

In Defence of the Faith

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Foreword

For over 53 years Brother H. P. Mansfield, editor of Logos magazine and author of many Christadelphian expositions, labored with voice and pen to “strengthen the things that remain” and to prepare a people for the coming of the Master. He was given opportunity to extensively visit ecclesias throughout the world, and to play a wise and helpful part in the establishment of Bible Schools, Bible Tours, and study classes in many places. This provided experience that proved helpful in his wise guidance and keen insight into ecclesial matters, that predominated his writings over a considerable time. The continuing volumes of Logos indicate his understanding of such and point to the changing circumstances in the Brotherhood and the World, that gave rise to comments from his pen.

This volume has been produced with a desire to bring some of these writings to the notice of the present generation. It contains articles culled from Logos to represent the varied range of exposition, advice and encouragements over those years. A group of young brethren and sisters in Adelaide have undertaken the task of preparing the matter, and of publishing and distributing the volumes, as a memento to the work of the late editor, and to assist towards the 1989 Youth Conference. Inclusions have been selected for their interest, valuable advice, and varied circumstances. The matter can be browsed through, and reference to the relative volumes of Logos can add to study. It is hoped that readers will achieve many hours of profitable and pleasant reading herein.

It is anticipated that a further volume will be possible in due course, God willing, that others might benefit from the writings of this “father in Israel,” and that the standards of the Truth, for which he stood for over half a century, might be maintained in a changing world.

Logos Policy

Is to extend the knowledge of the Truth; to defend it against error, and to assist brethren and sisters in their comprehension of the Bible in every way possible, but particularly by the invaluable aid of the finest non-inspired expositions of the Scripture available — the writings of our pioneers, Brethren J. Thomas and R. Roberts.

We aim to follow the Apostolic advice to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3,4). We thus preach peace to those holding the Truth in its purity, but are definitely against false doctrine, in our ranks or not. In this connection we are not called upon to give a hearing to error merely because the errorist thinks he is otherwise; Scriptural precept and common prudence rather counsel a contrary attitude (see Prov. 19:27; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 1:10-11; Exod. 23-2). “The Logos,” therefore, will not lend support to the publication of erroneous teaching now current, viz.: Partial Inspiration, Non-Resurrectional Responsibility of Enlightened Rejectors, Immortal Emergence, Unscriptural Teaching regarding the Sacrifice of Christ, the Present Possession of Eternal Life (Aionian Zoe), etc.

“Take heed to thyself and unto the doctrine.”
Prove all things — Hold fast to that which is good.



Debtors to Israel

LOGOS, December, 1943

Of the many signs telling of Christ's return, none is more poignant than that presented by the plight of Israel. The hatred of nations, intensified by the bloodshed, destruction and misery of the times is directed against Jews. They have become the mark for all the sadistic lust and brutality of the Nazi; millions have already been massacred, and it is evident that before the war has ceased, many more thousands will die. True indeed, are the words of Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord. We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. 30:5-7).

2,000 years ago when their Messiah appeared to them as "a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief," the Jews "hid their faces from him." "He was despised, and they esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:3). The counsel of God was rejected. "We do not want this man to rule over us," they said. "We have no king but Caesar." So they were given their choice — the rule of Caesar. (Zech. 7:13-14). God's protective care — that divine "hedge" about them (Isa. 5:5) — was taken away, and ever since they have suffered the pangs of persecution, meted out to them by their Gentile taskmasters.

As a result, old men and young alike are today suffering intensely. Women and girls are being delivered to a worse fate than death itself. Children are being murdered, or driven into swamps and forests and left to die. Bereft of homes and parents, the object of hatred and scorn from those about them, the butt of cruelty and death, their fate is unenviable, and an eyewitness gives the following account of their condition which was quoted by Prof. Woodruff, President of the League of Nations Union, over Station 3LO: "I myself saw those children many times. What do they look like? They no longer look like human beings. They are some kind of monsters, naked, hairy, and the expression of their eyes impossible to forget — eyes of little animals gripped in the fear of death. They trust nobody, expect the worst from everyone, move stealthily along the walls looking in all directions in fear of death. No one knows where they sleep. From time to time they knock at the door of a Polish house. When a human face appears in the doorway, the child does not beg, but without changing its position it says (almost all of them say the same litany in bad Polish): "Poles are good men, dear

lady. Poles don't like people to die of hunger. I am dying, good dear lady. Long live Poland."

So vile are the reports of brutality perpetrated against this race, that one finds a difficulty in believing that men could be found so sunken in sin and crime as to perform the acts. But their veracity is confirmed by various sources, and it appears evident that they are according to fact. Another report tells of the establishing of a "Death House" in the village of Treblinka in Poland. To these death chambers the men, women and children are beaten, whipped and driven; the cells are filled to capacity, the doors are hermetically sealed and the process of asphyxiation by liquid gas begins.

What is to be our attitude to this state of things? We can assist Israel in two directions. The first and most potent is the continual approach by prayer to the throne of grace; the second, and also important, is that of personal sacrifice in the contributing of funds to the alleviation of the condition of these people. Some would say that because the Jews are suffering the curse of God there is little we can do to help by money or by prayer. But this is a shortsighted view, and one that is not based upon a sound reasoning. Deity is not responsible for every act of horror made against the Jews. He has cursed Israel by delivering them up to the Gentiles, and the latter are responsible for the evil they practise. "I was but a little displeased," said God through Zechariah, "and they helped forward the affliction" (Zech. 1:15). Moreover we are distinctly told to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem", and it is quite evident that the peace of Jerusalem will not come until its people are delivered from the hand of the enemy; we are also told to "give Him no rest until He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." The power of prayer is mighty, and should be continually used for the alleviation of God's ancient people. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Because prophecy foretells the suffering of Israel, some assume that it is useless trying to alleviate their state by contributing to their relief. But such an attitude will never be adopted by one in full possession of the facts. God has declared: "I will bless them that bless thee; and curse him that curses thee." And those nations today cursing Israel will yet receive the curse of God, although, in a sense, they are fulfilling the prophets. The King of Assyria fulfilled the prophetic word when he warred against Israel. But he did not fulfil it intentionally. As the prophet declared: "He meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations nor a few" (Isaiah 10:7). In like manner, Germany does not curse Israel today because God has directed them so to do, but because of its hatred of things Jewish, among which can be classed both the God and the hope of Israel. Germany has thus well warranted the curse which shall surely fall upon her, and in Zech. 1:21 is symbolised the power who shall fray the Gentiles who have "lifted up their power over the land of Judah to scatter it."

Neither are we immune from responsibility in this matter. And whilst the full blessing of Israel will not come until "Shiloh appear," this, by no means, lessens our duty to assist in what relief is possible at the moment. John declared: "If any

man seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of "compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Paul declared: "Do good unto all, especially those of the household of faith." There are, therefore, degrees of responsibility in connection with the "doing of good," and the fact that we identify our hope with "the hope of Israel" makes our responsibility to the plight of Israel even closer. Paul makes this very clear. In Romans 15 he describes how he was about to go to Jerusalem with a freewill offering from the Gentile saints of Macedonia and Achaia for the poor Jewish saints of Jerusalem. (This was before the time when anti-semitic propaganda represented every Jew as being wealthy). Speaking of the relation of the Gentile believers to the Jews, Paul wrote: "Their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their DUTY is also to minister unto them in carnal things." (Rom. 15:7). Our duty it is, therefore, to assist, as we can to the relief of Israel. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul commended the action of the Macedonian brethren in assisting the Jews. He wrote: "Their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality". He exhorted the Corinthians to emulate the zeal of others in this work of charity. "If there be a willing mind," he said, "it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. 8:13).

We recall to mind the case of the Gentile Centurion who solicited Christ some assistance in connection with his servant nigh unto death. It was said to his credit by the elders of the Jews: "That he was worthy for whom he should do this; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue" (Luke 7:4). The Apostle Paul was not ashamed of his feeling for Israel as a nation, although he deplored the attitude of some Jews as individuals. He wrote: "They are beloved for the Fathers' sake." Paul did not respond to any anti-semitic sentiments, although, to their discredit, one occasionally hears the old hackneyed mis-statements regarding Jews retailed by some Christadelphians. "I say the truth in Christ," declared the great Apostle to the Gentiles, "that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:1-2). These being Paul's sentiments, would he hesitate to assist Jewry in its time of need? Would he stand back and say, "Oh no, they are accursed of God! Let us enjoy the amenities of life to the full, but let Israel suffer the curse they so justly receive?" Through the ages the echo of the Apostle's words come home to us. "Boast not against the branches. Thou as a wild olive grafted into the Jewish tree, do not support the root, but you depend upon the Jewish root to sustain you" (Rom. 11:18). Paul prayed for Israel after the flesh (Rom. 10:1) and we are confident that he would if needful support by material means his petitions to the throne of grace.

"The Logos" Committee has been greatly stirred by the attitude of different brethren and sisters to the plight of the Jewish children in Europe. A brother in N.S.W. writes to say that he is donating portion of his pension; from a "non-Christadelphian" comes an anonymous donation of £2; from a "brother in Jesus"

another anonymous donation of £5; from "Lovers of Zion" comes another donation of £8. Others support it as means allow. "It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. 8:3). In view of this support, "The Logos" forwarded a cheque to "The Ivriah" for £100 from "the readers of 'The Logos'" to be used for the amelioration of the Jewish children refugees in Europe. Already this amount has been donated, and in view of the continued support, and the urgency of the matter, "The Logos" has forwarded to the same quarters another cheque for the same amount, confident that this second amount will likewise be donated by our readers. This money has been forwarded on behalf of the Jewish children for two reasons. Firstly, because of their plight which cannot be adequately expressed in words, and secondly because of the Signs of the Times which indicate that the return of Christ is so close, and the rise of Jewry so near, that these Jewish children, snatched from the maelstrom of Europe will take their part in the Kingdom of Israel restored in Palestine under Christ. Speaking of these children, the prophet declared: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." (Jer. 31:15-17).

"He that toucheth Israel toucheth the apple of His eye" — Zechariah.

"I will bless them that bless thee" — Genesis.

Footsteps in the Sands of Time

LOGOS, December, 1955

The Bible is largely a record of how men and women have reacted to the opportunities that a knowledge of the Truth has opened for them. Some have embraced it with zeal, and maintained it with courage in the face of great difficulties, whilst others, through weakness, or lack of faith, have let its opportunities slip through their fingers. It is profitable to consider the circumstances of the various characters revealed in the Word, that we may profit by their experiences, and, if possible, avoid the mistakes they made.

Paul is well-known to all Bible students; but two other men that we propose to consider, are not so well-known. They are Mark and Demas. Their biographies are built up of brief references that the great Apostle makes of them in his various epistles, and should be considered on the background of his life.

Paul dominates the New Testament record. His character revealed the qualities of obedience, courage, endurance, faith and hope. He allowed nothing to deviate him from the course set before him. His eyes were resolutely centred upon the hope of his calling; he was prepared to undergo every difficulty in its service, and, if necessary, lay down life itself for the Truth. On one occasion he was constrained to draw attention to some of his sufferings:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the ecclesias..." (2 Cor. 11:23).

We are inclined to magnify our own efforts and sacrifices for the Truth, but when we read such a catalogue of suffering, we may well feel humbled. Paul had somewhat to boast about, and yet boasting was far from his intention. Rather did he humble himself, changing his name from Saul (meaning: Appointed of God) to Paul (Little) and declaring, "I am the least of all the Apostles, and am not fit to be called an Apostle..."

In Paul, we have a classic example of the power of Christ to transform lives.

Here was the greatest adversary of the Truth, converted into its most skilful advocate; its most inveterate tormentor, became the most persecuted among Christians; a Pharisee of the Pharisees changed into a belligerent opponent of Judaism.

So great was the conversion in Paul, that the Ecclesias doubted whether it was genuine. The record states: "When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). Barnabas (whose name means: Son of Consolation) broke down this attitude of hostility. He befriended the lonely Paul, and extended to him the hand of friendship and help:

"Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how boldly he had preached at Damascus in the name of Jesus" (v. 27).

And thus was forged one of those delightful friendships in the Truth that are so beautifully recorded in the Word. Paul and Barnabas embarked upon the first missionary journey together. They fought side by side against the Judaising heresy that was disturbing the Ecclesias. They were jointly appointed to carry the decision of the Apostles concerning the keeping of the Law to the Ecclesias among the Gentiles.

But then occurred a slight disagreement, that reveals that these men were not only earnest and sincere, but also human.

A second missionary journey was mooted. Barnabas wanted to take with him Mark, his nephew. But Mark had proved a disappointment on the first journey. He had left Paul and Barnabas at a crucial time. And Paul had lost any confidence in him, and did not want his efforts in the Truth jeopardised by the presence of one whom he could not completely trust.

"Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed..." (Acts 15:38-39).

The Vindication of Mark.

The subsequent history of Mark must be built up of incidental references to him in the epistles of Paul, but in the account thus established, there is much encouragement for all who may have temporarily lapsed as did Mark. Paul is a little above most of us. It needs much more than normal faith and courage to triumph over the disasters that constantly challenged his life, and few have the spiritual vigour to do so. But in Mark, who deserted under trial, there is someone with whom we are all more familiar. And Mark, who revealed weakness on the first missionary journey, lived to justify the confidence that Barnabas showed in him, and to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of Paul.

This is established in the epistle to the Colossians, which was written from Rome. Therein Paul mentions a few of the brethren concerning whom he says: "These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been

a comfort unto me" (Col. 4:10-11), and, significantly enough, among their number is found "Mark the nephew of Barnabas."

What a complete change in his attitude towards Mark! Previously Paul had been so disappointed in him that he had preferred to break the partnership with Barnabas rather than take Mark, but now, he is among those few concerning whom he declares: "These only have been a comfort unto me!" What encouragement there is in this for those of us who may have emulated Mark's hesitancy or weakness at some time. He did not allow one failure to destroy him, nor the opposition of the great Apostle, himself, to defeat him. And Paul, on his part, was ready to receive him when he saw the change. Here was vindication indeed! A grand exhortation to all who have failed to never give up faith or hope!

