circumstances. Wars and slavery permitted the sale of humans. The price depended essentially upon muscular strength, health, and age. Even in Israel, it was customary to release from bondage someone or someone's property through the payment of a close relative. If an Israelite was sold into slavery because of economic difficulties, a liberator could pay the price for his freedom.

"After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him." { *Leviticus 25:48*}

We remember how the firstborns were "paid for" by the Levites.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel. . . And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel. . . Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them (the shekel is twenty gerahs)." { *Numbers 3:44-47*}

Similarly, on the Day of Atonement, for example, animals could be sacrificed to take away sin [typically]:

"And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering. . . . Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil." { *Leviticus 16:11,15*}

But to redeem Adam, God's justice demanded much more. Jesus recalled what had been written in the Mosaic law:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." { *Matthew 5:38*}

The Apostle Paul also writes concerning the will of God:

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." { *Hebrews 10:5-7*}

Yes, in the book, God has hidden His plan and conveyed His will. Let us read that well-known passage concerning Jesus:

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, So he openeth not his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." { *Isaiah 53:2-7,10,12*}

The Special Work of Jesus

Jesus had been granted the privilege of executing the divine will regarding man. God had reserved this work for His Son, and no angel would have been acceptable to take his place. But Jesus had not been coerced. He gave himself voluntarily to his Father, and before all the angels and men he demonstrated his perfect obedience.

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." { *Colossians 1:15,16,20*}

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." { *Hebrews 2:9,10,15-18*}

Therefore, it sufficed that Jesus die to obtain the ransom price. However, during the time of his mission as the Son of Man on earth, he accomplished other works. First, he made a consecration at Jordan to be anointed of the holy Spirit and developed as a New Creature. Then, he organized his church, chose the twelve apostles and spent much of his time preaching the Kingdom of God.

He consecrated all of his time to prepare his disciples to carry on in this arduous task and to strengthen their faith. Even after his resurrection he wanted to encourage and prepare them to receive the gift of the holy Spirit, which would be sent after he returned to heaven. This is how he spoke to them:

"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." { *Luke 24:44-49*}

However, Jesus died a painful and humiliating death on the cross. Why? For the Jews, the ransom not only meant redemption from the Adamic transgression but also deliverance from the curse or condemnation of the Law covenant because they were not able to keep its requirements. They were under a double curse and,

because of this, required not only the death of a perfect man, but additionally a death on the cross. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," says the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:13.

In order to redeem the Jews, Jesus himself had to be born under the law, like them, and in the same nation.

"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." { *Galatians 4:4,5*}

We may add that the law given to Adam demonstrated man's weakness, just as later the ten commandments revealed the inability of the Israelites to do the will of God.

Only Satan, as the scriptures clearly indicate, is considered to be the author and the one responsible for Adam's fall. "He was a murderer from the beginning." { *John 8:44*} But we also find many scriptures that speak of the responsibility of men:

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." { *1 Corinthians 15:3*}

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." { *Romans 3:23,24*}

However, Jesus' death alone, which constituted the ransom price, did not yet give justification. It was only after he ascended to heaven and presented the price to his Father that he obtained the right to use it.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. . . Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." { *1 Peter 3:18,22*}

During the Gospel age Jesus uses the ransom on behalf of the Church. Having been raised a spirit being he, first of all, takes care of this class which his Father has given him.

"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: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." { *John 17:24* }

Next, and the time for this is very near, Jesus will apply the ransom price on behalf of all mankind, as soon as the last member of the Church enters into glory with him.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 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. . . . The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." { *1 Corinthians 15:20-26* }

May thy kingdom come, may thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all!

Amen.

The Season for Figs-Bro. Lutz Ruthmann, Germany

The eleventh chapter of mark tells us about the remarkable events that took place in Jerusalem during the days before Passover, about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the cursing of the barren fig tree, as well as about the cleansing of the temple.

We notice that those unusual events occurred in a particular context. All have something in common, namely that they need to be understood as symbolic events which point to a higher, antitypical reality.

When our Lord, as Messiah, offered himself typically as a king to his people and entered Jerusalem, the Jewish people welcomed him saying, "Hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!" But three days later the same crowd, which had been stirred up by the priests and leaders, cried: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Between those two important events Jesus faced the barren fig tree:

"The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, however, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the

tree, May no one ever eat fruit from you again." { *Mark 11:12-14, niv*}

The incident which is reported here by the evangelist Mark and which is also found in Matthew (21:19) brings up some questions which we want to consider.

Not the Season for Figs

The first question we might ask is, "Why"? Why was our Lord looking for fruit on a fig tree when, as clearly stated in scripture, it was not the season for figs? The harvesting of ripe figs had not yet begun. So why was our Lord disappointed to find just leaves and no fruit on a fig tree at such a time?

Who among us would look for ripe fruit on a fruit tree in spring when all fruit trees are blossoming and putting forth leaves? I believe no one would do this since everyone knows it's not until summer that fruit is produced.

And why this overreaction which resulted in cursing the barren fig tree with the words, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"

The scriptures give eloquent evidence that our Lord never behaved thoughtlessly or inconsistently. We know that any deed which would be apparently of so little significance, has in fact a most important, however more often future, meaning even though at the moment it could not be fully understood. So we can be sure that our Savior must have had good reason to look for ripe fruit on a fig tree at that particular time even if we are told it was not the "season for figs."

But what are we to understand by the expression "the season for figs"? What does "the season for figs" mean? It seems to be the time when fig trees bear ripe fruit, when ordinarily ripe fruit is picked.

To determine when figs are picked and to learn more about the fig tree, we want to quote from Calwer's Bible Dictionary. There we read this statement about the fig tree:

"In November-December a fig tree loses its leaves. However, in the tropical climate of the Dead Sea it keeps them. Beginning in January it brings forth buds for new fruit shoots. Their swelling in February and the *opening of the leaves in March* are welcomed as signs of spring. These *early figs* are appreciated even though unripe. { *Isaiah 28:4*} And So Jesus ought to find early figs in

addition to leaves on that fig tree, close to Bethphage (Village of Figs), and this tree becomes for him a type of his people. When in May the buds of the summer or late figs come forth, then most of the early figs fall. *Ripe early figs are especially appreciated.* { *Jeremiah 24:2 Hosea 9:10*} The picking of summer figs lasts from August until December, and it is impossible for a fig tree to not bear any fruit in the summer." (p. 317, German edition)

As we easily see, the fig tree differs from all other types of trees and thus gives a unique type for a nation that differs from all the other nations, for the Jewish nation, the chosen people. The fig tree is unique first because it brings forth fruit buds first, then leaves. It's also unusual because early figs are appreciated though unripe. So we can assume there are two seasons when we can find ripe fruit on a fig tree. First we have the *season of early figs*, which ends in May. Then the tree brings forth new fruit buds which ripen in August. These are the *summer* or *late figs*.

If we assume that the Jews divide the year into two seasons (winter and summer), the season of early figs occurs in winter, the season of summer or late figs in summer. Therefore the question arises as to whether the "season for figs" of which the Bible says "had not yet begun" concerns the season of early figs or of summer or late figs.

The question can be easily answered when we realize it was before Passover that our Lord went from Bethany to Jerusalem with the disciples. The time of Passover usually occurs in March/April. Therefore it was the season of early figs which ends in May. The Lord could expect to find ripe, early figs on the fig tree.

A Fig Tree Parable

Before pursuing this point further, let us remind ourselves of the parable of the fig tree:

"A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard: *For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any.* Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil? Sir, the man replied, leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down." { *Luke 13:6-9, niv*}

"A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard." We can say this "man" was none else but our Lord Jesus who came to his "fig tree,"

Israel, to look for fruit and found none. Our Lord's exclusive mission toward his people lasted 3 1/2 years. He sent out his disciples with these words: "Do not go to anyone, go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." We call this period of time when Messiah devoted himself exclusively to his people the "Jewish Harvest." When now it's said in the parable that our Lord came *three years* to look for fruit on the fig tree Israel, we can conclude that the Jewish Harvest was not yet over since it ended a half year later. At that time the Lord had not entered Jerusalem on a colt and he antitypically had not yet presented himself to his people as their legitimate king. The exact time for cursing the barren "fig tree," Israel, had not yet come.

John the Baptist who called the people to change their ways, warned the Pharisees and the Sadducees that it was not enough to boast about having Abraham as a father, but that it was necessary to bring with repentance the *appropriate fruit*. As he said:

"The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." { *Matthew 3:10, niv* }

John, who saw himself as Messiah's forerunner, wanted the people to clearly understand that the time had come to show repentance and to bring forth appropriate fruit; otherwise the nation would be rejected. Lip-service should be followed by faithful deeds. The "fig tree" Israel should bring forth fruit, not just "leaves."

The Early Figs

Abraham—and the "fathers" of Israel—were, generally speaking, not without fruit in their relationship with God. They believed in God and, in addition to their profession of faith, they brought forth fruit corresponding to their faith. The Prophet Hosea gives us an evidence about this:

"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers *as the first stripe* in the fig tree at her first *buds*." { *Hosea 9:10, German translation* }

In a footnote of the German Bible (Elberfelder translation) we read instead of "at her first buds," "at her first time."

At her first time Israel brought forth early fruit. And since it was "in the first time," applying it to a natural fig tree, we could say that the "tree" did not yet have leaves. Then came the season for

leaves; the early fruit had fallen; there was no fruit, but there were many leaves.