The incidents which caused Paul to change his opinion of Mark are not recorded, and are comparatively unimportant. The great fact is that he vindicated himself in the eyes of the Apostle to the extent that Paul was able to use him in his work. Perhaps the friendly Barnabas, having effected a change in the character of Mark, sent him back to Paul in order that he may be a help to him.

Under the Shadow of Death

Be that as it may, Paul was a prisoner on trial for life when he wrote those words concerning Mark, for he concluded his epistle with the plea: "Remember my bonds" (v. 18). But despite the ominous future that was opening out for the Apostle, there was no complaining. This hero set a wonderful example to all about him, and used every opportunity to maintain his service to his Master. Faced with similar circumstances, we would probably indulge in an orgy of self-pity, but there was no such weakness on the part of Paul. The Truth was proclaimed to the very jailors. The ecclesia at Rome was strengthened. The prison became a centre of activity, and from it went messengers throughout the ecclesial world carrying the stimulating and encouraging epistles of Paul. From him sounded forth the word of Truth. His zeal and energy were not impaired by prison walls.

His work was assisted by another disciple whom the great Apostle introduces in v. 14 of the same chapter: "Demas greeteth you." For a time these three strove together to effect a great work, so that in the epistle to Philemon, Mark and Demas are bracketed together with other helpers, and styled by Paul "my fellow-labourers" (v. 24).

Valuable service was accomplished. A door of utterance was opened by their joint efforts. And though Paul knew that only a few short years remained to him, he used them to redeem the time to the glory of his Master. Even those of Caesar's household heard and accepted the message of salvation.

But gradually Paul's liberty was curtailed. Nero became the inveterate enemy of the Christians. Paul was their acknowledged leader. The time came when his sufferings were to be crowned by the supreme sacrifice. And then, amid all his troubles, news came of the defection of many in Asia. "This thou knowest," he wrote to Timothy, "that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me..." (2 Tim. 1:15).

Under the crushing burden of these disappointments, with the heavy load he had to bear, and the threat of martyrdom impending, a lesser man would have capitulated. But Paul's confidence was not in flesh and blood. He leaned not on man, but upon the Rock of Israel, and that Rock sustained him. Out of weakness he was made strong.

"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

There was still work to be done, and the time was short. Paul called upon his faithful helpers, to assist him at that time. It is a wonderful vindication of Mark that at such a moment of trial, that the Apostle particularly turned to him for help: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee Timothy: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (v. 11).

What a change from the time when "Paul thought it not good to take him with them who went not with them to the work" (Acts 15). A change from when he so lacked confidence in Mark that he preferred to break up the partnership with Barnabas rather than have him in the party. It is an eloquent testimony to the wonderful way in which Mark vindicated himself; and, incidentally, an encouraging example to all who, like Mark, may have shown weakness at some time or other. It shows that we need not be cast down, though we may have proved a temporary disappointment to others, or ourselves, but, like Mark, should press on to victory and success in the good fight of faith, in spite of failures.

Demas the Drifter

But the same chapter, Paul also speaks of his other "fellow-labourer," Demas. Unfortunately, under pressure of trial, Demas had wilted: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (v. 10). Here is the record of a man, with wonderful opportunities of service, but who permitted the difficulties of the times to deflect him from the path of duty.

It is valuable to try and analyse each of these three characters in order to ascertain the secret of their success or failure.

Paul's success was due to his spiritual vision. He resolutely fixed his eyes upon the future, and refused to deflect them therefrom. All else, to him, was dross. "This one thing I do," he declared. "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" (Phil. 3:13-14). Mentally he was transported beyond his trials, and in comparison with the glory he beheld, the sacrifices he made for the Truth seemed but trivial.

Mark vindicated himself through the only means possible: Faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith" (1 John 5:4). Given faith nothing is impossible. It provides the power for us to rise above every

discouragement, and though we may be temporarily cast down, as was Mark, it gives us the courage to fight back and vindicate ourselves, as he did.

Demas must have lacked faith, and thus wilted under a crisis. He was like those in the parable who receive the message of the Kingdom with joy, and continue for a little time, but having no root in themselves are destroyed by trial.

But as we consider the character of Demas, there is one important feature we must bear in mind. He was unfortunate. He lived in an age that demanded great courage of brethren. He lived at a time when the line of demarcation between the ecclesia and the world was sharply defined, and to declare for the former was to invite the hostility of the latter. Had Demas lived in our times, he could have continued as a respected, nominal Christadelphian. For we live in an age when trials such as Demas faced, seldom come our way, and members can pander to the world and yet take their place in the congregations of the saints.

Paul, Mark and Demas have yet to stand before the Judge who has said: "He who denieth me, I will deny, but he that confesseth me, I will confess." Their accounts are closed, and nothing can alter them. But we are the living witnesses of His call today, and the question of supreme importance as far as we are concerned is where will we stand in that day? Paul may be above us, but we are able to emulate Mark who, temporarily fell, yet vindicated himself — or Demas who, though he may have earlier thought he was strong in the faith, ultimately drifted. Let the power of the Word so influence us that, like Mark, we rise superior above our failures to snatch victory from defeat, and having been tested by fire, shine forth approved in the Day of Inspection soon to be revealed.

Should we Prohibit the Use of the Divine Name?

LOGOS, February, 1960

I was recently approached by a group of brethren who were disturbed at what they described as an attack that had issued forth from the exhorting platform against the use of the Divine name. The speaker, apparently, had used more zeal than knowledge in the use of insinuation and indictment, and with singularly bad taste, had used the worst possible time in order to do so.

The exhorting platform is not the place for personal attack. In fact, when such is indulged in, the act of communion can be sadly disturbed. If a brother has a matter against another, it is for him to approach the erring one privately, with the object of reclaiming him, and not make the issue a public one.

The exhorting brother stands in a very onerous position when he takes his place upon the platform. His duty and privilege is to "feed the ecclesia of God" (Acts 20:28). The word Paul used in this place signifies to "shepherd," and the shepherd of Palestine did not drive the sheep, he did not employ a dog to angrily bark at the heels of the sheep as is the custom in Australia, but led them quietly to pasture, guiding them with his voice, inducing in them a confidence in his ability to help and protect them. We all need to learn the lesson of the shepherd as we go about our ecclesial duties; much harm, much distress would be saved by so doing.

It is a strange fact, that from the time when the Divine Name was first delivered to Moses (Exod. 3:14), men of flesh have resented its use. When Moses first came to Pharaoh, he declared: "Thus saith Yahweh Elohim of Israel, Let my people go..." Pharaoh had never previously heard of Yahweh; he did not recognise Him among the gods. He replied, "Who is Yahweh, that I should obey His voice? I know not Yahweh, neither will I let Israel go" (Exod. 5:2).

Pharaoh did not say, as it is recorded in the A.V., "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord?" Because Pharaoh did believe he knew who was Lord among the gods. For the first time he had heard the challenging name of the Deity of Israel, and recognised that the Name set Him aside from all others. It struck harshly upon his ears; he hated the sound of it and the demand that was made in the Name, and therefore rejected it out of hand.

And men of Egypt have hated it ever since.

Why should the mention of the Name arouse such opposition?

The answer to that question is beyond me. I have listened to many reasons over the years, but have yet to hear a valid one.

Generally the opposition amounts to a personal prejudice. If "Lord," or "God," or "Jehovah" is used no objection is taken. If the Name that Deity Himself selected as the one by which He wished to be known is used, there is immediate resentment.

Why?

Some have said that they "feel" it lacks reverence, that it is used for purposes of ostentation.

But the feeling that it lacks reverence is only due to a misunderstanding of the Name; and as to the latter suggestion, that is a matter for the individual. Some could parade the fundamental doctrines of the Truth for ostentatious purposes — but are we to refuse those doctrines, or hesitate to mention them because of the misuse on the part of some?

I have found no subject more humbling than that which surrounds the Name, the subject of God-manifestation. I try to use the name with the greatest reverence, whilst not standing in judgment on those who do not see fit to thus use it. Cannot the principle of Paul operate in such a case as this? Concerning another matter, he wrote: "Who are you that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth...One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it..."

The exhortation referred to in the beginning of these "notes," apparently made several challenging statements. It alleged that "those things which a former generation has laboured to build, a following generation casts aside and throws down." This principle, true in its proper setting, was somehow twisted around to do service for an attack upon any using the Divine name.

But stripped of emotionalism, what are the facts? The Divine Name was frequently used by our pioneers. It is found constantly in the writings of Brethren J. Thomas, R. Roberts, C.C. Walker, H. Sulley and others. In "Phanerosis," Brother Thomas makes the point that a great improvement would be made in the A.V. if the Divine Names and Titles were left untranslated in Hebrew, with an explanation of their significance in the front, he goes to great lengths to explain the meanings and usage of these names. "Phanerosis" was written for the stranger! It originally formed the substance of a public address!

Where, then, does this exhorting brother stand? Brother Thomas has built up a principle, who is busy pulling it down?

The Divine Name was so frequently used by Brother Thomas that he incorporated it into the name he gave a house he proposed to purchase in Birmingham. In "My Days and My Ways," Brother Roberts tells of how Brother Thomas decided to live in England, and purchasing a house in the Midlands, he named it "Yahlom Lodge," or the wayfaring place provided by

Yahweh Elohim for one of His pilgrims. Brother Roberts writes: "In my *juvenility*, I had my qualms about putting the name of God on a house. But the Doctor took it very calmly as a thing in harmony with the practice of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob..."

The next alleged point in the exhortation was that the original Hebrew word is unknown, or at least very doubtful.

I know that there are commentaries that allege this, but they are usually the emanations of men who reject in part the teaching of the Bible. There is absolutely no doubt whatever as to the Hebrew consonants, nor, if the Bible is accepted as inspired, the root from which the Name comes. It is the Hebrew verb *Ehyeh* — "I will be." This is shown without doubt from Exodus 3. Join the consonants with the vowels of the verb, and the Name is revealed.

The third point of the exhortation was that the Jews themselves will not pronounce it.

That is true. It is also true that they do not accept the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus. Are we to reject that truth because of their lead? Brother Thomas ridicules the attitude of the Jews in regard to the Divine Name, and shows that it is due to superstition. One authority from my library declares that the Name was commonly used by Jews until a time of great spiritual apostasy when it began to be substituted by the title of Baal, or Lord. Jews of faith did not hesitate to use it. In fact, one cannot read the Bible without frequently mentioning it. It is found incorporated in such names as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joshua, Jesus, or the common shout of triumph and joy: Halleluyah. It was in common and frequent use in the days of the prophets as all must admit who read the Word with understanding.

The Divine Name is commonly used today in theological circles to define the God of Israel, and the only reason that it was not incorporated into the Revised Standard Version is because the translators do not recognise the exclusiveness of the God of Israel. To use the Name, they realised, would set the whole of Christendom with its belief in the Trinity apart from the Bible.

That is just what Christadelphians do.

The speaker claimed that neither the Lord Jesus nor his disciples used the Divine Name.

But where is the proof of this? In "Phanerosis," Brother Thomas wrote: "The great teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, did not use the word *Theos* at all, inasmuch as he discoursed not in Greek." Throughout Palestine, in the days of the Lord, the common people, to whom he spake, used Aramaic, a form of Hebrew, but in the synagogue, the pure Hebrew was exclusively used. Is it not significant, that when the Lord visited the synagogue in Nazareth, he deliberately turned and read the Scripture where the Divine name appears (Luke 4:16-19, cp. Isa. 61:1-2).

We have the evidence of Paul, that when he heard the Lord speak, it was in "Hebrew" (Acts 26:14), and when he wished to address the people of Jerusalem, it was in the same tongue (Acts 21:40).

The speaker doubtless made the statement he did because it is commonly believed that the originals of the New Testament were in Greek. But there are no originals extant. We only have copies. And authorities believe that these are copies of originals written in Aramaic (or the common man's Hebrew of those times). The beauty of the Divine Titles cannot be revealed in this Gentile tongue. The Companion Bible makes that point, stating: "The Greek language, being of human origin, utterly fails (and naturally so) to exhibit the wonderful precision of the Hebrew inasmuch as the language necessarily reflects, and cannot go beyond the knowledge, or rather lack of knowledge, of the Divine Being, apart from revelation."

Finally, the speaker, is alleged to have said that we are breaking a tradition of past generations by using the Name. The speaker only needs to read some of the writings of the pioneers, works like "Eureka," "Phanerosis," "Ways of Providence" or his own hymn book (Hymn 14, for example) to realise the folly of such a statement.

Such exhortations can well be ignored.

At the same time, let wisdom be exercised by those who do understand and find pleasure in the Divine Name. Let them, as much as is possible, avoid argumentation on it. It is degrading to find it the subject of abuse and disputation, and those who have this additional knowledge should exercise the grace and charity to use it in a way honouring the One they wish to revere and worship above all else. "Those who are strong must bear towards those who are weak." Of course, when the subject is directly attacked, there is a need to stress what is right and true, and vigorously refute what is obviously wrong. But the Divine Name should not be bandied about as a catch-cry, or made the subject of undignified debate. Let the matter be reasoned in a calm fashion, on the basis of the Word, and Truth will prevail. The Name is designed for worship, not polemics. Be careful then, and learn the lesson of the shepherd who led the sheep and did not drive them. It is better to avoid the use of the Name than merely to use it without understanding or in the spirit of defiance or challenge. The beautiful doctrine of God-manifestation should draw all Christadelphians together as one. I know, that the opposition which certain have developed through ignorance and misunderstanding, is unfortunate, but at the same time we reveal the characteristics of the Name if with patience we bear with them, and try to help rather than to criticise and mock.

Forthright Criticism And Forthright Reply

LOGOS, July, 1961

IS WAR WITH RUSSIA INEVITABLE?

The distribution of "Herald of the Coming Age" results in a volume of correspondence — some appreciative, some critical. The issue bearing the above title drew from an interested "friend" the following comment.

Sir,

This issue of "Herald of the Coming Age" is the greatest bit of fatalistic nonsense I have read. If what you claim is true, it does not say much in favour of God. For a so-called "loving God" to allow such a bloodthirsty war to take place to fulfil the very obscure Bible prophecies shows God as a brainless monster, and not a supreme being who loves His slightly naughty children.

Even if man is a little wayward and far from perfect, this is no reason for a God to mass exterminate him to assure the few Christadelphians a place in heaven. What a wastage, anyway! The Christadelphians must be very pleased when war clouds gather, when there is a break-down in relations among the world governments, and when Kennedy and Khrushchev rave at each other. You must look forward to the day when the papers will cry out: "War declared!" I know how delighted you are when a natural phenomenon occurs such as an earthquake, destroying a few thousand non-Christadelphians: Bible prophecy being fulfilled!

Instead of forecasting doom, ranting against mankind, and spending much money publishing such piffle, why do not you "special" people try to help man improve his social life, and rise to greater heights? Man has risen, not fallen. He can choose to develop his capacities as the highest species and try to rise still further, or he can choose otherwise. The choice is his responsibility, and HIS ALONE.

— D.W.

Dear Mr. W,

I acknowledge your not very complimentary note relating to the booklet: "Is War With Russia Inevitable?" Your comments demonstrate that you have not read it properly. Bible prophecy foretells that which man, by his folly and his own volition, makes inevitable — namely war between Russia and the West. But Bible prophecy also shows that God has a purpose with the earth, which

shall rescue mankind from its folly, and cause His kingdom to be set up (Daniel 2:44). God's purpose thus reveals His love for humanity, for if He left man to his own devices it could bring about the annihilation of civilisation.

I quite agree that man has freedom to make choice of what he shall do — but unfortunately it is very evident that the choice will be as predicted in the Bible — and you may very well live to see the results of it.

You write of man being a "little naughty." Surely that is a gross understatement. Open your eyes Mr. W. Is the dropping of an atom bomb on Hiroshima to be pushed on one side as evidence of being "a little naughty"? Is the brutal murder of 6,000,000 Jews in the concentration camps of Germany to be considered as the playful mischievous act of otherwise delightful children? Is the record of violence and bloodshed down the ages, the persecution of the Inquisition and similar institutions designed to the same end, merely evidence of "naughtiness" on the part of otherwise dear, obedient children? What of the general repudiation of principles of righteousness and decency on the part of mankind, the crucifixion of God's son, the widespread blasphemy of which man is guilty. A "little naughty" you say — which shows that you are blind to facts.

You claim that we must be "very pleased" when the papers cry out "War Declared!" Rather put it this way, that we are very sad that people have not the intelligence to foresee the danger and hide themselves. We are pointing out to you the danger — but like the ostrich you hide your head, will have none of it, and growl at God. You impotently shake your fist at heaven, and condemn us. You write of us "wanting a place in heaven," which shows how far astray you are in your facts for it is fundamental Christadelphian teaching that the righteous are rewarded on earth. But all your criticism, your rejection of fact, will not stop war; it will not stop Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Khrushchev "raving at each other," and bringing about what God has predicted. He is warning you of wrath to come; He calls you to listen to words of wisdom. But you call it "publishing piffle," little realising that the only way to improve the social life of man, assist him to rise to greater heights (your own words), is to direct him to the way of life which is in Christ Jesus.

Why not investigate the matter further? Yours sincerely, — H. P. Mansfield

The Sequel

Dear Mr. Mansfield,

Sometime ago I wrote a letter to you, containing a vitriolic attack on you and your religion — and most of all, God.

Today I am repentant for such a foolish act, and when I learn to pray, I shall ask for His forgiveness (I know I have yours). For some unknown reason, I have changed from a cynical, anti-God-Rationalist, without any hope, to a child of God, with much hope.

In my vain search in the Bible to confute God's Word, I have discovered the real meaning of Truth: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

From now on, I turn the pages of the Bible with new meaning; not scanning it for some basis to attack it — if there be such a basis — but searching the Word for my eternal salvation and happiness.

After thirty-three years of blind struggling in a dark morass, I have reached out to His strong and loving arm. It seems as though I can feel that firm grip.

“Christianity is not taught, but caught!”

Yours sincerely — D. W.

The Lesson for the Workers in the Vineyard

Never give up!

The Cherubim

LOGOS, September, 1964

“As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle” (Ezek. 1:10).

THE EXHORTATION OF THE FOUR FACES

Two factors constantly obtrude in Ezekiel’s description of the Cherubim: the diversity of the vision, and yet its essential unity. He refers to four living creatures that are yet one: to four distinct wings that are also joined together; to four wheels that work “wheel within a wheel”.

He also describes four faces to each of the four living creatures, but declares that each set of four faces was joined to one head. This is expressed in Ezekiel 10:11:

“They turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it...”

Here is diversity and yet unity. It points to the Ecclesia, or multitudinous Christ as composed of many members, but having only “one head.” So Paul exhorted, that “speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 2:15).

The four faces of the Cherubim each manifested Yahweh in a different way; but they were attached to one head which did the thinking for the whole four: “whither the head looked they followed it.” That must be the case even now of those who wish to form part of the Cherubic glory of the future: they must try to let Christ do their thinking for them, striving to bring “every thought into captivity to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” Paul exhorted the Philippian brethren (Ch. 2:5). In another place, he showed that whilst the Ecclesia is made up of “many members,” each of which can serve the Truth according to each of their different characteristics or attributes, the one mind, the mind of the spirit (Rom. 8:6), should govern them all.

Such a mind is brought into being by the spirit-words of the Lord (John 6:63. Col 3:9-10). The Truth is designed to that end, but if it fails to create such a mind, it is because its real power is not felt, its true significance is not understood. Christ told his disciples that they were “clean through the word he had spoken unto them” (John 15:3), for that word had awakened their

consciences to the difference between the truth and error, good and evil. Through its means they could learn to “love righteousness and hate iniquity” even as had their Lord (Heb. 1:9).

The conversion of Paul, the great change in his life from persecutor to persecuted, demonstrates the transforming impact of knowledge when a realisation of its significance is brought home to one. Paul became dead to the old way of life, and alive to the new (Gal. 2:20), and so great and drastic was the change that many, in his day, doubted whether it was genuine.

The Truth is thus a way of life, and not a mere theory. It is designed, not merely to tell us something, but to change us for the Kingdom. It can create in us a new mode of thinking and a new code of morals, that will find their outworking in a new way of life. All this is done through the Christ-word dwelling in us, as the one head of the Cherubim controlled the four faces. That is why the Lord prayed the Father that He might “sanctify the disciples through the truth” (John 17:17); and that is why the Proverb declares that it is “the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter” (Prov. 25:1). God has deliberately clothed His revelation in language hard to be understood, in order that those who love His word may be caused to “think upon these things” (Phil. 4:8-9. See 1 Cor. 2:12-15). Such mental activity will result in the mind concentrating upon the things of God to the exclusion of the things of the flesh.

Take this theme of the Cherubim as an example. God could have expressed in simple, straightforward language all that He has concealed in the remarkable symbols presented, but to do so would have robbed the subject of the thrill and pleasure of discovery that is found in unravelling the vision. As we ponder the things presented therein, the mind learns to concentrate upon Godly themes, with the result that, as the Proverbs declare: “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

If the “one head” dominates the diverse elements of an Ecclesia, all members will be found co-operating together, and moving steadily forward in the direction to which the head looks. They will work as a team at the bidding of the Word.

This co-operation will be seen in perfection in the glorified Cherubim of the Age to come.

Why Four Faces?

The four faces of the Cherubim identify the vision of the true Israel of God. This is established firstly, because the faces are the same as the standards under which Israel marched in the wilderness; and secondly, because they are reproduced in Revelation 4:7, and later interpreted as being the multitudinous Body of the Redeemed (Rev. 5:8-10).

Israel marched towards the Promised Land in four groups of three tribes each, with the standards of the leading tribes (Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan — Num. 10:14,18,22,25) at the head of each of the groups. When the tribes

encamped, they did so in four sections (Num. 2), so that the encampment of Israel as a whole was foursquare like that of the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:16.

According to Jewish tradition, the standards of the four leading tribes were identical with the four faces of the Cherubim. This has the support of Scripture. Thus Judah is identified with the lion (Gen. 49:9), Reuben with the man (Gen. 49:3, 30:14-15), Ephraim with the ox (Deut. 33:17, Jer. 31:18), and Dan with the eagle — this tribe covered the rearward of all the camp, protecting it, hovering over it, as an eagle might that of its young (Num. 2:25).

As the symbols of the Cherubim are the standards of Israel, so the antitypical Cherubim (the saints in glory) though drawn out of all nations (Rev. 5:9), are Israelitish in character.

That is a feature of our calling that we must never lose sight of, and which we can hardly overstress.

As Israel was exhorted to constantly “remember” that they had been slaves in Egypt, but Yahweh had brought them out in order that He might “bring them in” (Deut. 5:15, 6:23), so Gentile believers are called upon to constantly “remember” that they are Israelites. Paul wrote the Ephesians:

“Therefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:11-13).

These one-time Gentiles had been inducted into the Commonwealth of Israel. They were now “Israelites indeed,” “Jews inwardly” (Rom. 2:29), “children of the promise” (Rom. 9:8). In Revelation 7 they are aligned with the twelve tribes of Israel, forming part of the symbolic 144,000 sealed in the forehead (Rev. 7:4, 14:1).

As members of the true Commonwealth of Israel, their symbol is the four faces of Ezekiel 1.

There is a need to give concrete expression to this fact, because the ties of flesh are strong. We are sometimes swept off our feet by feelings of fleshly patriotism, identifying ourselves with an Australian, British, or German viewpoint (as the case may be) to the exclusion of that “universal ecclesial” outlook that the Truth demands. We need always to “remember” that we have been taken out of the Gentile “fold”, and made “one flock” in Christ (John 10:16). Barriers of race, country, state or city should no longer divide members of ecclesias, for they have been taken “out” of such and dedicated as a “people for God’s name” (Acts 15:14). There should be no glorying in the flesh, which, the Lord declared, “profits nothing,” for we have changed our patriotism, and our citizenship is now in heaven awaiting its manifestation in the earth (Phil. 3:20 — “conversation” should be rendered “citizenship”).

For that reason we do not vote, take part in politics, join the armed services

of the state. But our separateness should go even further. We should try and crush mere fleshly partisanship in all its manifestations, and see service to Christ our king, and undivided loyalty to the Israelitish hope to which we have been called, as the main objectives of life.

That is not always easy to do, because the flesh blinds us to facts. It is so easy to be moved by propaganda, to be swept along by the mass hysteria which is the stock trade of national leaders. The influence of the Press is great and widespread, and the men who control it are expert in whipping up public opinion in such a way as to sweep readers off their feet. Facts are distorted to do service to the nation, the country, or the cause to which the paper is devoted. How easy it is for fleshly feelings to be aroused when the emotions are skilfully played upon. This is found even in the realm of sport, and unless the saints of God are careful, they too can be swept off their feet by finding pride of identification in some national hero who had demonstrated that he can use his muscles (but not necessarily his brains) better than others. Australians, particularly, need to be on their guard in that direction, for there, sport and sportsmen are idolised perhaps more than in any other country.

The theme of the Cherubim, rightly applied, should lead us to resist such trends, and recognise that we have been called out of that state of things.

The way of life which is so familiar to us today, in its political, social and religious manifestations, is destined to be destroyed at Christ's coming. How then can we be found identified with that which we hope to help Christ destroy!

The Four Faces Exhorted Israel

Apart from identifying the saints with the true Israel of God, what else did the faces teach?

There are various answers to this question.

Take the names of the tribes whose standards are brought into view. Judah signifies "Praise", Reuben "See a son", Ephraim "Double Fruit", Dan "Judgment". A paraphrase of these meanings provides the following statement: "Praise the Son whom you behold, he will reveal double fruit at the judgment."

Thus the marching tribes of Israel followed standards that proclaimed the Divine purpose in the nation.

In addition, the four faces set forth the principle of God manifest in the flesh. In *Elpis Israel*, Brother Thomas comments upon the four faces of the Cherubim in the following terms:

"We have arrived then at this, that the Mosaic Cherubim were symbolical of 'God manifest in the flesh.' We wish now to ascertain upon what principles His incarnate manifestation was represented by the Cherubim? First, then, in the solution of this interesting problem, I remark, that the scriptures speak of God after the following manner. 'God is LIGHT, and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5). again, 'God is a SPIRIT; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24); and thirdly, 'Our God is a consuming FIRE' (Deut. 4:24). In these three texts, which are only a sample of many others, we perceive that God is represented by LIGHT, SPIRIT, and FIRE; when, therefore, He is symbolised as

manifest in FLESH, it becomes necessary to select certain SIGNS representative of light, spirit, and fire, derived from the animal kingdom. Now the ancients selected the LION, the OX, and the EAGLE for this purpose, probably from tradition of the signification of these animals, or the faces of them in the original Cherubim. They are called God's Faces because His omniscience, purity, and jealousy are expressed in them. But the omniscient, jealous, and incorruptible God was to be manifested in a particular kind of flesh. Hence, it was necessary to add a FOURTH FACE to show in what NATURE He would show Himself. For this reason, the HUMAN was associated with the lion, the ox, and the eagle" (p. 151).

The lion, with its shining eyes, its tawny gold-like color, its flowing mane, its resistless strength suggests the velocity and irresistibility of light. The ox or bull with its horns, its curling locks on its forehead, its relentless fury when aroused is descriptive of the appearance and terrible effect of fire. The eagle with its silent, lofty skimming above, high in the heavens, is suggestive of the spirit in motion.

But it required an animal through whom these Divine attributes could be intellectually revealed, and so the face of a man was added to the lion, ox and eagle.

The manifestation of Divine knowledge (light), zeal (fire), and power (spirit — eagle) will be revealed in judgment upon the world of the ungodly in the Age to come, by the Cherubim of glory, and to that end God will be revealed in flesh (John 5:27).

If we are to form a part of that glorious company then, we must, in measure, reveal those characteristics now.