The Leaves

At the season of the harvest the Lord found only "leaves," i. e. , lip service, explanations, feigned innocence, empty words. The teachers of the people, the Pharisees and scribes, were bad examples who followed human traditions and vanity. They were blind leaders, ambitious, and loved money. They considered themselves as righteous and in harmony with God's commandments, but the Lord knew what they were doing and that their worship was only empty words and lip-service.

"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, [said Jesus to the crowds], So you must obey them and do everything they tell you, but *do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.*" { *Matthew 23:2, niv*}

In the parable of the vineyard { *Matthew 21:33-44*} our Lord shows us once again the forbearance of God with His people. Indeed the heavenly Father did send prophet after prophet up to the time of John to urge them to change their evil ways. And then he sent his son of whom Israel's vineyard tenants said: "This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance. So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."

The Pharisees and the scribes answered our Lord's question, "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" And their answer was prophetic: "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." { *Matthew 21:33-41, niv*}

When Israel as a nation rejected her Messiah, the privileges and opportunities which had first been offered to the natural seed of Abraham, to the people of Israel, were then transferred to those from other nations; the apostles and teachers of the Gospel Age representing grape growers to whom the vineyard has been entrusted.

See, Your House Is Left To You Desolate

In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul draws a picture of the olive tree into which we, who came out of the nations, have been grafted as wild branches.

"What then? What Israel sought So earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others became hardened. . . to this very day." { *Romans 11:7,8, niv*}

We remember that our Lord Jesus had rejected Israel with these words:

"Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." { *Matthew 23:38, niv*}

The Lord had us understand that his people Israel would not see him until they would accept him as their Messiah, until they would cry out from their hearts, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" So Israel will again, when they fulfill certain requirements or, let us say, when they bring forth the expected fruit of faith, see their Master and Messiah again, but then not with natural eyes but with their eyes of understanding.

But now we face a problem: in the text quoted initially, it is written, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." Does this mean that Israel is rejected for ever and that it will never again bring forth fruit? How can we harmonize this with So many definite scriptural proofs which assure us that Israel will come back into God's favor, that they shall mourn for the Lord whom they have pierced, and that they shall bring forth the expected fruit?

The solution of this apparent problem is easy and is in full harmony with the rest of the scriptural assumptions if we use the word "for ever" in its original meaning as it was in Greek. We quote first the Concordant Bible, then the Diaglott.

"But when he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the actual season for figs. Then he said to the tree, May no one eat fruit from you again for the Aeon."

Notice: For one "Aeon" no one should eat from the fig tree again. And now the Diaglott: "Let no one eat fruit of thee to the Age!"

So we see clearly that for one aeon or, as we say, for one age, the fig tree Israel was to bring forth no fruit. For "the age" it had to remain barren.

When our Lord cursed the "fig tree," one aeon or age, which we call the *Age of the Law*, was coming to an end and a new age was

beginning, the *Gospel Age*. The privileges that the people of Israel had as a chosen nation above all other nations were taken away from her and given to the believers among the Gentiles. God was then looking for a people as His possession out of the Gentiles.

Until the Full Number of the Gentiles Has Come In

The Apostle Paul explains in Romans 11:25 that Israel's blindness would remain until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. In other words until the bride class which will have been gathered from all nations will be complete and in glory. And for that very age, for the Gospel Age, Israel as nation shall bring forth no fruit.

During this time of Israel's blindness the elect shall be chosen, tested, and completed. The spiritual seed of Abraham, Israel according to the spirit, which is described in the promise as being the "stars of heaven," had of necessity to be first completed because as Paul says in Romans 11:26,27 (niv), "the Deliverer will come from Zion."

"The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

The New Covenant

About 600 years before Israel would be rejected as a nation, the prophet Jeremiah spoke about a new Age:

"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: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, 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." { *Jeremiah 31:31-33* }

These are clear words which the Prophet Jeremiah states. After those days, after the time during which the bride class will have been chosen and glorified and during which Israel as a nation is rejected, God will turn back to his people and make a new covenant with them. This new Law covenant shall not be written on tables of stone again, "but it shall be written in their hearts."

Even though the time of the new covenant is still future and the fullness of the Gentiles has not yet come in, now we can already see that the "fig tree" Israel is no longer withered. The signs of the "fig tree" are not to be overlooked, that the time is near for their re-acceptance when their God "will put his law in their hearts."

Israel as a state has risen again. For 46 years the state of Israel has been re-established and has moved into the spotlight of world events. As the prophet predicted, Israel has become a *burdensome stone* for all nations upon which some nations have hurt themselves. At ten times superiority in strength, Israel's enemies tried to correct God's counsel and drive Israel into the sea. But Israel became stronger from these wars, *Jerusalem* was taken and reinstated as the eternal *capital of Israel*. And Jerusalem has now become the main bone of contention of nations that don't know that from time immemorial the prophets proclaimed God's counsel about his people Israel. Here is what the prophet Amos wrote:

"And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which *I have given them*, saith the Lord thy God." { *Amos 9:14,15* }

You Know that Summer Is Near

In Matthew 24 our Lord speaks about the signs of his presence and of the accomplishment of the age. He urges us to pay attention to the fig tree.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that *summer is nigh*: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even at the doors*." { *Matthew 24:32,33* }

As we have seen with the help of a dictionary, the branch of the fig tree becomes tender in winter and the sprouts of leaves come forth *in winter* as well. The fig tree Israel has burgeoned and brought forth leaves, *but no fruit as yet*.

The Gospel Age was indeed a winter for Israel, a time of darkness, a time of cold, a time of death. "The sun of righteousness with healing in his wings" { *Malachi 4:2* } did not arise for them in this time of winter.

The Lord tells us when we see all the signs which he enumerates in Matthew 24 happening around us—and we do see the fulfillment of this prophecy in our day—*then summer is near*. In other words, winter is coming to an end, it is about to vanish. However, at the end of this winter time we still await Jacob's trouble from which Israel will be saved through God's intervention.

In Ezekiel 37 the prophet speaks about a valley of dry bones which, as we believe, represents the people of Israel. These bones had to come together, to be linked together with sinews, and to be covered by flesh and skin. We think that the separate phases of the restoration of Israel as a nation in the Holy Land are here pictured. All this we have seen being accomplished in our days, in the time of winter for Israel. Then in verse 8 the prophet makes an important comment which we should heed. He says, "*But there was no breath in them.*" This breath cannot come upon Israel until the church will be in glory because the scripture clearly teaches us that the Deliverer will come from Zion.

As we have already said, according to Jewish tradition the year is divided into *winter time* and *summer time*. It is also plausible that summer is near when the fig tree brings forth leaves in winter.

Under the concept of "summer" which our Lord mentions in relation to the fig tree, we surely ought to see a time of blessing. Summer is a time of bright light, of warmth, of life coming back, and the *time for fruit*. What is even closer to be seen than the summer about which our Lord speaks, is the time for the restoration of everything, the great Millennial Jubilee, the time of blessing which will then come, when in the dark time of winter the fig tree, Israel, burgeons out and brings forth leaves. For Israel this "summer time" begins with the new covenant that their God "shall write in their hearts."

"[And then] it shall come to pass, that 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: for we have heard that God is with you." { *Zechariah 8:23* }

This is "the time of figs" in which our Lord will not vainly look for fruit on this fig tree.

The "Real" Season for Figs

The Concordant translation makes a very slight and interesting difference between the early figs and the summer figs. Their translation is, "for the *real* season for figs was not yet."

When our Lord came to the fig tree, it was the season of figs, but it was not the "real" season for figs, it was not the season for figs which the heavenly Father had in mind in his foresight, the time in which Israel as a nation would bring forth fruit. God's prophets had foreseen long before it happened that at the coming of Messiah Israel would not accept her Deliverer, *not at that time*. And our Lord himself explains to his disciples before he presented himself to the people as king, that Israel would mock him and reject him, that they would even kill him. (See the parable of the vineyard.)

The holy scriptures show us that before the foundation of the world our great God and Father has foreseen this in his glorious plan of salvation and that he used it for a blessing to all mankind. And we too, who are from the nations, came in because Israel failed to accept the privilege of adoption.

We are now living in the days when the "fig tree" has burgeoned. Everything points to the fact that *summer is near*. Our Lord Jesus is still looking for fruit on us, the spiritual seed of Israel. Let us not disappoint our Lord So that he looks in vain for the fruit of the spirit on us, fruit which shows that we follow our Lord. Let us put forth effort So that in addition to leaves, fruit will come forth also, and all the more as "summer" is nigh.

May the Lord add his blessing. Amen.

Without Shedding of Blood Is No Remission-Bro. Stanislaw Sroka, Poland

Dear brethren in the lord. by the Lord's Grace we have the privilege of feeding upon the Bread of Life. In the time before us let us learn the lesson from the words of the Apostle Paul which he wrote to the Hebrew brethren. Hebrews 9:22 states:

"And almost all things are by the Law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." {*}

The subject and substance of our lesson are the Apostle's words, "Without Shedding of Blood is No Remission." Man's justification from sin is a great gift and favor of God, given to men through Jesus Christ. Salvation—deliverance from sin—is the first need for

all mankind, those that lived, those who are living now, and those yet to be born.

Deliverance from sin is shown in the scriptures through many different parables. For example, as a robe in the parable where the king asked, "Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" { *Matthew 22:12*} Redemption from sin is also shown in Revelation 1:5 as a washing through Jesus Christ "who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray to God to forgive us our trespasses. But, praying thus daily, do we remember the Apostle Paul's words that "without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]?" When we realize that only the blood of Christ washes away our faults and imperfections, it arouses a feeling of thankfulness and adoration for our Creator and our Redeemer.

In Paul's letter to the Hebrews in 9:16-22 we read,

"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood."