The Lord Jesus, as the nucleus of the Cherubim, manifested all four faces. He was the complete manifestation of God in flesh, so that he could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He was, and is, completely "one with Him."

For that reason, his life is recorded in four gospels, each of which sets forth one of the four faces. These gospels are not mere repetition, but reveal Christ as the Lion, the Ox, the Man, and the Eagle. He is the Lion in Matthew, for Matthew dwells on his royal majesty; he is the Ox in Mark, for Mark reveals him as a servant devoted to the needs of the people he desired to help; he is the Man in Luke, for Luke traces his genealogy back to Adam (Luke 3) and wrote for Gentiles; he is the Eagle in John, for John reveals him as the word from the beginning then made flesh, and shows the influence of his Divine begetting more than any of the other writers.

So in these four gospels, we have in order: Rulership, Service, Humanity, Divinity. We learn that Christ is fit to rule because he learned to serve; and though he came in flesh, he triumphed through the spirit.

That also is the exhortation of the faces as far as we are concerned. As we see them set forth in that order, the order of the Gospels, we learn the message of their appearance: if we would rule, then we must serve; and though burdened with humanity, we must seek the strength that comes from the spirit- word.

In Revelation 5:9-10, the four beasts (identical with the four faces — see Rev. 4:7) are represented as singing:

“Thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.”

Here is a community, created out of flesh, elevated by the spirit-word, and destined to rule because it learned to serve. Christ sets the example. Paul exhorts:

“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. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:5-11).

Carefully analysed, those verses reveal the four faces of the Cherubim. There is the eagle, the spirit — the “form of God;” there is the ox — the “form of a servant”; there is the man — “made in the likeness of man”; there is the lion — the royal majesty that is his, and which will ultimately bring every knee bowing before him.

The faces of the Cherubim, the standards of Israel’s tribes, are thus revealed in the King, the ideal Israelite, and through the four Gospel records of each of those four faces flash one by one into view to provide a composite picture of the Lord.

“Let this mind be in you,” wrote Paul. As the four faces of the Cherubim were attached to one head, and as the body went in the direction dictated by the head, so the mind of Christ must motivate us now, if we would share the glory of the future.

Thus, the exhortation of the faces is this: if we would reign (lion), we must serve (ox), and will only serve acceptably in flesh (man) by the influence of God’s Word dwelling in us (eagle).

Yahweh Ropheka

LOGOS, May, 1970

The subject of the names and titles of Deity is not one of merely academic interest, but one expressive of concrete realities, and of essential principles in relation to our worship and walk before Yahweh.

Each aspect of it adds to our knowledge of the Father, revealing what He is and what He can become to us; providing the need for every circumstance of life, and revealing that great hope to which we have been called.

In studying the names and titles of Deity, it is extremely helpful to consider the circumstances in which they were revealed unto man, as well as the ultimate use to which they are placed in Scripture.

For example, the name Yahweh was first proclaimed when Deity was about to move to redeem His people from Egypt, and it was revealed on that occasion, because it enunciated the great purpose that God had in mind in moving for the deliverance of Israel. Israel became the name-bearer among the nations:

“Yahweh shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of Yahweh thy God, and walk in His ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of Yahweh; and they shall be afraid of thee” (Deut. 28:9-10).

But Israel failed to appreciate the great compliment paid to them, and the privileged position in which they stood. Jeremiah declared that Yahweh had taken the nation unto Himself “for a people, a name, a praise and a glory; but they would not hear” (Jer. 13:11).

In consequence, God ultimately turned to the Gentiles, and so Peter, having been sent to Cornelius to baptise both him and his household, subsequently told the brethren of Jerusalem “how God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name” (Acts 15:14).

The name Yahweh, and its significance, is commonly known; but that is not the case with many other names of Deity. These include such lesser known names as Yahweh Shalom, Yahweh Nissi, the Mighty One of Jacob, Yahweh Tzekenu, and so forth. In studying these names of Deity, it is always valuable, as we have stated above, to seek out the first use of it, and consider the circumstances in which it was proclaimed.

That is the case, also with the Name that forms the title to this article: Yahweh Ropheka, or Yahweh the Physician, as Rotherham renders it.

Tried In The Wilderness

New experiences of God, on the part of His children, called for new names to express the truth concerning Him which they had learned. Among such names is that of Yahweh-Ropheka, rendered as "The Lord that healeth thee."

It was not long after Israel had left Egypt that the people were tested. They had witnessed the mighty hand of God in the plagues that had poured out upon the Egyptians; they had been delivered from the wrath of Pharaoh when the rod of Moses had been outstretched towards the sea, and a path of deliverance had been carved out for them; they had sung with joy the song of deliverance on the other side as they had witnessed judgment outstretched against the Egyptian army. Then followed a three-day march through the wilderness, during which "they found no water." By now their water bottles were empty, and they were thirsty and apprehensive. What joy, therefore, when an oasis of water was found; what disappointment when it was discovered that its water was bitter. The people turned on Moses with bitter lament, forgetting all that they had seen but a few days earlier.

This was but the first of many similar experiences in the wilderness, which God permitted in order that the people might be tested. "There," says the Word, "He proved them" (Exod. 15:25). They turned on Moses with the demand: "What shall we drink?"

Behind their murmuring and complaining there was fear: the dread of death through lack of water. This was natural in view of their thirst, but unreasonable since God was with them. If only they had stopped to think, they would have realised that God would never have delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians to permit them to perish in the wilderness! The very name by which they knew Him, testified that He had delivered them for a purpose, that He might be manifested in them.

It was unreasonable, but all so natural. How often do we repeat the unreasonable moan of Israel in affliction! How soon do we forget the One who has called us, and though we have experienced His goodness, tend to complain when expected benefits do not eventuate.

In Israel's case, Yahweh revealed how the problems of life might be met. Moses interceded on behalf of the people, and he was directed to a tree, which, when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet (Exod. 15:25).

What a lesson! The crucifixion of Christ is associated with a tree (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:39), and through this means, 'living waters' have been made available for whosoever will drink therefrom (John 4:14). Thus, at the very beginning of Israel's wanderings, the people were directed to the means whereby they would succeed, and which pointed forward to the redeemer who would come.

The Bitter Turned To Sweet

Through faith, the waters of Marah were made sweet. The experience of Israel typified the experience of all the servants of Yahweh. Life's journey is studded with bitterness that Yahweh alone is capable of making sweet; and that

through the tree, the crucifixion of self, dramatised by Christ on the stake.

We must all go through these times of testing. Search the record; see how frequently this was the case with those of old. Israel experienced bitterness in Egypt (Exod. 1:14); Naomi did also when she wandered from the house of bread (Ruth 1:20); Hannah was in bitterness through the persecution of Peninnah when she had no son (1 Sam. 1:6-10); Job's sufferings brought much bitterness (Job 7:11; 9:18; 10:1); the Psalmist found the mocking voice of folly bitter to his soul (Psa. 42:3); Mordecai experienced bitterness because of the anti-Semitism of the enemy (Est. 4:1).

Many and varied are the causes of bitterness; and frequently has the voice of complaint ascended into heaven because of such. Yet the Word instructs us that Yahweh tests His people by these means, "proves them," as to their loyalty towards Him (Exod. 15:25). It is designed to humble them, so that His strength may be perfected through weakness (2 Cor. 12:7). Christ, alone, truly conquered over the bitterness of life, and found, in so doing, that the waters turned sweet:

"Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

The Name Pronounced

Through the means of the tree, Yahweh healed the waters, and it demonstrated His ability to heal the people. In that moment of a new experience of God, they were challenged to trust and obey Him henceforth, without murmuring:

"There He made for them a statute and an ordinance... and said, 'If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Yahweh thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am Yahweh that healeth thee' (Exod. 15:25-26).

In the Hebrew, the words "the Lord that healeth thee," are but two: Yahweh Rophe'eka. They introduced Israel to the great Physician of spiritual and physical ills. As noted above, Rotherham translates them as *Yahweh the Physician*. Thus, in the dusty, arid wilderness, Israel received a wondrous promise that related to both physical health and spiritual well-being. This was further endorsed later on when, under the terms of the Mosaic covenant, the people were reminded that He, Yahweh, would prove to be their Physician, if they obeyed His laws, otherwise:

"He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee" (Deut. 28:27,60).

These diseases of Egypt included leprosy, the living death, the symbol of active sin working through the members of one's own body. Deliverance from this scourge of the East was promised Israel if the people "hearkened," "did," and "heeded" the voice of Yahweh.

It is of infinite comfort to the people of God to know that He who made us,

cares for us, and graciously meets the needs of our physical frame. The Lord taught:

“Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:32-33).

Was not that the case with the children of Israel as they struggled through the wilderness on to the Promised Land? Did not Moses remind them, when they ultimately stood before the Jordan: “Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years” (Deut. 8:4)? Was not all this an evidence that Yahweh cared for them in their daily needs; that He provided for their necessities of life, and was concerned for their ultimate wellbeing?

Is not His power as great today? Does He not care for our needs as well? Will He not provide for us if we remain faithful to Him? And whilst we will not be exempted from difficulties for He will prove us, should not the experiences of our own lives, and of those recorded in the Word, remind us that we have an “ever present help in time of need” to whom we can turn with every confidence?

If the Truth means anything, it means all of that.

The word *Rophe'eka* is from the Hebrew *rapha*, to heal, and is used frequently throughout Scripture in relation to Yahweh. It teaches that He is the great healer, both of physical and spiritual ills, and that we can turn to Him with every confidence. This does not mean that He will inevitably heal us whenever we call upon Him to do so, but it does remind us that He has the power to do so if He deems it meet for our good. It certainly means that in any circumstances of suffering or ill-health, we can turn to Him with every confidence that He will help us by strengthening us to endure, even if, in His wisdom, He deems it best that we learn to surmount the particular trial that faces us.

There is inexpressible comfort in this realisation, as I have found by some personal experiences, that I want to relate. But first, we must come to understand more thoroughly the significance of this divine name, and to that end we must seek the Word, to find out how it is used. By so doing, we will learn how that we might lean upon Yahweh in times of trial and find a comfort and a strength that is beyond human aid to provide.

Consider, therefore, the circumstances in which the name was first pronounced. After leaving Marah (*bitterness*), Israel moved to Elim (*powers*) where was ample water and plenteous growth, and where they were able to encamp by the waters. This oasis foreshadowed the Kingdom, and taught that it is only possible to attain it through “much tribulation” (Acts 14:22). There was no murmuring at Elim, but only rejoicing in the goodness of Yahweh Ropheka; the complaining came later! How like life! Let us fortify ourselves against such by considering what Yahweh Ropheka is prepared to do for us. We will discover that, by tracing through the Scriptures the effect of His healing and comforting powers.

Our Most Deadly Disease

The Scriptures constantly relate sin and disease to one another. In the beginning, man's disobedience brought him subject to such a state as to cause sin and death to be inevitable. Thus disease is often used as symbol for sin. The leper was put outside of the camp of Israel, not merely because of his complaint, but because of what it represented: active sin. On the other hand, the miracles of healing that Jesus performed, not only illustrated that he had the power to cure physical ills, but spiritual failings also.

The Pharisees failed to comprehend that fact. They were critical of the Lord claiming that he "blasphemed" when in performing a miracle he also pronounced the forgiveness of sins.

"Who can forgive sins but God alone?" they asked.

They failed to acknowledge that only God could perform a miracle, so that the very Power that Christ used for the latter, enabled him to pronounce the forgiveness of sins.

The Lord answered them:

"Why think ye evil in your hearts? For what is easier to say: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee'; or, 'Arise, and walk?' But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed, and go into your house" (Matt. 9:4-6).

The Lord's point was that as God was with him to perform miracles, He was also with him to forgive sins.

In making it possible for sins to be forgiven, the Lord helped humanity to be healed of the deadliest of all diseases: that of mortality. And in doing so, he manifested the attributes of his Father as Yahweh Ropheka.

Whilst the Scriptures make it clear that individual illnesses are not necessarily the direct result of individual sins, they frequently align sins and disease together. For example, in his wonderful chapter on the atonement (Ch. 53), Isaiah declared.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted."

In Matthew, however, this is cited in relation to the Lord's miracles of healing:

"With his word, he healed all that were sick that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17).

Disease and mortality are related to sin, in that they made their appearance consequent upon the first sin of Adam and Eve. Jesus thus bore the worst of our infirmities, and the deadliest of our diseases, even a nature prone to sin and mortality.

The Healing Touch Of Yahweh

Yahweh is presented as the great Healer in many passages of Scripture, which thus are able to comfort us in all experiences of sorrow, suffering and trial. They reveal that He takes heed of all that happens to His children, and feels for them

in their misery. More, He invites them to turn to Him for the strength and comfort that only He can provide.

Consider the following beautiful expressions:

*"Bless Yahweh, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits;
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."*

Significantly this Psalm (Psa. 103:2-4) links the forgiving of iniquity with the healing of disease. As sickness humbles us and destroys our confidence in flesh, so does sin. As we feel our helplessness in regard to the former, let us do so concerning the latter. As we acknowledge the ability of Yahweh Ropheka to restore health, let us seek the same means to strengthen us spiritually to overcome. We have inherited a mortal malady that assails us every day, and which will ultimately deposit us forever in the grave, unless we constantly seek the healing balm of Yahweh who will "redeem our lives from destruction, and crown us with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

A hospital bed can be a very lonely place, but the isolation can be instantly overcome by prayer. This bridges the illimitable distances that divide us from Yahweh, and brings Him, as it were, by our side. And He, in turn, has promised to "strengthen us upon the bed of languishing," and "ease all our bed in sickness" (Psa. 41:3).