Notice, that in this short inscription the Apostle mentions the necessity of death and shedding of blood a few times. Moreover from that quotation we might come to the following conclusions:

1. The Apostle Paul had a very good knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures.
2. The Apostle Paul understood the teaching and meaning of that which was written.
3. The apostle was using symbolic and figurative language.

Now let us turn to the title of our subject: "Without Shedding of Blood is No Remission." In this lesson there are three important points: 1) Blood; 2) Sin; and 3) Remission.

Blood

Let us take under consideration the first point. What do the Scriptures say on the subject of blood?

Shortly after the flood God gave a commandment pertaining to blood which is written in Genesis 9:5,6,

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

The lesson from this divine commandment is as follows:

A. Blood is a living part of an organism. The life is in the blood. Israelites were forbidden to eat it. Living energy which makes man a living, functioning being is in the blood. When blood is shed, or its circulation stopped, life will end—a person dies.

B. The Lord God stipulated and reserved for himself the right to make a decision concerning the life of man. The Creator is the giver and Lord of life because he created man in his image.

C. Everyone must answer for the taking of a man's life. God keeps account of man, his creation.

The doctrine of redemption by the sacrifice of life can be found in many places in the scriptures. In Paradise, after his transgression or violation of God's law, man was ashamed because he was naked. Nakedness, and the shame connected with it, are symbols of sin and remorse. But the fig leaves of human justification (i. e. , good deeds) cannot cover the nakedness and sin. It was necessary for the Lord to provide coats of skin. Animal blood was shed in Paradise in connection with sin which came into the world. This shedding of blood is mentioned in Genesis 3:21.

Abel made the sacrifice of firstlings of his flock, which was accepted by God because it was an offering of flesh and blood. The Apostle Paul wrote in Hebrews 11:4,

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gift: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

Do we hear what Abel is saying? Do we understand his language? He says that without the shedding of blood we can not have fellowship with God and can not have his approval. When Abel attains a better resurrection as one of the princes, he will teach the people in the Millennium that only by faith in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God can they be justified from sin.

Moses, as mediator of the Law Covenant, wrote down the Law, and then took the blood of the bullock and the goat, and sprinkled the book and the people. Thus he prophesied that in due time the New Covenant, sealed by the blood of Christ—Head and Body—will become a blessing for Israel and all mankind.

Sin

Now let us consider the second problem cited in the title of our topic: How did sin enter into the world, and what are its results or consequences? In the letter to the Romans we read:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." { *Romans 5:12,19* }

Who was that man who brought sin into the world? In 1 Timothy 2:14 the apostle writes: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

In Genesis 3:6 we read: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food. . . she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

Sin became an accomplished fact. The Biblical "man" who brought sin into the world were Adam and Eve. Genesis 5:1,2 states:

"In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam [Polish Bible: man], in the day when they were created."

The greatest responsibility for disobedience remains upon Adam. Upon him fell the whole weight of the curse of the earth and the curse of death for man, "Dying thou shalt die." Eve, the wife or

flesh of Adam, played an active role in bringing sin into the world. For the disobedience to God's command she bore the consequences of sin—pain and suffering in connection with the bringing forth of children, and filling the earth.

There are several aspects of sin. It operates in different ways. We will mention two:

First, sin is the transgression of God's law, that is, a violation of the principles of justice. Whoever sins is in opposition to God's will and does the will of the "evil one." Therefore he defames God and his holy principles. Sinners act against God's wisdom, justice, and love; therefore they oppose God.

The second way sin operates is by corrupting man, his degradation, and death. Sin is the dying agent of man, a killer, a poison. Our parents in Eden, by eating of the forbidden fruit, experienced a great change and they lost the capacity to live forever.

God endowed man in Eden with perfect qualities, which could have been inherited by the whole human family. It was perfection of mind, and of wisdom, which enables man to live and to behave justly, and to possess knowledge to discern good and evil.

A further element of perfect existence is moral perception. It motivates a man to lead a holy life, to fulfill the injunction, "Be holy."

Another quality of perfection is physical incorruptibility, that is, being full of health, and efficiency in every part of the human organism. A body without blemish, a perfect mind, and holiness of character in Eden were Adam's glory and honor—God's son. Sin wrought great devastation in this beautiful endowment of man.

In 1 Corinthians 15:56 the Apostle Paul wrote: "The sting of death is sin." In Romans 7:11 he said: "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."

Sin is killing man. The acceptance of false teachings, which were originated by Satan, and disobedient behavior are violations of God's law and bring degradation and the death of man. People who disregard God's law err in their conduct, meaning that they are walking on the way which leads to destruction.

Why did God make such an arrangement, that sin could be removed and erased only by the shedding of blood? It is because

sin kills, that is to say, it destroys life, and life is in the blood. In Leviticus 17:11 we read,

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul."

In the letter to the Ephesians we read:

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." { *Ephesians 1:7,8*}

To reverse the effects of sin, that is, annihilation of life, life-giving blood is needed. Notwithstanding his disobedience God left Adam the ability to procreate; Eve could bring forth children. But because of sin Adam's posterity was imperfect, without the right to everlasting life. The father could not transfer a perfect life, and mother Eve could not transfer perfect flesh. Psalms 51:5 tells us about this: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." In Job 14:4 we read, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, not one."

Here is a short summary of the effects of sin:

- * Adam brought sin into the world, and Eve had an active role in it.
- * God's law was violated.
- * The life and the organism of man became subject to corruption.
- * Adam gave his children life, but it was a short-lasting life.
- * Eve could only give her children an imperfect body.

We would like to give a few more comments about death which came as a result of sin. Death is not only the moment of exhaling the last breath of life. God's sentence, "dying thou shalt die," is a long process of falling from perfection.

This sentence uttered against Adam, "dying thou shalt die," referred not only to his muscles and physical construction, it affected the whole man both physically and mentally. Under this sentence his moral qualities were also affected, because they are part of the mental powers.

Confirmation of these words is the present condition of man—a fallen being in every respect. He has a degenerated body; there are also many shortcomings in his mind and morals. His short life does not permit him to fully develop his capabilities.

Remission

Let us again recall our theme text, "Without Shedding of Blood is no Remission." Let us consider its third basic point: Remission.

In what way will sin be forgiven, and what will be the result thereof? In the Gospel of Matthew 9:2,6 we find a description of the situation, which gives a figurative answer for these questions. We read:

"And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

This is a beautiful picture and a great lesson. The Son of Man has power to forgive sins because he has shed his holy blood, that is, he gave his life as a sacrifice for sin.

As a result of the forgiveness of sin, this man became healthy and went home. During the Millennium the whole world of mankind will in a similar way be delivered from the curse and will become perfect regarding moral, mental, and physical qualities.

They will be lifted out from their bed of sickness and will return home, to Paradise which was lost by Adam by reason of transgression. Forgiveness of sins will mean the restoring of all mankind to health.

Let us recall the words of our Lord Jesus which he said regarding that miracle. Our Lord presented himself as the Son of Man. When he was a spiritual being before coming into the world, he did not have the power to forgive sins. The Apostle John recorded Jesus' words in his Gospel:

"For as the Father has life in himself; So has he given to the Son to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." { *John 5:26,27* }

Here we have a deep and beautiful lesson: our Lord received the power to forgive sins and to execute judgment from his father because he became the Son of man. In his letter to the Hebrews 8:3, the Apostle Paul says:

"For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: Wherefore it is of necessity that this man has somewhat also to offer."

The High Priest Aaron offered animals, but "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins," as is stated in Hebrews 10:4. Why was it necessary that our High Priest had to offer something? Jesus could not bring as a sacrifice his spiritual nature or spiritual body because it was not a corresponding price for man:

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." { *Hebrews 10:5* }

God foresaw a wonderful way to form the body of the Son of Man. Our Lord ceased to exist as a spirit being but he did not die. God's power transferred his life into the womb of Mary who became the Redeemer's mother, and she gave him a body. "The Word was made Flesh." { *John 1:14* }

When our Lord Jesus reached 30 years of age, he began the sacrifice of the flesh and blood God had prepared for him. The shed blood, that is, the offering of his whole soul, was a satisfaction of God's justice, which demanded a "life for a life."

As the death sentence included Eve, Adam's wife, So forgiveness of sin through the blood is applicable first for the Bride of the Redeemer. In Leviticus 16:11 we read:

"And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself."

The lesson in this type is that, Jesus' sacrifice first justifies those who are his members. "To make atonement for himself" applies to the Church, which is the Body of Christ. God's arrangement of justification by faith in the Gospel Age is an exceptional opportunity to give oneself into the hands of the antitypical High Priest. In the letter to the Romans we read:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." { *Romans 12:1* }

In Hebrews 13:11-13 the Apostle Paul explains the purpose for which God is now justifying and calling individuals:

"For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

The animals mentioned here are a bullock and a goat, which were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement. This was a typical sacrifice for sin. The two animals are two parts of one sacrifice, offered by the High Priest.

The bullock is a type of our Lord Jesus—a perfect man at 30 years of age. Aaron, the high priest, typified our Lord as a New Creature, who through his baptism began to sacrifice himself, and throughout 3 1/2 years perfectly fulfilled his mission until the time on the cross when he said, "It is Finished."

As Aaron went into the Most Holy carrying the bullock's blood and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat, So our Lord entered into heaven before the Father's throne to prepare a place for us, applying the merit of his redemptive sacrifice. This is written in Hebrews 9:24:

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

This redemption, justification, atonement with God, is only for those people who are ready to sacrifice themselves in reasonable service for God. The apostle calls attention to the time; for the Church it has to take place "now." For the world, Christ will appear before God in the future.

The second animal whose blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat was a goat, selected by lot "for the Lord." What was done to the goat was first done to the bullock. First, both of these animals were offered by the priest—it was one offering in two parts. Second, the goat was killed in the same way as the bullock. Third, the flesh of

the bullock and of the goat was burned without the camp, the fat and the life-producing organs were burned on the brazen altar.

The Son of Man has power to forgive sins because he gave his life as a sacrifice for sin.

The most important element of the offering (the blood) was taken by the priest in a vessel and was put before the Ark of the Testimony, a second time: according to God's command he sprinkled the blood of the goat on the Mercy Seat as he did with the blood of the bullock. The Lord's Goat represents the Little Flock, those who faithfully follow the Lamb wherever he goes. When we think about the type of the Lord's goat as a second part of the sin offering in the Day of Atonement, we should remember that this goat represents individuals whom Jesus Christ has accepted as members of his Body. We can therefore conclude that the offering is not performed by the Church, but by the High Priest.

This lesson comes from the words of our Lord directed to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" In causing suffering to the brethren, Saul rose in opposition against our Lord Jesus whom God appointed as Head of the Church, Christ's Body. We should notice, that on the Day of Atonement, when the sin offering was made, only one priest appeared, Aaron, who made the offerings. Yet the offering consisted of two parts, the bullock and the Lord's goat. It confirms the teaching that Aaron represents the New Creation—Head and Body.

The two different animals show that the offering of Jesus has much greater value than the offering of the Church, his Bride. Her offering without the application of Christ's merit would not have any value. There is a definite parallel between the marriage of Adam and Eve and the union of Christ and the Church. Eve first took of the forbidden fruit, but her transgression was not the direct cause of the death sentence on humanity. Adam willingly transgressed God's law, therefore through him, "sin entered the world" and destroyed his perfection. But in this Eve played an important role, for the Apostle Paul said, "The woman being deceived was in the transgression." { 1 Timothy 2:14 }

Restoration to perfection of fallen man through the ransom is the work of our Lord, our Redeemer. However, in harmony with God's arrangement, Christ's Bride, the Church, will have a share in restoring "that which was lost." Consequently, the transformation of mankind, foreseen in the Millennium, will be a

reverse process to that which took place at the beginning of the world. Nevertheless, between the performers of these changes there is an analogy: as in Eden So in the Millennium, there is the Husband and Wife—Bridegroom together with his Wife, the Bride.

It is not without reason that the sacrificial gift of our Lord is called "redemption." This we understand as acquisition, acquiring for himself. It contains the additional thought of deliverance, liberation from the bondage of those for whom the price was paid. The payment given by Christ frees mankind from the chains of sin. Application of the ransom for mankind will satisfy God's justice. Then God will turn over mankind and the whole world into the hands of Christ.

In Psalms 2:8 we read, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Under the reign of Christ, God's sentence, "dying thou shalt die" will cease to burden man; there will not be a curse upon him anymore, according to the words of Revelation 22:3.

But when the curse is lifted, mankind will not become perfect immediately, for there is no change in the tomb. The restoration of all things, including every man's recovery, will be the work of the entire Millennium. Redemption therefore has a double meaning:

- * Satisfaction of God's justice is the basis of forgiveness of sins.
- * Bringing mankind into a state of perfection is a provision in the atonement with God.

Let us return once more to the title of our discourse: "Without shedding of blood is no remission." These few words contain God's whole Plan of Salvation. It starts from the Creator's foresight of the possibility of man's fall.

Fulfillment of this foresight was man's sin. The main point of God's project is blood—Christ's sacrifice. The end of the work is forgiveness and atonement. When this is accomplished, all mankind will hear the voice, which is mentioned in the Book of Revelation:

"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." { *Revelation 21:3*}

Amen.

Solomon's Throne of Glory-Bro. Samuel Stalder, Germany

Beloved brethren and friends of the Truth! Let me first convey to you the greetings from my home ecclesia in Frankenthal. The brethren there wish you God's blessings for this convention.

The greatest among the kings of Israel was Solomon. God blessed this great and wise man with three important things:

1. Wisdom.
2. Peace during his reign.
3. Honor from other monarchs of the ancient world.

Yes, it was Solomon, who made clever and wise decisions. It was Solomon, who inherited a kingdom from his father and brought it into peace with its neighbors.

The Queen of Sheba honored him with her visit; kings of the surrounding countries gave him their daughters for wives. The reason for all these different gifts was Solomon's commitment to the true worship, for which he was blessed by Jehovah with glory and riches. David put Israel's enemies under his feet; then Solomon inherited the land from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt.

During his reign Israel dwelt in safety and "they were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry." { *1 Kings 4:20*}

The name Solomon means "sprout which means peace." This name symbolizes peace. Today we want to examine his kingdom of peace. For Bible Students this peaceful kingdom had two interesting structures.

The first is well known to us and was used in the worship of the only true God, Jehovah. It was the temple, which replaced the typical tabernacle. But the Lord did not permit David to build the temple; he chose Solomon instead.

The second structure is the subject of our presentation. It was a new and impressive throne, one quite different from David's. The

Bible tells us that this throne was unique, that one like it had never been built for any other king.

The New Throne

Why did Solomon build a new throne? The next question is also interesting: What did the different parts of that throne represent? Finally we would like to ask if there is any possibility that this throne might apply to the "greater Solomon," our Lord Jesus and his kingdom of peace.

A king needs more than a crown, a scepter, and a kingdom. He also needs a throne. What was the use for such things? A crown gives dignity to a king and a scepter gives him kingly power. The kingdom provides the people for which he is responsible. But why does he need a throne? Does he not already have all he needs to reign?

The throne of a king is always found in the capital of the land. We know that it was usual in ancient times to build the throne in the king's palace. The palace reflected the wealth of the ruler. In such a building we would probably also find the throne we are now considering.

Before this throne something took place which today we call an "audience." The place in front of the throne was where Solomon made his wise decisions when difficult judgments were presented to him. *{See 1 Kings 3:4-14}*

So we can really say a throne is the place from which a king makes judicial and legislative decisions and from which those decisions are announced. Let us now keep this in mind; later we will prove it by the Bible.

Of What Was the Throne Constructed?

Here it is probably better if we let the word of God speak directly. We open the scriptures to 1 Kings 10:18-20 where we read:

"Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind [Septuagint: bullock's heads], and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom."

According to the report it must have been an overwhelming throne. This throne was also described in the chronicles of Israel which can be found in 2 Chronicles 9:17-19. It contains other important information for our consideration including these additional facts:

"And there were six steps on the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne. . . and two lions standing by the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps." { 2 Chronicles 9:18,19}

At this point we would like to mention that Green's Interlinear Hebrew-English Bible supports the correct translation of the location of the lions.

There were obviously a total of twelve lions and not, as might seem according to the report of some translations, two times twelve or 24. Both accounts give twelve lions standing on six steps with two more beside the armrests.

The king had to step upward to the throne to be able to judge and give laws. This required Solomon to climb six steps upward. But we notice in the second account that there was a kind of seventh step, called a footstool, that had to be technically on the same level as the throne. What does this mean?

We are sure that Solomon had to take seven steps before he could sit on the throne. These seven steps were "protected" or "accompanied" by 14 lions. Only after these steps could Solomon sit down and put his arms on the armrest. We don't want to look too much at the technical details but this could be important for our understanding.

In Matthew 25, beginning at verse 31, the scriptures show us that the son of man will come in glory with all his holy angels. Then he will sit upon the throne of his glory and gather the nations.

Today we are living in the invisible *parousia* of the Lord, but we have a good hope that his appearance or *epiphania* with one of the angels (the church) will happen very soon.

But can we really compare these two thrones? We think there are some remarkable parallels between them. Let us now let Pastor Russell speak. We read about the throne of Jesus and the throne of David and Solomon in Reprints 1283:

"In the regeneration the Son of Man is to 'sit on the throne. 'What throne, or what kind of a throne? Is it the identical seat, bench, or chair of state which David used, that is given to David's Son and Lord for his use? Certainly not. Solomon laid aside his father's throne and made a unique and costly one for his own use." { 2 Chronicles 9:17-19}

The church is authorized to sit on the throne after faithfully finishing her consecration unto death.

We remember that it was a large throne made of ivory and gold with six steps and a footstool. Our text also tells us that the throne was given to the kingdom, or built for the kingdom. Its purpose was therefore for the judgment of the people, not for displaying Solomon's wealth.

Gold symbolizes the divine nature. Jesus and the other new creatures who will receive the Father's throne are as pure and precious as purified gold. Ivory is seldom mentioned in the Bible. Physically it's very interesting. Its density is 31/2 times stronger than that of cedar wood. But nevertheless it is elastic and therefore easy to carve. Ivory has always been synonymous with luxury.

In the So we read a description of the bridegroom in chapter 5, verse 14: "His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires." We are to see ivory as a symbol for beauty. In our case it's the beauty covered by the divine nature: gold.

666 Talents of Gold

The gold we mentioned comes from the gold of Solomon's supply. Solomon received in one single year 666 talents of gold. And it's from these 666 talents that the gold for the throne was taken. What might this symbolize?

We know that Solomon is a type of our Lord Jesus. He typifies the whole glorified Christ, head and body. This gold represents the divine nature.

The number 666 is only mentioned one other place in scripture and also in connection with our Lord. In Revelation 13 a beast comes up (in verse 11) which had horns like a lamb but spoke like a dragon. The lamb—or better, its horns—possibly typify the forces belonging to the lamb of God, to Jesus. But the words of this beast are those of a dragon, of Satan. This beast performs great signs and miracles.