He will do this, if we respond to the comfort He can give us (see 2 Cor. 1:4). What is that comfort? The realisation that He has the power to raise us from the bed of sickness, the wisdom and foreknowledge to know what is best for us, and the personal interest in our welfare to help us as He sees fit. That might require that we remain on that bed of isolation and ill-health, in which case, we must accept the decision in faith. There is great comfort in doing so, and giving our problem into the hands of Yahweh. There is great help in recalling to mind how finite, unsatisfactory, and limited is life at the moment; how boundless and wonderful is the future with which we are associated. As we lean upon God in bringing these things to mind, and the great privilege that has been given us in the Truth, we appreciate how rich He is in lovingkindness and tender mercy, and how mindful He is of the sufferings of His children. He has healed many in the past; He can do so today; but the impotent man had to wait thirty-eight years before he experienced the healing touch of Yahweh Ropheka manifested through the Lord Jesus (John 5:5). In spite of all the circumstances of life, we can subscribe fully to the Psalmist's words (Psa. 34:8-10).

*"O taste and see that Yahweh is good;
Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.
O fear Yahweh, ye His saints;
For there is no want to them that fear Him.
The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger;
But they that seek Yahweh shall not want for any good thing."*

In spite of all the suffering of Israel, and the fact that the wilderness was strewn with the graves of those who rejected His counsel, this was the experience of those who turned to Him. Isaiah declared:

"I will mention the lovingkindness of Yahweh, according to all that He hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie; so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63:7-9).

Yahweh Ropheka is not unmindful of our needs; nor indifferent to our sufferings. It may sometimes seem to us that He is, but that is only because our vision is blurred. As our loving heavenly Father, we can always turn to Him for help, knowing that as He can penetrate to our very heart, He will be more understanding than our associates; as a heavenly Physician we can seek his assistance realising His sympathetic interest in our case, but also accepting that He knows best.

As Healer, Yahweh is referred to in Psalm 147:2-4;

*"Yahweh doth build up Jerusalem;
He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.
He healeth the broken heart,
And bindeth up their wounds.
He telleth the number of the stars:
He calleth them all by their names."*

The building up of Jerusalem, the gathering together of the outcasts of Israel, is associated with the healing of the broken in heart, and the binding of their wounds. This, of course, will be the case when the Lord returns to the earth. But where is the guarantee of this? In the heavens, reasons the Psalmist. Yahweh's mighty power as exhibited in the heavenly bodies, demonstrates His ability to effectively assist us in our problems. The tremendous divine force that hold the stars in place, and permits them to plunge through space at tremendous speed and meticulous exactitude, will be extended to help us, healing and restoring us to inherit the Kingdom.

Under normal conditions, the overthrown city of Jerusalem was completely unable to help itself; the outcasts of Israel were at the mercy of their powerful, ruthless enemies; the broken in heart are completely bowed down by sorrow; but in the heavens above, in the shining forth of glory in the stars, is the token that He who "keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps," and has the power, ability and will to help those who turn to Him.

Thus in periods of physical and spiritual weakness, we can draw comfort and strength from the knowledge that He whom we worship has proclaimed as one of His names, that of Yahweh Ropheka. With David the beloved, we can recite:

*"He restoreth my soul,
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,
For His name's sake!" (Psa. 23).*

The Divine Physician

The word Ropheka is from *rapha*, to heal. It occurs in relation to Yahweh in such places as the following.

“He sent His word, and healed them” (Psa. 107:20).

I kill and I make alive; I wound, and I heal” (Deut. 32:39).

He will completely heal the faithful ultimately, and sometimes (as in the case of Hezekiah) will restore them to health even now, if it be His will. In His wisdom, however, He may not grant our petitions to that end now, and we must accept the decision in faith. Our prayers must never be in petulance proclaiming that God has the power to heal, and should invariably do so. Both Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), and Paul (2 Cor. 1:8-9), stared death in the face before relief came. In the case of Paul, it came that he might continue to serve the Gospel, so that he could truthfully say: “To live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). He wrote thus because his great desire was not continuance of existence in the present unsatisfactory circumstances, but future glory. He declared:

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

Upon those eternal things let our eyes constantly be centred, and then we will pray, not that we might be individually healed, but that this sorrowing, sinning world might be cured of its fatal malady in the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Acts of Healing

Yahweh has frequently manifested His ability to heal. In many cases the circumstances have been significant. In the case of Abimelech, “God healed him” in answer to Abraham’s prayer (Gen. 20:17), illustrating the words of James: “The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up” (James 5:15).

The case of Miriam, smitten with leprosy, was similar:

“Moses cried unto Yahweh, saying, Heal her now, O God (El, Power), I beseech thee” (Num. 12:13).

In her circumstances, however, the leprosy illustrated her state of sinfulness, and the Law had to be upheld before the healing power of Yahweh would be extended. Miriam was placed in an isolation ward for seven days, after which she was healed, and offering the appropriate sacrifices, took her place again in the midst of the people.

David experienced the healing balm of Yahweh:

“O Yahweh my God, I cried unto Thee,

And Thou hast healed me.

O Yahweh, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave;

Thou hast kept me alive,

That I should not go down to the pit” (Psa. 30:2-3).

Hezekiah likewise prayed unto Yahweh, and was healed (2 Kings 20:8). He was told:

"I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of Yahweh."

Following this act of Divine mercy, Hezekiah composed the wonderful Psalm of thanksgiving to Yahweh Ropheka recorded in Isaiah 38:10-20, and which is prefaced by the superscription:

"The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness" (v. 9).

Jeremiah likewise ascribed praise to Yahweh Ropheka:

"Heal me, O Yahweh, and I shall be saved: for Thou art my praise" (Jer. 17:14).

These men, of course saw the acts of healing they experienced, as important to the development of the Divine purpose. Because of that they prayed so earnestly. They did not do so merely to use the health granted, or extension of life given, in order to gratify the flesh, but that they might complete a divine work set them to do.

We need to remember that, in our requests for help.

Spiritual Quackery

It is possible to seek help from sources whence it will never come. Israel did so. They neglected Yahweh in seeking a cure for their national ills. It hurt Jeremiah to see this, filling him with astonishment:

"For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? (there was Yahweh Ropheka!) why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

The answer was because she had ignored the ability of Yahweh Ropheka to heal. Her disease, of course, was spiritual, and could only be cured by seeking the help of God.

This was illustrated by the physical condition of king Asa. We read:

"And Asa was diseased in his feet until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to Yahweh, but to the physicians, and Asa died..." (2 Chron. 16:12).

Asa's name means "physician," and he seems to have been one who delighted in the science of healing, rather than the power of Yahweh Ropheka. Physicians can be helpful as aids to Yahweh, but must not supplant Him. Paul seems to have gained help from the ministrations of "Luke the beloved physician," and in these days of increased knowledge, we can do so also in the science of diet or medicine. It can provide the means which Yahweh will bless in granting health that we might serve Him better.

But apart from that, it only extends a life that is a pilgrimage to the grave. In other words, the healing of Yahweh relates to the curing of mortality, and not merely temporary physical sickness. Paul was afflicted with a "thorn in the flesh," and three times besought that it might be removed. But it was explained

to him that Divine grace was all sufficient for him to perform the work God gave him to do, and that Divine strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10). That is true. The fact that Paul steadily pursued his course in spite of his affliction, demonstrated that he was motivated by a strength greater than the flesh, and thus witnessed to the Truth. Let us do likewise, maintaining our interest and work in the Truth despite physical weakness, and it will demonstrate that we, too, are moved by an influence that is greater than the flesh, and added force will be given to our testimony.

Pleasing God

LOGOS, September, 1977

“Without faith it is impossible to please God,” wrote Paul (Heb. 11:6). How important it is, therefore, that we develop faith! And how best is it done?

To answer the question we must understand what faith is. The Apostle defines it as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Without expounding these terms specifically, we note that they define faith as a conviction of the reality of that which is promised, but which is not yet revealed. It manifests confidence in the future, and therefore sustains the man of faith during times of difficulty leading to that end.

The word “faith” is from the Greek *pistis*. From this word is derived *pisteuo*, frequently rendered “belief” and “believed” in the New Testament. These experiences are developed from the verb *peitho* which, according to Strong, signifies to *convince* by argument true or false. This suggests two things:

- 1) We can have faith in something that is false;
- 2) As faith is closely related to belief, a sound understanding is necessary for true faith.

Granted a true faith, and this must stem from a correct understanding of the Word, how do we go about pleasing God? Men of God will walk by faith, whereas men of the world will by sight. The former will invest in the future by his adherence to the principles of God today; the latter wants an immediate return from what he puts into life. Walking by faith implies an implicit confidence in the utterances of the Bible, despite appearances which sometimes seem to conflict with those utterances. Yet faith is not mere credulity, but a conviction founded on evidence. A credulous man is a simpleton, and God does not favour such. God would have our minds well-furnished with reasons for the trust we have in Him. God has provided the material for forming these reasons. It is found within the covers of the Bible, and is illustrated by events taking place in the modern world about us. The moral, social and political conditions of life which are so familiar to us, are predicted in the Scriptures, and our recognition of this fact can strengthen faith. Above all else we have the miracle of Israel. The most superficial comprehension of Bible prophecy recognises that in this we have a most compelling latter-day witness. No one can dispute the predictions of the Word in relation to Israel; no one can dispute the facts of their partial fulfilment today. In these things we see not merely a vindication of prophecy, but a means of strengthening our individual faith: our conviction of the certainty

of God's promises, and the absolute truth of His word.

But that conviction will only come from our knowledge of these prophecies, our comprehension of the Word. Paul taught that "faith cometh through hearing the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It is a matter of development. Let us not be discouraged by our doubts, or at the small modicum of faith we may possess. Doubts will be destroyed, and faith will be strengthened if we care to use the means that God has given us to that end (John 17:17). But the process is a slow one. Confidence in Yahweh is created in the same way as confidence is created in one another. If by experience we know a man can be relied upon, we will trust him. Our confidence in him will be increased as we come to know him more intimately. So with God and the Bible. We need to "know God" in order to manifest that reliance which pleases Him (John 17:3): we need to "search the Scriptures" if we would graduate in those things that will lead to eternal life. This knowledge can only develop through familiarity with records of the Bible. In this Book, Yahweh reveals Himself to us. We learn of His character, of His ways, of His purpose. We learn to trust Him more as we consider His actions in the past, and find His prophecies vindicated in the present.

To grow in faith, therefore, needs effort on our part. The Israelites were styled "children in whom is no faith." Why? Because, as Isaiah declared: they were "children that will not hear the law of Yahweh" (Isa. 30:9). Therefore they were people of "unbelief," or *no faith* as the term is better rendered. They had "belief," but no conviction therein; they "worshipped" God but were not motivated by complete trust in Him. As Isaiah says elsewhere, they were given a Book, a Bible, but they refused to study it:

"The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned" (Isa. 29:11-12).

Those who had the ability to read and understand the book found excuse for avoiding doing so on the grounds that it was sealed; those who lacked ability used that as their excuse not to do so.

The result was lack of faith. This displeased Yahweh and it resulted in His subsequent rejection of the nation.

What of ourselves? We have the means of studying that Book, and learning of its secrets. The writings of Brother Thomas have assisted to unseal the more difficult portions of it, and ample aids are available for those lacking ability to read it with understanding.

Indeed, it is essential for us to do so if we would develop in faith and so please God. And if we are not prepared to spend time in developing faith, we shall soon succumb to the pressures of the day. Our eternal salvation, therefore, depends upon what we do with the Book given into our hands, in this our day of opportunity. This is both a personal and a communal responsibility. Let us give ourselves to the personal study of the Word; to verse by verse marking of our

Bibles; to daily contact with the mind of Yahweh as revealed therein. And let Ecclesias carefully review their study classes. Are they providing for the spiritual needs of the brethren and sisters? Are the young in understanding being helped as well as those of more advanced knowledge? Is attention given to the first principles as well as to the prophecies. Is the personal, practical application of doctrine as a way of life drawn to the attention of members, as well as the exposition of words, sentences and chapters? The progress or otherwise of Ecclesial study classes should be under the review of Arranging Brethren constantly to ensure that sound, nourishing food is being provided for all in these difficult times. And individual members should respond by their enthusiastic interest in furthering such study. "Talk ye of all His wondrous works," "Remember His marvellous works" are among the exhortations of the Psalmist. Faith will grow where these exhortations are heeded, but it will wither where they are disregarded.

Let Ecclesias closely consider the study classes associated with the meeting, in order that they may become as oases in the wilderness of life, helping to strengthen the faith of members in preparation for the return of the Lord, and the consummation of all our hopes.

Egyptian Slavery

LOGOS, March, 1979

The Egyptian overlords saw to it that their Israelitish slaves enjoyed the good things of life. In fact, as far as material advantage was concerned, the Israelites were better off in Egypt than they were in the wilderness. Whilst they groaned under the work-load which was imposed on them, freedom seemed a desirable attainment; but once they found themselves suffering the privations of their wilderness wanderings, they hankered after the good things of Egypt. It was not long before they were pleading for flesh, and comparing their present lot with their Egyptian experiences: "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Num. 11:4-6).

So dazzled were they by the prospect of eating an onion, that they gave away a kingdom. Their murmurings erupted in the unfaithful report of the spies sent out to view the land. They complained that the privations, the difficulties, were too much.

As we contemplate these incidents in Israel's history, we are doubtless moved to pass unqualified condemnation on these faithless men, and to express astonishment that they could so have acted. But do we realise the possibility of our exhibiting the same characteristics? Let us examine ourselves as to whether we are or are not like the faithless wilderness wanderers. Do we lust after the things of Egypt? Do we become involved too closely in the things of this world?

Consider the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as he warned of the "times of Noah." He listed certain things: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage..." (Luke 17:27). Were not these things legitimate in themselves? Undoubtedly they were. Then why did the Lord advance them particularly as characterising the days of Noah? Why did he not advance the violence of the world, the corruption of its leaders, the wickedness of the people, as matters against which we should be on our guard?

Because, like the faithless children of Israel in the wilderness, the saints of Noah's day had allowed legitimate things to get out of perspective. Their whole lives were bounded by what they ate and drank and their domestic affairs. Gradually, the things of the truth became of secondary concern. It was an age that promised great advancement, and men were led astray by that, doubtless justifying their action by claiming that they could use the material means that

their advancement provided to further the things of God.

And sometimes that does result; but in most cases it does not.