It's interesting that the number of this beast is 666, the number of a man. Of course it can't be the number of Solomon. It's the number of a "false lamb" because the true lamb is described in Revelation 14:1 . There it stands with the faithful ones on Mount Zion.

As in the case of Solomon we have here a connection with great wealth. As with Solomon this beast established its power and influence upon trade, exchange of goods and the riches resulting from that.

King Solomon had extensive trade relations. His fleet was supported by Hiram's fleet and brought gold from Ophir in great quantities. From Egypt he received horses and chariots. { *1 Kings 9:26-28 _ 2 Chronicles 8:17,18 9:10,11*} Kings of other countries presented him with gifts made of silver and gold, ointment, horses, donkeys and other goods and precious items. The ships of the fleet from Tharshish brought extravagant and expensive goods and animals like monkeys and beautiful birds. Solomon possessed 1,400 chariots and 12,000 saddle-horses as well as horsemen. { *1 Kings 10:26*}

The scriptures say: "So king Solomon exceeded all the Kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom." { *1 Kings 10:23 _ 2 Chronicles 9:22*} These riches were a visible sign of God's favor.

We believe that these 666 talents of gold were, and perhaps still are, a symbolic measure for Solomon's riches, the wealthiest man on earth. Doesn't the beast mentioned in Revelation also want to appropriate this same measure? Doesn't the AntiChrist and his system long for fullness of riches, a public sign of God's favor, which God gave to Solomon in the type?

Seven Steps to the Throne

Let us now turn to the construction of this remarkable throne. We know that there were six steps leading to it. The seventh step was represented by the well-known footstool which was attached to the throne.

If we compare Solomon with The Christ, head and body, we see also that the whole Christ must go through seven steps of development during the Gospel Age. What proof do we have for such a connection? Could it really be that these seven steps represent the seven steps in the development of the church? Or might this just be vain speculation?

Here are three reasons why there could be a connection:

1. Solomon was a type of the entire Christ. Christ also will have a throne. Thus the throne of Solomon could very well be a type for the glorious throne of Christ.
2. Six of the steps toward the throne differed from the seventh, the footstool. In the steps of the development of the church the first six also differ from the last, the Laodicean, one. Then the Lord is present.
3. For some Bible Students the strongest proof in connection with our suggestion is found in the book of Revelation. A promise is given at the end of the last, the Laodicean, period. What happens after Laodicea? Let us read the words of our Lord:

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches." { *Revelation 3:21,22*}

Yes, beloved brethren, until they can sit on the throne of glory the church also has to go up seven steps. How wonderful is this represented in the seven churches of Asia-minor!

On the seventh step the presence or *parousia* of the Lord took place to gather the entire church together in harvest. This harvest is, we believe, a short period of time.

The Lord came also to put his enemies under his footstool. He smites the kingdoms of the earth with an iron scepter. This footstool, the time of Laodicea, is an interesting and sometimes strange mixture of step and throne together. It was a part of the throne, but was used by the feet. In its construction it must have been on the same level and height as the throne. The footstool was attached to the throne, as our text clearly states.

Can we suggest that the seventh epoch is a time of change? Bible Students know this time of change more especially as a harvest time with an overlapping of the ages. Even though on the one hand the Gospel Age is not yet finished with all its functions—the harvest ends with the burning of the tares—on the other hand a new time period comes into existence: the early dawning of a new day.

Imagine the picture of Solomon stepping upward to his throne. As he stepped on the footstool, he already stood on the footrest of the throne of glory. But he has not yet sat for the antitypical judging of the people. Only when he sat down and presented the scepter, the rod of his power, and when he laid his arms on the armrests, did he take his ultimate place as judge.

A Possible Interpretation

If our suggestion and antitypical application is correct, there should be an explanation for the twelve lions standing two-by-two on each step. The number twelve is an important number and is often mentioned in the scriptures.

At first we might think our text in 1 Kings 10:18-20 speaks of twelve lions. We do remember that on each step there were two lions, one on each side of the step. That would make 12 together. But this is not quite right. We have to recognize that there were not twelve, but fourteen lions around the throne. In addition to the twelve there were two others beside the armrests. What could these two lions on each step and the two at the armrests represent? A lion could symbolize any of three things:

1. A lion is a symbol of victory and of overcoming, like the lion out of the tribe of Judah, our Lord Jesus.
2. A lion symbolizes one of God's characteristics, such as with the four living creatures in Ezekiel's vision. It is God's righteousness.
3. The lion is a symbol of danger, as with Satan, a roaring lion.

Yes, all these characteristics can be represented in this majestic animal. The seven periods of the churches were indeed accompanied by symbolic lions. The attacks of Satan against the church were always present. Nevertheless these attacks were neither successful nor righteous. Of course they didn't come from God or the Lord Jesus. Therefore they were not represented in either of the two lions at each step. However they were permitted by God as a test of faith and faithfulness.

In each period we find a "lion of victory and overcoming."
Remember the well-known words at the end of each period: "He that overcometh . . . I will give."

The second lion was the justice of God. Where can we see it in the seven time periods? We think it can be seen in the judgment of

each period. God judged each church according to the measure of justice. We all know the remarkable words from the seven letters, "I have somewhat against thee" or "I know thy works."

The Bullock at the Throne of Solomon

For us the bullock above the throne on its back side is important. Only the old Septuagint manuscript tells us about this bullock. Not all translations have a footnote about it. The bullock can represent two things:

1. A symbol of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the great atonement day.
2. The bullock as one of the living creatures in front of God's throne in Ezekiel's vision is a symbol of God's power.

Because the type of the throne of Solomon corresponds with the antitypical throne of Jesus, we feel the first application is correct. Only with the sacrifice of the Atonement day is it possible for the church, the 144,000 body members, to be a part of the entire Christ. Their sacrifice is of much less importance and even by itself, worthless. But together with Jesus' great sacrifice they will be able to work justified and legitimized as kings and priests.

Who has the legitimacy or authorization to sit on the throne? It's you and me, after we faithfully finish our consecration unto death. Only when we suffer with him, can we be glorified with him.

Beloved brethren and friends, by the grace of the Lord we can then step upward to this beautiful antitypical throne. Let us therefore endeavor to make our calling and election sure. Our consecration into the death of Christ, the bullock of the Atonement day, is our true legitimization. But it is for us, by the grace of the Lord, to step forward with joy while following our great example.

May we all, by the Lord's grace, make our calling and election sure. The Lord willing, we will then sit on the throne and it will be a throne in New Jerusalem.

"Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom." { *1 Kings 10:20, niv* }

May the Lord add his blessing! Amen.

The Olive and the Fig Tree-Bro. Casimir Tomiak, France

The scriptures are rich in diverse types, figures, symbols, illustrations and parables that are sometimes obscure and hard to understand, that are incomprehensible to the natural man, as God wanted it to be:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."
{ *1 Corinthians 2:14*}

The deep fundamentals of the Divine Plan can only be understood by those who have received the spirit of God, those who have been begotten by the holy Spirit.

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." { *Colossians 1:26*}

To those, even the highly qualified and educated occupying privileged places, who find themselves in the nominal systems (who are Christians by tradition), to these God did not intend to reveal the important mysteries of His plan of salvation:

"Because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." { *Matthew 11:25*}

Looking over the Divine Plan we can also note with certainty that God did not intend to reveal His plan of salvation to Israel according to the flesh. We read in Matthew 13:13,

"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (vs. 16) But blessed are your eyes [referring to spiritual Israel], for they see: and your ears, for they hear. [vs. 11] Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [Israel after the flesh] it is not given."

The Significance of the Olive Tree

In Volume 3, page 187, we read:

". . . the true olive tree, whose roots are the true promises of God, and whose branches are the truly and fully consecrated and faithful ones of the Gospel Age, whose names are 'written in heaven. "'

The Polish periodical *Nahum Strarzy* (Numbers 3 and 4 of 1981) tells us:

"The olive tree represents the promises made to Abraham (to you and your seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed). This seed was represented in the priesthood of Israel."

The real head of the posterity of Abraham was Christ at his resurrection. The body of Christ represents the Church, his bride, chosen during the Gospel Age. The priesthood of Israel was a figure of the new creation (Church, head and body) for the bullock and the Lord's goat were a picture of their humanity.

The olive tree has a particular significance. Each of its elements—root, stump, branches, leaves, fruit, and oil—has its own meaning. We should not mix everything together.

Its leaves are always green. The greatest drought (blazing heat) cannot harm it, but on the contrary is beneficial because its fruits ripen in the sun. The more sun there is, the better and richer in oil is the fruit. The olive tree is well rooted in rock.

"He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." { *Deuteronomy 32:13* }

For this purpose the Lord brought Israel (the people of God) out of the land of Egypt, So that they could benefit from the oil of this rock. There, Israel after the flesh represents the people of God who, during the Lord's reign during the Millennial Age, will have the possibility to gain eternal life which was lost in Adam. (Vol. 6, p. 462) For spiritual Israel, isn't the Lord the rock, the foundation-rock upon which the Lord builds his church? As he revealed to Peter:

"But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. . . and I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter [one of these stones], and upon this rock [foundation-rock or large stone, the rock that Peter had just declared] I will build my church." { *Matthew 16:15-19* }

The Lord is our rock and it is in him that we place our confidence. Accordingly, our house is not built upon sand because in the case of the one who built his house on sand. . . when the winds came (tests and difficulties), the floods took the sand away and the house fell. { *Matthew 7:27* }

"The olive tree is the only tree that never dries up, because it is everlasting." Even though this statement is legendary, nevertheless it has a foundation because no arborist could ever claim to have seen an olive tree dry without reason.

Let's consider the fruit: it is exceptional, very useful, having rich biological elements and nutrients. The eating of that fruit requires a certain acclimation. Consequently, after tasting it, not everyone will agree that it is really pleasing and appetizing.

It is much the same regarding the sacred promises of the Lord which are not agreeable and of a pleasing fragrance for everyone.

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." { *1 Corinthians 1:23,24*}

We have tasted how the Lord is good and we desire to abide close to him.

To produce its fruit in abundance, the olive tree must be pruned periodically. The new branches in turn shoot forth with the beginnings of beautiful fruit. In Romans 11:17 the Apostle Paul tells us that certain of the branches of the olive tree which represent Israel according to the flesh (the unproductive branches) were cut off and the Gentiles grafted into their place; therefore it follows that the other branches, compared to wheat or to sheep, the true Israelites, have had the privilege to obtain the holy Spirit, the Pentacostal spirit of begettal. These true Israelites are called spiritual Israel and are chosen during the Gospel Age.

"Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And So all Israel shall be saved." { *Romans 11:25,26*}

Olive oil is used therapeutically, even today, as medicine and for dietary purposes. We read about this in Exodus 30:25,

"And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary [French: perfumer or, according to other translations, 'the art of the pharmacist' whose Job it is to prepare various medications and preparations to treat different sicknesses]."

We are aware that the great and true therapist is Christ, who in due time will heal all mankind. The church has already benefited from this great physician first, during the Gospel Age by the grace of the heavenly Father.

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." { *Isaiah 61:1* }

We may notice in this prophecy that the Gospel must be proclaimed to the meek, to the humble, and to the broken-hearted.

The precious oil was used to anoint (or put into office) both priests and kings. There we see that the High Priest and the under-priests, priests of the people of Israel, typified the new creation, while the animals (bullock and Lord's goat) typified their human nature. The kings of Israel were also a type of Christ, head and body, as David, for example, symbolized Christ battling on this side of the veil. In another sense, King Solomon was a type of the glorified Christ.

Israel according to the flesh was represented in the branches which were cut off, cast aside, during the Jewish harvest. There the Lord reserved the cast off branches for the fire and the true Israelites for the Lord's garner, representing the Gospel Age.

Let's look now at the lamps of the candlestick. This magnificent candlestick has seven branches of gold which represent seven periods of development of the true church begotten by the Spirit (oil). In Exodus 27:20 we read: "And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always." This is in conjunction with the statement of the Lord in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world," that is to say, the bearers of the Gospel light.

A question comes to mind: Is there a difference between the olive tree and the fig tree? What does the fig tree represent? It goes without saying that if there is no difference between these two trees, then one should have been enough. The olive tree, as far as our subject is concerned, does not represent Israel according to the flesh; that is represented by the fig tree.

1. The olive tree is a hardy tree, continually green.
2. The fig tree, which dried up, has a special significance, as we will shortly see.

The olive tree represents the promise God gave to Abraham, the fruit of the seed, those who receive the holy Spirit of begetting (the oil).

"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." { *Psalms 52:8* }

The promise which God made to Abraham—"In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"—was figurative. In this case, the spiritual promise was represented by the stars of heaven and the earthly promise by the sand which is upon the seashore. It is understood that the blessings to be received by those represented by the sand upon the sea will be dispensed by those of the class represented by the stars of heaven.

Ro 15:4, tells us, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." From this we see that in all of Abraham's life, as well as in that of the people of Israel, the whole of God's plan of salvation is represented. For example, Moses in certain cases symbolizes God.

"And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." { *Exodus 4:16* }

Christ, head and body, was represented in Aaron, the high priest and the priests. The great company was represented by the Levites and the Ancient Worthies in Kohath, a name which means ally, friend or companion.

In Volume 6, page 129, we read that all mankind is represented in Gershom which means "rescued." The camp of Israel represents the traditional Christian world, requiring liberation from the great slavery of sin and death.

First and Second Fruit

Let's look at the first fruit of the olive tree. At the moment when our dear Savior was resurrected, the head of the seed of Abraham was born. Our Lord *Christ*, a word which in the Greek means *Anointed* and in the Hebrew means *Messiah*. His present role or activity, which Christ is still carrying out, is a role of sacrifice because the Church has a part in the sin-offering. Such is the will of God. From this we see that Christ, the head, and his bride, the church, his body, are the first-fruits of the olive tree.

The second fruit of the olive tree. Psalms 45:16 states, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses—these fathers constitute the lineage from which the Lord was born according to the flesh. But when Christ and his bride, head and body, as givers of life will once again give existence or life to these fathers, then this prophecy will be fulfilled. The place previously held by these fathers will be held by the children of Christ, by the better resurrection in the Millennial reign. These resurrected children will be set up as princes in all the earth. These faithful patriarchs, from Abel to Moses, and from Moses to John the Baptist, will receive life and will be in the earthly phase of the kingdom—the second fruit of the olive tree.

These faithful ones of the Old Testament have placed their trust in the first covenant, called the Abrahamic Covenant, which is to give birth to the posterity that will bless all the families of the earth, because this covenant was confirmed with God's oath.

"By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, [here Abraham represents God the Father] 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." { *Genesis 22:16,17*}

This earthly class will be made up of the Ancient Worthies from Abel to John the Baptist. "These are the two anointed ones ['two sons consecrated with oil'—French Osty translation] that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." { *Zechariah 4:14*}

"These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." { *Revelation 11:4*}

The kingdom of God will consist of two phases: a heavenly and an earthly. Isaiah 2:3 states, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Zion represents the heavenly phase of the kingdom and Jerusalem the earthly phase.

"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains." { *Zechariah 14:4*}

The division of the Mount of Olives teaches us a precise lesson. A mountain in the scriptures represents a kingdom. The separation of one part of the mountain to the north and the other toward the south has significance. To us the north represents the throne of the almighty God, the condition of immortality which has been promised to Christ, head and body.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." { *2 Peter 1:4* }

This is the spiritual phase of the kingdom of Christ.

The prophet Isaiah describes how the usurper, Lucifer, wanted to elevate himself to this position:

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." { *Isaiah 14:13,14* }

Lucifer didn't know that God had reserved this place for Christ and his bride, from even before the foundation of the world. { *John 17:24 Ephesians 1:4* }

To us the second part of this mountain represents the earthly phase of the kingdom of Christ, reserved for those who will have part in the better resurrection, the Ancient Worthies who will be made princes in all the earth. { *Psalms 45:16* } The valley created by the separation between the two parts of the mountain will be called the valley of blessing through which all mankind will travel, benefiting from the light of the sun from the east to the west. However, it will not be, as the prophet tells us, a day in its full brightness from the start, but rather neither light nor dark:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark." { *Zechariah 14:6* }

It will not be the dense darkness of night, nor the dark shadows which predominate at present under the reign of Satan and of evil. This will be an epoch during which all mankind will receive the opportunity to attain real perfection (light), when the prayer of the master will become a reality ("Thy Kingdom Come") and the earth will be filled with the glory of God.

The Fig Tree

We believe the fig tree represents fleshly Israel. The fig tree also produces a fruit which is highly appreciated and rich in nutrients. As in the case of the olive tree, it requires a trained palate to enjoy a fig. All do not unanimously find a fig pleasant at first taste, because in its natural state, it is a bit plain and repulsive. All cannot equally appreciate the important and deep teachings included in the types of the people of Israel, and particularly in the Tabernacle types.

However, we may note from the teaching of the word of God that, from Moses to the restoration of the ruins of the temple of David, the work or activity destined for the Millennial Age under the New Covenant, pictured by this fig tree, has not produced any fruit, except in the case of our Lord who was not part of the Adamic race. By perfectly fulfilling the law, our Lord acquired the right to eternal life on the earth according to the conditions promised by the law, even though Jesus as a perfect man already possessed earthly life.

It was impossible for the imperfect people of Israel to fulfill the law. It is this life to which Jesus gained a right by means of perfectly fulfilling the terms of the covenant, that our Lord offered in sacrifice upon the altar: first for his own advantage, because that is how he attained immortality; second for his bride, the Church, that his merit may be imputed to us: human life on earth, so that we could equally have something to offer in sacrifice to God.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."
{ *Romans 12:1* }

When the Church, the bride of Christ, attains the glory of the first resurrection, at that moment the first fruit of the olive tree will be made manifest. It is necessary that the olive tree give its fruit first. After that and by The Christ, head and body, the fig tree will give its fruit.

This fig tree represents fleshly Israel which has never produced fruit as we read in Matthew 21:19, "And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only." There were many leaves, which represented Israel's profession of faith, as children of Abraham realizing that they were the elect people of God.

Let us look at the words of our Savior concerning their profession of faith:

"They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. . . Ye are of your father the devil." { *John 8:39-44* }

Such was the profession of fleshly Israel under the law, but they totally ignored that which the apostle mentions in Hebrews 7:19, "For the law made nothing perfect." And what happened?

During the first advent of our Lord, the fig tree dried up. Well did our Lord decree in Mark 11:14, "No man eat fruit of thee." It follows that under the Law Covenant, the fig tree did not produce and will never produce fruit. But later when the New Covenant comes into force, the fig tree will give its fruit, but under a better mediator than Moses who was part of a fallen race. In contrast the new mediator, The Christ, head and body, will have the ability to bring Israel into full harmony with God.