This modern age is likewise an age of great material opportunity for workers who like to set their ambitions high. And because it is an age of specialists, and intelligent, conscientious workers are limited, the rewards offered are great. But extreme care needs to be taken. The world gives nothing away. The reward for high wages is often self-surrender to the will of the employer. In many cases, companies require, or encourage, their employees to find their relaxation as well as their hours of activity within the circle of the company employing them. They have their social clubs, their sports activities, their forms of relaxation; and they expect their officers to give their time to the furtherance of these activities as well as to the work of the company. There are their programs of social entertainment, and responsible executives are drawn more and more into this aspect of modern business life. And these are very attractive to the flesh. We recall on one occasion, when we were conducting a tour through Lebanon, that the Director of the company with whom we did business, advised us that he had arranged for us to be honoured at a special luncheon convened for high officials of the Travel industry and Airways in Beirut. He could not understand why we refused the invitation. We told him that we were not really interested in such a dinner, and, in any case, we had arranged a meeting around the Word with the other members of the group that evening. Poor man — he did not understand; and had gone to great trouble to obtain this “honour” for us.

More than ever before there is a need for separation from such things. And the need for a clear recognition that for every advancement the world offers, it requires payment in kind. It is a form of Egyptian slavery. The world tries to dominate its employees in every way. It is becoming more and more frequent for brethren in responsible ecclesial positions, to be uprooted and sent to different parts in order to further business; and, of course, lucrative inducements are offered for this.

Let brethren beware. Let them exercise great care in that which they permit. Let them consider as to whether the Truth is going to be advanced by their being uprooted and transferred to distant parts. Let them recognise that the Truth is their first concern, and that everything else is subservient to it. And if we “lose” materially by it, let us remember that the Lord may repay more than ever we sacrifice. Christ declared: “Take no (anxious) thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink: or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:31-33).

That is the challenge of the days in which we live. Therefore, when added responsibilities are offered to us by the world, or long hours of overtime are dangled attractively before us; or wives are induced to leave their children to fend for themselves whilst they take a job — ask whether the added drain on time is worth the money offered; or whether the Truth will be advanced by our

removal into distant parts, or whether we can spiritually afford a job of responsibility that takes us constantly away from the influence of the Truth; or the neglect of home or children that must come from overtired minds. Develop the strength of purpose to set aside the seductive appeal that Egypt offers us: the onions, garlic, fish and melons. Let us not give up our heritage (like Esau) for a mess of pottage; or throw away a kingdom (like the Israelies) for something that perishes with the using.

In some industries today, marriages themselves are under jeopardy because of some dubious ways employees are asked to entertain their customers. The flesh becomes the basis of appeal, and the result for the individual is tragedy. Against such let us be on our guard. Like Israel we may be giving up the Kingdom for an onion!

We have never found that we suffer materially by sacrificing for Christ. We have appreciated, and learned to listen with greater respect to the exhortations of a brother of our acquaintance who, in his daily work, refused lucrative advancement because he knew it would interfere with his responsible and important Ecclesial activities. For such, we believe, there is treasure laid up in heaven; and our advice to our readers in that regard, is "go thou and do likewise."

Purchasing Time

LOGOS, November, 1979

In Ephesians 5, Paul sets forth a series of moral counsels and warnings, sharply contrasting the corruption of society with the requirements of the life in Christ. It is difficult to exaggerate the urgency and solemnity of his words. He warns that it is only as we build into our lives principles of righteousness such as he lists, that we can look with confidence to the future, and to the coming of Christ.

He concludes this section of the epistle with the exhortation: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." His words are most timely, his statement most intriguing. He introduces a theme upon which I have had cause to ponder as the years roll by. The word "redeeming" is the translation of a Greek expression signifying "to buy up for yourself". Hence the apostle likens "time" to a commodity on offer for sale, which the wise trader, recognising its value, and the good use to which he can put it, does not squander or waste, but proceeds to buy up for himself.

Paul argues the wisdom of so doing, on the ground that "the days are evil". How evil and hurtful in influence they are, he has previously indicated. The things against which he warns are those common to the modern world, and for which there is no enduring future. To give time to these "evil things" is for saints to waste it, to empty it of its value, to turn from the opportunities it presents. And the danger was, and still is, that those to whom he then wrote, or we who read his words today, may waste this valuable commodity "time" by using it up by indulging in the very evils to which he refers.

What Is Time?

There are various words translated "time" in the Bible. The one used by Paul in Ephesians 5:16 is "kairos," and denotes a fixed duration of time, and therefore, a time of limited "opportunity". Indeed, the same word is rendered "opportunity" in Galatians 6:10. Accordingly, Paul's statement can signify, "Buy up opportunity!" But what opportunity is presented to us that we may purchase? The opportunity to use profitably the limited time at our disposal.

To buy anything requires payment: the giving up of something in exchange. If we buy up time in the way suggested by Paul, we have to exchange the profitless way of the world to one of profitable activity. We give up an aimless wasting of time, a futureless drifting of one day after another, each of which

lacks objectivity and ambition, to use the time at our disposal in purposeful activity that can provide an investment for the age to come. Let us use time in that way, and we buy it up and make it profitable.

There is a due measure of time allocated to each of us. Solomon declared that there is “a time to be born, and a time to die” (Ecc. 3:2). Between the point of beginning and that of termination, time presents opportunity for those who are wise enough to buy it up for themselves.

It is the most precious of all commodities. We can use it or squander it; turn it to profit or waste it. None of us have enough of it to satisfy us. The wealthiest man, as life nears its end, would exchange all his riches for an extension of time. But time waits for no man, and exacts its toll. We must use it as it comes to hand: now! this minute! Time does not “keep”! Unlike frozen fish you cannot put it in a deep freeze and bring it out tomorrow. It has to be used fresh, immediately. Time is the unique and universal element available to each individual in exactly the same amount. Each day of life brings a full bank account of twenty-four hours: and the quality of our life for as long as it lasts depends directly on how we use the minutes that make up the hours as they inexorably tick away. The king upon his throne, the prisoner in his cell, cannot alter this law of God. The wealthy cannot purchase or increase time; the poor cannot sell it. It is given to be used. We cannot spread it out when things are pleasant, or reduce its duration when they are evil. Inexorably, with measured note, time ticks away, and cannot be hurried up nor slowed down.

Time has no substitute. We cannot replace it with something else. Almost every other commodity can be substituted. For example we can substitute iron or steel, use plastic instead of wood, make synthetics look like leather. But what can you offer as a substitute for time? Absolutely nothing! Unlike money, time cannot be borrowed; it cannot be increased by overtime, or deposited in a safe to be drawn out later. We can squander money, and then make strenuous, and often successful, efforts to recoup it; or we can economise, and so restore our dwindling financial resources.

But not so time. Once it has passed away, it has gone from our grasp for ever.

Some minerals may be in short supply, but usually further deposits may be obtained by exploration and discovery. Not so time: it is irreplaceable.

Making Use of Time

We need to recognise time as the most valuable of all our possessions, and so use it wisely. Paul urges us to buy up the opportunities it presents. The use we make of time can bring happiness or regret; it can lay a foundation for an inheritance in the future when there shall be “time no longer”, and when its limitations shall be swallowed up in eternity.

Meanwhile, we still have time. How shall we use it? There are expensive management courses for businessmen, outlining the more effective use of time; and while these may be of temporary value within their sphere, they have no lasting benefits to the saint in Christ.

Modern labour-saving devices, and a shorter working week, have reduced the allocation of time for one's daily vocation, so that workers might have more leisure. Then, because man wants pleasure as well as leisure, he works more over-time to earn more money to pack pleasure into his leisure; then seeks a shorter working week in order to obtain the desired leisure — and so creates a vicious circle of discontent and unhappiness.

Meanwhile inflation robs him of the very rewards he seeks. Haggai warned his contemporaries, that whilst they ignored the work of God to work for self they benefited not. They filled their time with hard labour to earn wages "to put in a bag with holes". They wasted time; squandered the most valuable commodity they had in order to "labour for that which satisfieth not" (Isa. 55:2).

How easy it is to waste time: to fill it with profitless occupation; to misuse it in personal indulgence, not recognising that in so doing we are killing time, and not buying it up. Paul urges us to look into this fact. To seek for the right management of time so as to use it and not abuse it. When he exhorts us to "buy up time", he urges that every moment has its own duty assigned to it. But doing the duty in the moment, we purchase opportunity, turning it into gain. Time becomes a friend and not a tyrant. We keep abreast of it, pushing aside the temptation to put off until tomorrow what we can do today. To do otherwise is to fall behind in our work, to contract a "debt" of time. Instead of controlling time by methodically using it, we permit it to dominate and frustrate us. So it is that every moment comes with golden opportunity; and Paul urges us to make our day rich with work well done. This requires good planning, a good selection of labour, and a determination to accomplish a certain amount of specific work each day. The bad habit of putting off what is best done immediately will be set aside, for such indulgence only kills time! Then the wrecks of wasted opportunities build up around us; frustration increases; and we irritably find a day passes with nothing profitable accomplished.

The solution is in our hands. It is to make every moment full with activity and effort pleasing to God. By so doing we buy up time, make it our own, extract the greatest good, and store up treasure for the future. When the Lord returns, we will have a bank balance of time profitably used in his service, in a life of activity to his glory. And as his coming is near, so time is limited. Hence there is greater urgency in the exhortation of the Apostle: "Redeem the time because the days are evil."

One final point. To "buy up time" requires determined, well-planned individual action. We must "do" something about it, and not merely theorise concerning it. Time each day should be set aside for the study of the Word, the proclamation of the Truth, the development of habits of industry in the things of God, the building into our lives of divine principles. To "buy time" we must sacrifice selfish indolence, but the rewards are rich: both now and hereafter. Hence there is wisdom in the poet's words:

*If you can fill the unforgiving minute,
With sixty seconds worth of distance run;
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,
And — which is more — you'll be a man my son!*

What Kind of Warrior Are You?

LOGOS, December, 1979

Soldiers are of three kinds: conscripts, mercenaries, or volunteers.

If the former, they have been compelled by circumstances to give themselves for a cause they may or may not, approve; and for which, in any case, they may find little pleasure.

If mercenaries, they are professional killers, doing it for profit, with no real loyalty for the country or cause for which they fight, but giving their skill in battle to the highest bidder; ready to change sides if the pay of their employer dries up.

A volunteer is one who serves as a soldier because of his love for the cause he has espoused. His identification with it, and dedication to it, is absolute. He is prepared to sacrifice personal convenience, wellbeing, or life itself in order that it might succeed.

The best volunteers are those who clearly recognise the issues before them. They know for what they are fighting; their objectives before them are clear. They believe in the cause they have espoused to the extent that they are prepared to give up their lives for it if necessary.

Soldiers of Christ are not conscripts nor mercenaries. They have joined the ranks voluntarily. The divine appeal has touched their hearts, and they have responded cheerfully. Having done so they now must recognise the necessities of a good warrior. They must train; they must learn to endure hardness; they need to develop skill in battle.

First, they must become familiar with "the weapons of their warfare". These, declared Paul, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4). John adds his comment: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). It was "by faith" that the walls of Jericho fell down (Heb. 11:30).

That is the challenge that faces us in the battle of life. A display of normal cunning it to be avoided; mere expediency is not sufficient; one must avoid "doing evil that good may come." Sometimes the use of fleshly methods may appear to offer the prospects of greater success, but we will fail if we succumb to the temptation. Paul wrote that "the weapons" we use become "mighty through God". The word he used in the verse before us is repeated in Romans

6:13, and there rendered as “instruments”. He urged that we “yield our members as instruments (or weapons) of righteousness unto God”. Our “members” are the attributes that are ours by nature: eyes, ears, hands, legs, bodily strength, and above all else, the mind. It is possible, he warned, that we use these normal attributes as weapons in the service of King Sin (the flesh); whereas the call of Christ requires that we use them as weapons in the fight of faith.

Self-Examination Necessary

How do we do that? First, through the mind. We are to fill it with the spirit-word, and permit it to motivate the members of our body. By that means we will succeed in “pulling down strong holds”, declared Paul. His words illustrate the power of the Truth to overcome evil. What was necessary to destroy “strong holds” in normal battle? To demolish the strong fortified walls of a fortress, the Roman army brought to bear its most sophisticated weapons of war: its strong battering rams, its specially constructed catapults capable of throwing projectiles large enough to weaken thick walls, its cunningly constructed siege machines and scaling ladders, designed to protect the attacker whilst defeating the defender.

These were “carnal weapons” that might smash down a wall, and take a city, but could not change men’s minds, nor transform their lives. There are things harder to breach than the strong walls of a fortress. “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Prov. 18:19). When a person has “made up his mind” in accordance with fleshly reasoning, it is often more difficult to turn him from his course than to win a battle. Having barricaded himself behind the walls of his own fleshly reasoning, contention only serves to establish him more firmly in his conceit: his opinions become like the bars of a castle.

But if we “do not war after the flesh” but after the spirit, by allowing the spirit-word to dominate our thinking, we will “cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God” (1 Cor. 10:3-5), and having thus overthrown the walls of defence behind which we previously sheltered, great victories will be won in our lives over self.

And that is the enemy to be attacked first: not our brother, even though he may need some advice, help or warning. A good volunteer in Christ’s service, therefore, will carefully review his own opinions and decisions to ascertain as to whether they really conform to “the knowledge of God”. He will rid his mind of bias, of personal likes and dislikes, and in any given situation, he will ask the question posed by the prophet: “What doth Yahweh require of me?” (Micah 6:6-8). Then he will seek the Word, and fulfil its requirements, even though what it advocates may appear foolish or fatal to fleshly reasoning.

The volunteer will carefully examine the armour issued him, and will see that it properly fits him. In that regard, he will be like David about to step out to do battle with Goliath, and who rejected Saul’s armour because it was not

appropriate. Our armour is described in Ephesians 6:10-18. In the light of what is there set forth, we may well ask some pertinent questions, whilst avoiding the temptation to delude ourselves with the answers we give: Am I well-grounded in the Truth, and faithful to its obligations? Am I a zealous, or disinterested preacher of the gospel? Is my faith in God strong? Do I clearly understand for what I am fighting? Is my hope in the future bright? Am I skilful in my handling of the sword of the spirit, the Word of God? Am I prayerful and watchful? Finally, do I scrupulously carry out the commandments issued to me by my commanding officer?