In Matthew 24:32 it is written, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." Some members of faithful Israelites are compared to wheat, who had the privilege to live during the first advent of our Lord, benefited from this exceptional privilege of the high calling; and these true Israelites are incorporated in the called ones of the Gospel Age. But the vast majority of fleshly Israel were hardened.

On the other hand, faithful Jews who did not have the opportunity to live at the blessed time of Pentecost, could therefore not benefit from this privilege (e. g. , John the Baptist). Even then the Lord declared in Luke 7:28, "For I say unto you, among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." However, John did not benefit from this great privilege.

Since that time, the Lord was sent to the few faithful sheep, as we read in Matthew 15:24, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The Lord also sent the apostles on a mission to these same sheep. "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—but { *Matthew 10:6* } not to all the people of Israel who were compared to cut-off branches destined for the fire.

We learn from the gospels how many pleasant moments our Lord spent on the Mount of Olives. Perhaps some of us have had the privilege to be in an olive grove on a summer's evening. The

atmosphere, the calmness, the pleasing aroma, induce us to reflect, to render honor and glory to our good Heavenly Father. On such a mountain our Lord went to reflect, to reestablish contact with the Father rendering Him glory and expressing gratitude for the great and numerous blessings received.

The upper part of this mountain had twelve peaks, a number corresponding to the twelve tribes of [spiritual] Israel, the sons of the kingdom, inheritors of the Abrahamic promise. It is also on this mountain (kingdom) that God will place his feet. We read in Zechariah 14:4, "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives," and at that time the judgment of the nations will begin.

According to Matthew 19:28, the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel will judge the twelve tribes of fleshly Israel and the kingdom will be inaugurated:

"And I appoint unto 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 [after the flesh]." { *Luke 22:29,30*}

This will take place at the beginning of the Millennium when all mankind will be blessed; at that time, there will be no more war. But this is yet future because today there still are wars in various places in the world. The time So longed for will come and the nations will be at rest. This is shown in Joshua 11:23 where we read:

"So Joshua took the whole land [Joshua represents Jesus Christ]. . . and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war."

Hosea confirms this:

"I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely." { *Hosea 2:18*}

The Olive Branch

The olive branch is a symbol of peace. The author of order and peace on earth will be The Christ, head and body. In Genesis 8:11 we read when Noah [Noah signifies serenity, calm, tranquillity] sent forth the dove, it returned to him with an "olive branch" (French Bible), proof that the waters of the flood were lowering,

indicating peace and security because the enemies were completely swallowed up in the flood.

The olive symbolizes light, the oil of the holy spirit of begettal, in accord with Matthew 5:14, "Ye are the light of the world." Since its branch is a symbol of peace, according to Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God") the begotten ones will not be called servants, as fleshly Israel, but participating sons in the divine blessings.

When the feet of God will be placed on the Mount of Olives, a symbol of the kingdom, in response to the millions of prayers addressed to God—"Thy kingdom come"—we can readily see that it is through the spiritual phase of the kingdom of Christ that mankind will be able to regain the perfection lost in Adam.

"God having provided some better thing for us [Christ complete], that they [ancient worthy patriarchs] without us should not be made perfect." { *Hebrews 11:40* }

"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." { *Exodus 19:6* }

It did not please the Father to give fleshly Israel this royalty. God knew and He has amply revealed to us that fleshly Israel will not inherit the kingdom [heavenly phase]. This had been reserved for someone else, in particular for the little flock. We read in Luke 12:32, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is only by the members who will obtain this kingdom that others will receive the earthly blessings.

For this same reason it is written that Abraham did not receive that which was promised him:

"And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not So much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession." { *Acts 7:5* }

This does not signify that God will fail in his promise. God will keep his word to the last iota because the heavenly members will become the governors of the earthly phase of the kingdom of Christ. They will be established as princes in all the earth under the New Covenant. { *Psalms 45:16* } Since his first advent, as well as second advent, the Lord came as a reaper, having a sharp sickle in his hand, to reap the mature wheat according to Revelation 14:15.

During the harvest of the Jewish Age, the Lord threw the cast-off branches into the fire, whereas he commanded that the wheat be gathered into his Gospel Age garner. This also transpires during the harvest of the Gospel Age. The tares will be bound, destined for the fire, and the wheat gathered in the garner of the Lord on the other side of the veil. God has set aside a thousand years to restore his footstool to glory. Isaiah 6:3 tells us that this will be accomplished when Christ will put down all authority and power.

"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." { *1 Corinthians 15:25*}

Only then will he return humanity in its perfection to the Father, and this, after the ultimate test is given by the Heavenly Father. Then all mankind will render glory, honor and praise to the Almighty.

May the Lord bless us all.

Amen.

Come Thou With Us-Bro. Jean Wozniak, France

Four thousand years ago, the heavenly Father looked upon the people of Israel:

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." { *Exodus 19:5-8*}

For 40 years, these people, being types and figures, as "the house of servants," had the blessed privilege to receive divine favors under Moses' command. Today, and for the last two thousand years, the "house of the sons," under Christ's authority can enjoy unprecedented privileges of divine favor and communion.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." { *1 Peter 2:9*}

When the people of Israel left Sinai to go through the wilderness,

"Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." { *Numbers 10:29-32*}

What a wonderful lesson of humility coming from this leader of an estimated two million people! Moses didn't overestimate the power that he had received. Only the heavenly Father's power was appealed to.

Since today we consider the experience of Israel as a picture, we can draw a similarity with our pilgrimage toward heavenly Canaan. Those who are with us, who walk with us, our friends and neighbors, must be invited on the basis of faith to join with us.

"Come thou with us and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

The heavenly Father blesses those who encourage one another, and also those who make a firm decision to support the divine cause. As spiritual Israelites, we do well when we follow Moses' example, by calling to those who are around us. We do well when we, with an unshakeable faith, share with them the divine promises.

These words did not convince Hobab, as perhaps they won't convince our friends. "I will not go." Following Moses' example, we should try more convincing arguments. "Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." This argument moved Hobab to join the people of Israel. The thought of service can at times attract some to God's people.

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." { *John 12:26*}

The Midianites were never invited to serve as priests at the altar. Therefore we understand that it would not be proper to give the primary ministry to those who have not manifested a complete consecration to the heavenly Father. But we should not reject those who wish to do something for the Lord.

Hobab really knew the wilderness. He could be vital to the Israelites during their journey in locating pasture and wells of water, which were so important to the people. Moses didn't always expect miracles; he stood ready to use human instrumentalities to do God's work.

We should trust the Lord in everything and seek wisdom from above. But we should also engage all our energy, employing the talents of everyone who wants to cooperate with God. We must do everything within our means. We should encourage everyone who feels he can use even the smallest talent in the service of the brethren. Our heavenly Father will use our small efforts in the outworking of His plan.

Come Thou With Us

come. . . give me your hand. come. . .

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." { *Psalms 23:1-3* }

Dearly beloved in the Lord, brethren, and dear friends: like the Israelites, we just experienced an important event in our Christian life. During their 40-year wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites enjoyed 42 stops or periods of rest. Their journey was leading them to the promised land. Israel was used by the heavenly Father as a typical people. Their experiences in good and evil pictured the trials of spiritual Israel (the Church class).

We are all in the wilderness of sin and death. We are all experiencing life's difficulties: sicknesses, trials, and tears. No-one can avoid them. But the promises and hopes draw us near to God.

"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." { *Psalms 23:4* }

The Israelites were subjected to innumerable trials, difficulties, sufferings and discouragement. Dearly beloved! We must endure innumerable blows and polishing experiences. We must submit ourselves to a radical transformation under the direction of the Great Master of the Universe. We must become conformed to the Lord's example, and develop within ourselves the faculty and ideal of the heavenly Father. Our life is often a carousel of activities, a source of to-and-fro motion full of fascinating events.

Come Thou With Us

"And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters." { *Exodus 15:27*}

After walking with difficulty in the sand and rocks of the wilderness under a scorching sun, what a relief to enjoy a time of rest! What a pleasure to quench one's thirst and rest under the shade of the palms! What a place of peace and serenity! How the Israelites under Moses' leadership must have appreciated that wonderful spot.

The heavenly Father, through His dearly beloved son, leads us to symbolic Elim. Today, for us this place is Poitiers. For an entire week, we rested near 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees. This recess in our Christian life, this rest prepared by our good heavenly Father, was for our spiritual benefit.

For fleshly Israel, this blessing followed numerous difficulties in the wilderness. What about us? The journey through the wilderness of life often brings discouragement. Oh how many times have we felt discouragement in our Christian life? Once? Twice? Or like most people, many times? We all go through periods of discouragement. Some days we feel beaten, depressed. Most of us can overcome these particularly difficult times of our life. Others have more difficulties. They live more intensively what is all around them because of their character, their appreciation, and their conscience. Often our heavenly Father rescues us:

"For he [God Himself] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." { *Hebrews 13:5,6*}

Our Father offers His hand, He provides time for moral and physical rest by which we regain courage. We regain our strength

as was the case at Elim. The heavenly Father takes care of us. He knows our needs and uses the right ways So we can regain faith.

"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." { *Revelation 15:3* }

If we sometimes feel down, depressed, discouraged, the heavenly Father, who knows our hearts, extends His hand. He puts along our way someone positive, some lovable and generous person who says exactly what we need to hear. But the heavenly Father also provides for the welfare of all of us as He did at Elim.

Come Thou With Us

Because God loves us all. We are His children. During seven long days, He gave us the opportunity to meet here at Poitiers. Having come from all parts of the globe, we just experienced some marvellous and blessed moments. We have met with those we love, our dearly beloved brethren, our friends. We have lived as a real family, far from the cares and problems of life, So close to the Lord and his words.