Practical Issues

A soldier is a subordinate: not a commander. Our Commander is Christ (Isa. 55:4); and our service calls upon us to "please him" by following his instructions (2 Tim. 2:4). Those instructions are not always easy. Moreover, human nature tends to delude itself; it is, according to the Bible, a deceiver, and we are inclined to rationalise ourselves out of what is clearly taught in Scripture, and amend the instructions of the Word to conform with fleshly philosophising. The temptation to blunt the point of Scripture in relation to our own conduct is strong. It is common in the world about us. We are bombarded constantly by advice that frequently runs counter to its instructions. Consider the disciplinary measures recommended by Scripture in regard to child-care. It is contrary to the self-expression advocated by modern systems. Which one will we follow? As soldiers of Christ, shall we prefer the counsel of the enemy?

Consider another topic of widespread discussion and contrary advice: marital relations. The Scriptures teach that Yahweh "hateth putting away." What is our attitude towards this common failing of today? The Scriptures clearly designate the relationships of husband and wife. The sister is to submit unto her husband as "unto the Lord." (Eph. 5:22), recognising that in so doing she renders service unto Christ, the Commander-in-chief. The husband is to "love his wife as Christ also loved the Ecclesia, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25), hence manifesting the greatest tact, sympathy, consideration and self-sacrifice to assist her.

These are clear, explicit instructions of Scripture; yet in our small community, problems in this sphere of life's activity are on the increase. Why? Because those instructions are carried out? No! Because they are ignored!

Let nobody imagine that the instructions are easy to carry out. They are not. In some circumstances, they are most difficult. But Christ has shown the way, and demonstrated what should be done. His "wife" has not always been easy to get on with! In fact, at times, she proves most incompatible. But as, under those conditions, the principles of the atonement were worked out in his life, so they should be also in the domestic circumstances of every home where the Truth has found lodgment. We may be tested by conditions in that sphere: the answer is in Scripture. We may experience little of real comfort and joy in our present state: but our heritage is in the future. Our partner may not co-operate as he or she should do: but let us do our part as soldiers in Christ's service, and the

ultimate reward will be great. And usually, if the wife is prepared to “submit”, the love of the husband towards her will grow; and if he, in adverse conditions, maintains that sacrificial love (for the word is “agape” and should not be confused with what the world calls “love”), the wife will generally respond.

But such advice is not popular. Those troubled with such problems want a ready-made answer here and now. They want “their own way” and refuse to “give in”. Or they want to live in a “fairy-land” where with the wave of a magic wand, and with no effort on the part of those involved, everything suddenly becomes right. They are influenced, often, by their worldly environment. They fail to use faith to bring down the stronghold of evil, and instead listen to such defiant advice as: “I would not put up with that, you know!” They learn of marriages breaking up, and of people discovering happiness or pleasure in new associations which, though contrary to Scripture, are justified because agreeable to flesh. They claim that they can render better service to Christ by throwing off that which hinders, and seeking a greater freedom. They mistake liberty for licence. What pleases Christ better? Is it not adherence to his instructions? Can we really serve him better by ignoring them? Is not self-sacrifice the way to true happiness now, as well as of greater assurance for the future? The Truth must find its expression in the normal circumstances of life: particularly in our homes. It is there that its principles are worked out in a practical manner, and not at the meetings. As Paul clearly shows, the Truth can elevate the common duties of life: that of wives towards husbands; husbands towards wives; children towards parents; parents towards children; servants towards employers; employers towards servants; into a service to Christ (see Eph. 5:22,25; 6:1,4-9). By that means, the daily, humdrum affairs of life, become as service to the king. “Whatever we do, let us do it heartily as unto Christ, and not unto men”. When that becomes the call of life, we will find pleasure in work that normally is treated as drudgery; we will realise that Christ takes heed and finds pleasure in the normal duties of the work-a-day world in which we find ourselves. And in the normal conditions of life we will be disciplined into “enduring a hardness” that will qualify us as being “good soldiers of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). The way is not easy, but the reward is real, and the joy great, if we “endure unto the end”. And that end, the signs indicate, is near at hand.

On Feet Washing

LOGOS, January, 1980

“I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). So remarked the Lord to his Apostles. What had he done, that he desired them to so diligently observe and do? He had washed their feet, and in so doing, declared: “Ye also ought to wash one another’s feet”. The apostasy has travestied these words by an ostentatious display of literal washing of feet. But Christ’s lesson, that of service done in humility, is too plain to be misunderstood. Because travelling in those days was done mainly on foot, and the feet became dusty in consequence, an honoured guest would have his feet washed on arrival at the home of his host. It was a menial task, performed by the humblest of servants. Christ’s actions showed, that though he was Lord and Master, he was prepared to humble himself in such a fashion.

They had been arguing among themselves as to who was to be acknowledged greatest and chief, and his comment was: “He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Luke 22:26). In other words, a truly great man will be prepared to humble himself to serve others. Let that simple lesson be borne in mind, and applied in action, and a lot of tension will be taken from Ecclesial life.

No service of humility is to be despised. Christ set a challenge: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). We serve Christ by serving his brethren. To what tremendous heights does that elevate a labour of love! If Christ were personally in attendance at our Ecclesial meeting, who would not want to meet and serve him? But, replies Christ, I am in attendance — in my brethren and sisters!

And consider his service for such. “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). In doing so he washed our feet. For the washing of feet had a spiritual significance when performed by Christ, and was not intended by him as a mere social convenience.

That is shown by the Lord’s comment to Peter. He told that Apostle: “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet...” The word “washed” in this place is different from that used in other places in this chapter. Here it is “louo”, and signifies a complete ablution. Whereas the word “wash” is from the Greek “nipto”, and denotes the washing of but a part of the body. Obviously the Lord used the word “louo” in the sense of baptism, and taught the Apostles that there is no need of a re-baptism, when once a person has submitted to such in truth, but there is a need to constantly wash parts of the body, and particularly the feet.

Hence the answer of the Lord to Peter has a double meaning. It is both literal and figurative. Just as one who, having bathed in the morning considers himself clean and does not repeat this total ablution at meal-time, but is contented with washing his feet on entering, to remove such accidental defilement as he may have contracted by the way; so he who, by sincerely attaching himself to Christ, has found pardon for his sins, needs nothing else than a daily and continual purification from the moral defilement of which he becomes conscious during the course of His life.

But what is even more significant about the action and the words of the Lord is the statement that what he had done for them, they should do for each other. Not literally to wash the feet of each other (though humble service of a practical nature has an application here), but to assist each other, in humility and thoughtfulness, to walk with cleansed steps towards the Kingdom of God.

Paul illustrates what is required:

"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. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me" (Rom. 15:1-3).

Here is an appeal for disciples to humble themselves in order to figuratively "wash the feet" of their brethren. Paul gave a personal demonstration of what is needed. The "weak" were claiming that certain restrictions should be imposed upon the brotherhood, particularly in regard to eating and drinking. Paul could not endorse their scruples as a matter of doctrine, but he was prepared to curtail his own lawful liberty in such matters that his brethren might be won over to the Truth. He showed the greatest consideration and tact for others to that end, striving to understand their point of view, and with kindness educating them in the truth.

Figuratively, he humbled himself to "wash their feet".

To the Galatians he wrote:

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1-2).

Notice what he requires: (1) Develop the spirit of meekness; (2) Consider your own faults; (3) Help another in his fault; (4) So fulfil the law of Christ. Consideration, thoughtfulness, meekness, tact should be brought to bear in such circumstances, with the realisation that ultimately, at the Judgment Seat, "every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5).

It is interesting, and significant, that though the word "burden" is used twice in this Scripture, the Greek words used in each case are different. The former is the word "baros" and implies a heavy weight that can be lifted by the combined help of others; but in v.5, the word is "phortion", and denotes a load that an individual must carry on his own account. The time will come, reasoned Paul, that every person must carry his own burden to the Judgment Seat; but in the meantime, by the combined help of others, a burden may be lifted from one

“overtaken in a fault”. We may find our “burden” lightened at the Judgment Seat if, meanwhile, we have lightened the burdens of others: “Forgive us our trespasses as we...” This is a duty devolving upon every member of the Ecclesia, and not upon its executive only. Members have a responsibility to each other, to help one another in their walk to the Kingdom. Humility is required, recognising that we all sin. If Christ, the sinless one, was prepared to kneel before his Apostles to cleanse their feet, to what extent should we be prepared to humble ourselves to help another.

Such humility is not always revealed. A brother might have a legitimate complaint against the members of his Ecclesia, and when his complaint is not heeded, he may threaten to leave, and even carry out his threat by transferring to another Ecclesia, there to indict the Ecclesia he left. Is that endeavouring to wash the feet of others? What happens to those in the meeting he left who may have supported him in his contention? Are they not being left to languish? Or to be influenced by those who have been “overtaken in a fault?” Is there not a duty on our part to seek to “strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die”? Did not the “good shepherd” remain to protect the sheep? Is it not the healthy, active salmon that fights against the current of a river; whilst an ailing or a dead fish is swept by the current into the mighty deep there to sink to a watery grave? The example of individuals within an ailing ecclesia can be very strong in inducing others to turn and fight the current of opinion that would sweep them away. The most powerful exhorters that I have met in my experience in the truth have not necessarily been those who have stood upon a platform and proclaimed what should be done, but humble men and women who in their weakness have quietly set about “doing good”. They have exercised patience and produced results in so doing.

We are instructed to “have peace with one another”. Whilst this does not permit us to condone evil or close our eyes to doctrinal error, it does illustrate an attitude that can be manifested Ecclesially or towards individuals. What motivates our action in times of Ecclesial trouble? Consider the following precepts, and allow them to dominate our thinking: “Seek peace” (Psa. 34:14; 1 Pet. 3:11); “Live in peace” (2 Cor. 13:11); “Have peace with one another” (Mark 9:50; 1 Thess. 5:13); “Follow peace with all men” (Heb. 12:14; 2 Tim. 2:22). If we are right-minded we shall not harbour a bitter, contentious, quarrelsome attitude towards our brethren. We shall seek rather “to wash their feet”. And whilst we are to “contend earnestly” when the need arises, we must learn to differentiate between when it is necessary, and when it should be avoided. We will not fight over trifles. Otherwise we might be “consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:15). The New Man does not develop in the midst of rows and wrangles. It is in quiet, calm, and peace that the Truth prospers best, and the New Man develops. Faults and failings we shall ever have with us. In this present evil world, whilst standards are being lowered in every direction, and within the Ecclesias there are those tinctured by this worldliness, the challenge is greater than ever before. But it can be met in faith and courage, with due

consideration of the means suggested by the Apostle, and the example manifested by the Lord: in meekness, in consideration, and in humility seek to lead others to a better concept of what is required in Christ. It is easy to condemn; it needs patience, skill, tact and faith to convert. We are called not to condemn but to convert, and in doing that we shall have "washed the feet of saints". And by that means, Ecclesias will be strengthened, and will develop a warmth of fellowship, and manifest a higher code of standard than will be the case in the midst of controversy and debate, thus helping its members towards the Kingdom of God. Let us labour that Ecclesias may develop in strength so that there may be developed "a people prepared for the Lord at his coming".

Campaigners Or Complainers

LOGOS, July, 1981

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings..” (Phil. 2:14).

There is nothing quite so contagious as either campaigning or complaining. When the work of an ecclesia is entered into enthusiastically the keenness manifested is transmitted to others; but the same is true when it is done slovenly or apathetically. Paul’s exhortation reveals that murmurings and disputings can hinder or defeat the very work of God. He sandwiches the comment quoted above between two statements: “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure”; and, “That (to the end) ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

Therefore, we need to avoid “murmurings and disputings”, for they can defeat the very work of God in us. Instead we need to give ourselves to the labour of the Truth with enthusiasm, performing it to the best of our ability, and recognising the high honour paid us in being called to His Majesty’s Service. This is a service that the lowliest among us can render, needing only a minimum of ability. But, unfortunately, the prevalence of apathy instead of enthusiasm is among the greatest of problems plaguing Ecclesias today. This, perhaps, is due to the discontent rampant in the world rubbing off on to Ecclesial members. If so, we need to challenge that influence, for it can destroy the work of God in us.

The word “murmurings” is from a Greek root signifying “to mutter, murmur, grumble, say anything in a low tone”. It denotes those undercover complaints that can destroy confidence in another, and because they are not open so as to be answered or refuted, act as leaven does in dough: secretly, silently but effectively. The very sound of the Greek word when pronounced (“gonguzo”) reproduces the significance of the word. It sounds like a murmur!

We may look upon murmuring and grumbling as little sins, but they were the root cause of Israel’s failure. The record states the “people complained” (Num. 11:1). This not only displeased Yahweh, but caused others to complain as well. Israel had the power to conquer. The people had the invitation of Yahweh to enter the land (Deut. 1:8), but instead of keeping their eyes firmly fixed on the future glory, they permitted present difficulties to obscure their vision.

Grumbling led to complaining, and soon the contagion spread throughout the camp. The people began to contrast the alleged comforts of Egypt with their hard state in the wilderness. Gradually the whole camp was affected and degenerated into a murmuring, complaining company, so that the spirit of faithful endeavour was lost. Even Moses became discouraged (Num. 11:10). Contention then broke out among the leaders (Num. 12:1). The general state of dissatisfaction contributed to the defeatist attitude of the spies which finally brought ruin to the whole project as far as that generation of Israelites was concerned. It all commenced with a little grumbling! This teaches that those who murmur without cause are soon given cause to murmur.

In a querulous mood of discontent the people questioned: "Why came we forth out of Egypt" (Num. 11:20). They forgot the death-sentence that Pharaoh decreed against their children; they forgot the pain of the lash as they were driven to their slave-labour; they forgot the state of degradation to which they were reduced by a people that feared and hated them. Their desire for flesh took precedence over every other consideration: "Why came we forth out of Egypt?"