All during this time, together at our Lord's feet, we have fellowshiped with those who on previous occasions have rested with us in similar oases of peace, and who are well known and dear to us. But we also encountered here some new faces which, having emerged from the shadow for the first time, share today the same experiences with us. Today our family has surely grown. We have learned to understand, to forgive, to love. What a feeling to have met a brother, a sister, a friend whom we never knew before! Surely we know our brethren are scattered around the world, but who would have imagined even for one moment that these faces would be found here, flowing from the beneficial effect of our rest in "Elim." Moreover, this is our brother, our sister, our friend, a member of the same family!

"But as many as received him [the word], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." { *John 1:12* }

Having come from afar, they wanted to meet us, to shake our hand warmly in a brotherly fashion, to embrace us and say: "Peace be with you!" Yes, may peace be with you. That's their message, that's their most sincere desire for us. They are here, with us, occasionally at the cost of great sacrifices. Nevertheless, they have gathered the necessary strength to face all the problems of distance and isolation, often at the cost of sacrifices and deprivations. They

are all here smiling, with a heart full of thankfulness toward the heavenly Father.

Surely they have told us of their joy and of the ties that bind us. The expression of their feelings could probably be read on their faces. But, perhaps next to us was found a heart sad and tired because of the difficulties of life! Perhaps a shaking and hesitant hand was stretched out to us. Perhaps it almost reached us. Perhaps more compassion was expected of us, a gesture, a smile, a word! Perhaps our brother, our sister, our friend, didn't use adequate words! Perhaps his words did not attract our attention, did not reach our heart! And yet, this one suffers, needs our help, and still relies on our support. Perhaps he is here, very close to us. His face may not show any sadness, but his heart waits, waits, . . . hopes.

On the other hand, perhaps some new ties were created, ties of brotherhood and friendship, ties that draw our hearts together.

This feeling which takes birth
In the depth of the soul, in the depth
of the eyes
Be it certainty or hope?
'Tis a desire that comes from the heart.
One no longer fears loneliness
When one possesses fully
This fragment of happiness, This savor that stems from childhood.
Among all the possessions of earth
That a man envies without ceasing,
This mystery bears a beautiful name,
For it is called friendship. (*Pierre Vaussais*)

Perhaps someone took our hand and said, "My brother. . . my sister. . . my friend."

Come Thou With Us

Because Jesus calls us with no discrimination of race, skin color, nationality, or language—all these physical distinctions that divide mankind.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." { *Matthew 11:28* }

In the most difficult times of abandonment and humiliation, God better prepares us for our mission of love toward those we meet along our way. Come, and let us journey together toward our heavenly home.

These seven days allowed us to draw near to God, to His words, to these seven wells of water and 70 palm trees. We now feel richer and stronger. Spiritual food was provided abundantly by His

servants. We raised our voices in thankfulness by singing hymns and praises to the glory of God. Our prayers united us even more. It seems we are nearer our Father and have a greater trust in Him. Yes, to be ever closer.

"For through him [our Lord] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." { *Ephesians 2:18*}

We are his children. How much the presence of our Lord was evident. He promised to be with us and bless us.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." { *Revelation 3:20*}

Our heart is overflowing with thankfulness, happiness, and joy. The Lord has been with us through his word.

We have profited abundantly from this spiritual feast. . . and what a feast! All the discourses that we have heard testify to the richness of the food prepared by God through His servants. We have been enriched at "Elim," we have benefited from the setting of this cultural complex and the facilities that were provided.

Perhaps we are among those who over a long time worked to make this convention successful, who concentrated their energy So that this regathering would be possible and fruitful. Possibly not everything was the way we would have liked it to be. Perhaps we were affected by some inconveniences. Perhaps we expected more from the meals, the accommodations, the translations. Yet the brethren put all their hearts into it. Could we doubt that even for a moment?

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, So also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." { *Colossians 3:12-15*}

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." { *Hebrews 6:10*}

Now we will have to leave this pleasant place and go on our way. Let us return to our homes, our families, our country, with new resolutions, regenerated by the power of the holy Spirit.

Come Thou With Us

Let us work together. Let us work together on our destiny because we are and will always be watched. The effects of this convention must spread to our associations, our fellowship with the family of God. Wherever we go, whatever we do, whether at work, during the meetings, or when struggling with the vicissitudes of life, we are observed. People watch us. When we walk in the street, they look at us, they judge us, some with approval, others with disapproval. During our conversations they judge us according to our words and our actions.

Our words describe our story, the most accurate one about ourselves, the one whose author we have been from cradle to grave. We reveal ourselves by our behavior and by the outward display of our feelings and desires. These outward displays are an integral part of ourselves and we cannot escape from them. It is in this manner that we are observed and judged by everyone around us.

But there is another inner eye that observes us even better and more thoroughly than the eyes of our friends. It is the eye of the conscience. It looks at our innermost secrets and our thoughts; it weighs and judges the secrets of our soul, it tries to lead us virtuously through life. We are happy if the eye within us is healthy and alert. If we let this eye guide us, we will be an example to everyone who observes us. But woe to us if we blind this inner eye of conscience with pride and selfishness! In this case, we are missing our best friend, our guardian and counselor.

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." { *1 Timothy 1:18,19*}

These few days spent with our spiritual family have enabled us to learn useful lessons to face the difficulties of life with more enthusiasm and more zeal.

Come Thou With Us

Soothe your pain. Let yourself shed tears if that can relieve you. Of course we would like to never leave each other, to maintain this oneness of faith forever, far from the worries of a society that is doomed to failure, far from all those who lead a different life.

Perhaps we are ready to say with Peter when he was with James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." { *Matthew 17:4*} But we have to depart. We have to return home. Yes, it is a must. Life goes on. Now we must show our Father that we are returning stronger than when we arrived. This strength is indispensable to face all the oppositions of life.

Some among us will have to struggle more. They will have to draw more from out of their spiritual reserves. Others might be instruments of comfort, most sought out, as was Moses:

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." { *Exodus 17:11,12*}

How true is this picture for each one of us! How much will we need to hold up the hands of our sisters, brothers, and friends! Perhaps we, ourselves, will need this help to brave the difficulties of life. How much more might we have to help and encourage those who for various reasons couldn't rejoice in this brotherly fellowship: those absent, who are on a bed of pain, in hospitals or perhaps isolated. They count on our help and our prayers!

With no possibility to fend for themselves, they remained in touch with us through prayer. They often shared with us a few words, perhaps on a bit of paper, "Beloved, I can't come, I send you my love. May God be with you." Have we thought about them or felt their presence? They, more than anyone else, may need our help, our affection, our love.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." { *Romans 12:10,11*}

The lives of famous people remind us that we can make our life and that of others great, and leave our footprints in the sand of time. Let us be positive, ready to face life. Always conquering, always pursuing, let us run toward our heavenly country. "For here

have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." { *Hebrews 13:14* }

Let us always stay near God and His word, because when we step away, we lose our bearings and drift on an ocean of confusion, selfishness, and corruption.

Come Thou With Us

For no-one knows what tomorrow will bring. Together let us probe the divine time clock. The heavenly Father doesn't leave us in ignorance. Seeing the growing tragedy of a world less and less controllable, we should have the acuteness to appreciate the need for a new central authority, but one not of human origin.

The time for the establishment of the kingdom is coming. Only the ideology of Christ will undo the world-wide crisis. Clearly, knowledge is not enough. We realize there is also a need for intelligence and understanding.

Let us not forget to share with our brethren the highlights of our meeting by "wells of water."

Our time is important, even precious. The increasing pace of today's life leaves us little time to devote to that which matters most. We are the chosen avant-garde, participating in a master plan conceived by God, demonstrating that something never before tried can in fact succeed. God decided to do an unprecedented thing: create powerful and immortal beings from fragile, fleshly humans. God gave us a hope surpassing everything in this physical world. We are running a spiritual race.

Come thou with us. Let us go our way peacefully and remember that God is with us. Let us be ourselves. Let us accept the inevitable passing of years keeping in mind that in order to be strong, we must be prepared. Let us be at peace with God, whatever He wills for us, and whatever our work and aspirations might be. Let us keep our soul in peace among the noise and confusion. Despite the hard work, the disappointing dreams, life still has its beauty, especially if it is in God. Let us be careful. Let us try to be happy.

Come Thou With Us

Let us consecrate all our life on the altar, or what's left of it, and also our knowledge and talents for the service of others: thus we will find satisfaction, joy, and inner peace. We will discover the

true meaning of life. We don't know if God will let us have another rest in our fellowship like this one which is ending. Let us trust in God. He alone knows what we need. We could certainly use more regular rest periods in our gatherings and classes, and just as warm and friendly ones.

May the words laden with meaning during our fellowship carry ever more meaning as we separate: Peace Be With You!

Now it is necessary that we part. This difficult time moment which we never gave a thought to while we were together has come. Our emotions are severely tried, our throat tightens, our tears testify to our devotion to the Assembly of God.

Lord the time has come For us to depart. On our way back In thee we yearn to rest. Scattered though we are May oneness draw us closer. We will meet together When we will be in heaven.

May the heavenly Father bless us as we return home. May He keep us. Whatever mode of transportation we use (car, train, bus, plane), may He be with us. May the heavenly Father let His face shine upon us, let Him give us His grace. May He turn His face toward us and give us peace.

Let us not forget to take our Christian love to all our brethren throughout the world. Let us not forget to share with them the highlights of our meeting at Elim near the 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees.

Peace be with you until we meet again! "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." { *Romans 2:7* }

Come thou with us. . . Yes come!

Amen.