They disregarded the fact that they had been delivered out of Egypt not for personal salvation but to glorify Yahweh (Deut. 28:9-10). They ignored the purpose of their call: that Yahweh had chosen them, guided them, educated them, revealed His will unto them in order that they might reflect His glory, and that they might be equipped to pass on to others the message of His plan. "I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel... saith Yahweh; that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear" (Jer. 13:11). In contradistinction, the Israelites imagined that they had been delivered for gratification of the flesh.

Flesh being what it is, instead of campaigners they became complainers. And human nature has not changed since then! The same sin of murmuring and complaining that brought disgrace and defeat to the generation that left Israel is not unknown among Ecclesial circles today. Ecclesial endeavour is undermined by the opposition of malcontents. Very often it takes the form of murmuring: that is, of underground criticism and complaining. Those concerned do not go personally to those responsible, and in friendly, brotherly fashion discuss any problem real or imagined.

Instead, without any sense of responsibility or loyalty to the meeting, the murmuring becomes widespread increasing the feeling of dissatisfaction. The Ecclesial Business Meeting is used as an opportunity to voice complaints that should have been resolved in private, and a minor matter is magnified into a major issue. The result is dissatisfaction leading to discontent and unhappiness, increasing the number of complainers whilst dedicated campaigners become fewer in number. Instead of the meetings becoming joyous occasions they become the very reverse, and enthusiasm lags.

This is wrong. The call of the Truth is a call to happiness, and the Ecclesia should reflect that quality. The word "blessed" by which the Book of Psalms opens, and by which the Lord commenced his public discourse on the mount,

in its original form signifies "Happy!" And certainly, in the Truth, we have wonderful privileges that should cause us happiness, and plenty of avenues through which to express it.

Indeed, the happiness, or blessedness, of the Truth should permeate all avenues of life whether Ecclesial, home or business. There is a need to enter into the legitimate pursuits of business and pleasure enthusiastically, with appreciation and thanksgiving. This is an attitude of mind advocated by the Word. Israel was told: "Rejoice in all that ye put your hands unto, ye and your households, wherein Yahweh thy God hath blessed thee" (Deut. 12:7). Israelites were encouraged to recognise in the material benefits they received, the blessings of the Almighty, and to rejoice accordingly. Solomon, in his wisdom, encouraged the people likewise: "Every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God" (Ecc. 3:13).

He encouraged enthusiasm: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecc. 9:10). And Paul added his exhortation: "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). He taught that we serve Christ in the manner we conduct our business, or serve our worldly masters, as well as in Ecclesial activities. Servants are to give extra service, "as unto Christ", "doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:5). Masters are to act similarly (v. 9). Children and parents are to recognise the responsibilities of family life so honouring the Truth upon which it should be founded. All should be done enthusiastically with Christ in mind. In that way the normal pursuits of everyday life are elevated into forms of service on behalf of the King.

He provides no scope for murmuring or complaining. On the contrary, we are constantly exhorted to "rejoice" (Phil. 4:4 — there are nearly 200 exhortations to "rejoice" in Scripture). How mutually encouraging and stimulating is enthusiasm; how wretched and depressing is the example and the influence of one who is forever complaining of his lot, of the evil of his circumstances, and the shortcoming of his fellow workers — in the world or in the Ecclesia.

Yahweh has given us much in life in which to rejoice. His material blessings are part of the witness He has given: "He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness" (Acts 14:17). Cannot we rejoice and be happy in such things; cannot we relax in a Godly way, taking pleasure in the beauty of nature, and the benefits received from God, recognising Him as "the Giver of every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17)? Should we not count our blessings and seek to be enthusiastic and positive in regard to God's goodness?

Sometimes we are too inclined to look only at the dark side of life: to get into the habit of supposing that cheerfulness and enthusiasm over our affairs, and over the good things which God constantly grants us are forbidden. The Scriptures indicate otherwise. It urges that we recognise the providence of God in these things "and in everything give thanks." Certainly let us weep when there is something to weep about (and we have our share of sorrow), but let us also look on the the bright side of life, and rejoice in that which Yahweh has given us.

And let us speak with enthusiasm, of the joy, the goodness of Yahweh within the family of God. Let us show by our looks that contentment and happiness have a place in our hearts. If we do so, we shall be far more useful in our little sphere. We will brighten up and encourage others. The work of the Truth will be further advanced, and will proceed more smoothly. Others will be helped along the pathway to the Kingdom.

On the other hand, a persistently gloomy, mopish, melancholy face does not necessarily indicate high spirituality. Indeed, Christ declared: "Be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast" (Matt. 6:16). They wanted to appear "very religious". They might have deluded men, they did not delude God. In that regard, some of us need stirring up. We are not only cold in approach, but miserable-looking in the bargain. Our very attitude discourages others. They shrivel up under our stare. There is no abounding enthusiasm in our labour for the Truth. Our mannerisms suggest that the proclamation of the Gospel is sure to be a failure. No one will listen to us. There is little use in the work. So some might reason, forgetting that we labour not in our own strength, but in that of God.

Of course, some find it easier to be enthusiastic than others. They are naturally warm and keen, zealous and ardent. They bubble over with enthusiasm. But whether we are cold or warm by nature let us heat up the cold, and direct the warmth along proper channels. We can extend a hearty, warm hand-shake where needed, we can be sociable and friendly, we can manifest a positive attitude in our labours (whether for the world or in the Ecclesia), stimulating others by our endeavour. "Quench not the spirit," exhorted Paul. The Spirit-word, like the divine fire on the altar needs to consume and motivate us. When it does so, we will be more like Christ, who was so enthusiastic in the things of Yahweh, that his apostles, as they witnessed his conduct, remembered that it was written of him, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). In these closing days of the Gentiles, as pressures and problems mount, let us make our Ecclesias centres of warm, enthusiastic, zealous activity, with members "always abounding in the work of the Lord" knowing that "it is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58), and manifesting a warmth of fellowship that is both encouraging and stimulating to those who may hide real problems in their hearts. It is a service that each one can render no matter how humble their standing might be.

The Difference Between Gnosis and Epignosis?

LOGOS, August 1982

What is the difference between “gnosis” and “epignosis”? That question was recently put to us. It is a thoughtful question, and the answer is important.

As far as the words are concerned, they are both Greek nouns rendered by the one English word, “knowledge”. For example, Peter exhorts us to “grow in knowledge” (2 Pet. 1:5-6), and the word is “gnosis”. He assures us that if we follow his advice we will be “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 8). But in this statement the word is “epignosis”, and similar comparisons will be found elsewhere. The question is; What is the significance of these two words? And if we have “gnosis” (knowledge), when can we claim to have “epignosis” (deeper knowledge)?

Both words are derived from the verb “ginosko” which signifies the act of taking in knowledge, in such a way as to establish a relationship between the one knowing and the object known. For example: “This is life eternal to know (ginosko) Thee, the only true God and Jesus whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). In such a context, the verb implies the one knowing, and not merely an academic knowledge.

When the preposition “epi” is added to the noun or verb, transforming it into “epignosis” or “epignosko”, it suggests a fuller knowledge or recognition of the object known. Hence the question posed us: When does one reach “gnosis” to move on to “epignosis”?

The answer, of course, is a matter of interpretation. Our opinion is that “epignosis” does not indicate an increased quantity of knowledge, but a fuller quality of it. “Epignosis” is the absorbing and manifesting of whatever knowledge the capacity of the individual permits him to absorb.

And capacity varies with the individual.

Christ declared: “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 13:48). The liquid capacity of a glass may be half a pint or litre, and when that amount is poured into it, it has reached its full capacity. It would be folly, wasteful, and perhaps disastrous to try and pour two litres of liquid into

it. So with ourselves. When we have reached full capacity according to our limited ability and are using that knowledge effectively, we have "epignosis"; even though our grasp of a subject is more limited than that of others.

I tried to illustrate this by drawing attention to the most fundamental doctrine of belief: the Godhead. This was expressed to Israel in the following terms: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:4). When a person acknowledges that there is one God, and it is the responsibility of such to love Him with their strength and being, he has "gnosis" or knowledge of the subject. A child is capable of grasping that simple truth, and is taught it in Sunday School. But understanding must not stop short at that point. The exhortation of Scripture is to "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge" (gnosis). On the basis that God is one and deserving of our love, we can learn more of His personality. We can "add to our faith" by studying the names and titles of Deity, principles of God-manifestation, the ways of Providence, and so forth. That is increased knowledge to which Peter commends us.

But, it is not necessarily "epignosis".

"Epignosis" is full-knowledge, or the fulness of knowledge. It is applying the substance of knowledge. Like ordinary food, it is not the quantity that we take in that counts, but the absorption by the body of the goodness of that which we consume, and which contributes to physical growth.

Consider the basic doctrine that God is one, and that we should "love Him" with all our strength. If we love a person sufficiently, we will enjoy being in his company, and we will extol his virtues to others. We will be anxious that he is well-respected by our acquaintances, and to that end we will introduce him to others, so that they may share our pleasure. Moreover, if our love is real, we will be longing and yearning after his presence, and moulding our lives so that we may appear attractive to him. So with the love of God. A person who truly loves God will yearn for fellowship with Him. He will strive to reach His holiness, knowing that it will please Him, in the same manner as he would pursue any object for which he feels a strong passion. He will find pleasure in studying the things relating to His majesty and purpose, in uttering words of praise to His name; and in occupying himself with the messages he has received from Him for his benefit and guidance. His feelings towards God will be like those of a lover towards the wife of his youth, or those of a father towards his child.

David attained unto such a love of God, and expressed his feelings in the words: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psa. 42:1). There is nothing very recondite in the knowledge that God is one, and that we should love Him with all our strength; but that simple truth becomes profound as we ponder what is implied in the supreme unity so expressed, and what is involved in the development of the love demanded.

In my opinion, it is the meditative reaching forth to such substance in basic doctrines that constitutes the "epignosis" of which Peter speaks.

If we do not develop this we remain merely academic in knowledge. We may have “gnosis” but we lack “epignosis” no matter how much we might know. Not that we despise academic knowledge. Indeed, it is essential as a springboard for “epignosis”. But knowledge gained for itself alone is a danger. It is like hoarding up food but never using it. The food tends to spoil very quickly. “Knowledge (gnosis) puffeth up, but charity builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1 see “The Diaglott”). Merely knowing a doctrine, or a subject, avails nought until we have worked out in our mind how that teaching can be applied in action. Then “gnosis” becomes “epignosis”. Peter taught that “grace and truth comes through epignosis” (2 Pet. 1:2,3), but he also wrote that brethren should “add knowledge” (gnosis) to the virtues unto which they have attained. We can always be adding to knowledge; but it still remains largely useless until we have applied it effectively, until it has energised us to action, and played a part in changing our lives. Then it becomes “epignosis”.

And there is not a single doctrine in our “Statement of Faith” that should not be so treated. Every doctrine should find some practical out-working in our lives. That is the reason why each one forms part of saving truth.

Take the doctrine that “man is mortal”. It is a simple statement of fact; but when the lesson is learned, does it not demand that we make greater use of the opportunities of our limited lives? If it does not, what is the use of the mere academic acceptance of the truth that man is mortal?

We believe that Christ is coming, but what use is that “gnosis” if we do not recognise the need to curtail our activities relating to the present existence, so as to make sure of our standing when he does appear? James expressed the truth of what we are trying to write, when, in treating with a basic first principle he wrote: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well (you have “gnosis”); the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19). When faith develops works a believer has attained unto “epignosis”.

To progress in knowledge is a duty. “Abound yet more and more” is the oft-repeated declaration of Inspiration (Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10; 2 Pet. 1:8; Jude 20). Progress does not mean an everlasting changing of one’s belief or theories, nor the massing of sterile facts, but deriving the substance from what we have absorbed, as the physical body of a child develops through the food it eats and absorbs. To progress is to grow, develop, augment, mature, not to destroy or recommence. Paul taught the need of such development. He warned the Hebrew brethren who glorified in mere academic knowledge that they had need “that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat”. He showed the purpose of knowledge. It is “to have the senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14), which surely means the practical influence in action of doctrines and teaching understood and believed. “In understanding be ye men”, he wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:20). The word signifies “mature”, that is full-grown. There was much immaturity and evidence of spiritual malnutrition in

the Ecclesia in Corinth. Because that was also the condition in Israel, Isaiah warned the people that their princes were children, and “babes ruled over them” (Isa. 3:4). Immature rulers brought doom to the nation, and can do so also to Ecclesias today. We live in an age of immaturity, of superficiality, of disrespect for age and experience. Maturity develops from thoughtful pondering of the significance of principles. It does not depend upon the extent of knowledge, but application of it. We can have the whole of our Bible marked up, understand the significance of every symbol in the Apocalypse, comprehend the prophecies of the Old Testament, expound eloquently the literary structure of the Psalms and be thoroughly acquainted with the history of Israel, and yet fail to put any of this into practical or moral use. If such be the case with ourselves, we may have “gnosis”; we certainly have not attained unto “epignosis”.

Peter was an example of one developing from “gnosis” to “epignosis”. As a disciple, he thought he understood; he was boastful and arrogant. But he was moulded by the added knowledge he gained through the resurrection of the Lord, and from that standpoint attained unto “epignosis” as he learned to apply the simple truths he had been taught. He is an excellent example to follow. We need to cultivate a liking for the Word, and persevere in personal research (1 Pet. 2:2; Prov. 8:34). But in addition, we need to ponder how to apply that knowledge practically in the everyday issues of life. Then we will attain unto “epignosis”, no matter how simple may be our faith.

In these difficult days when the seduction and shallowness of life about us is designed to encourage our ego, and satisfy our fleshly hearts, the need to develop “epignosis” is imperative; particularly in view of the significance of the times. “If these things (virtues previously enumerated) be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge (“epignosis”) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:8). “Epignosis”, then, implies that thoughtful application of the principles of “gnosis” as a way of life. By manifesting the fruits of such in our lives, in the Ecclesia, and in the world, we will illustrate that “we have been with Jesus” and have “learned of him”. Then with confidence and joy we will be able to sincerely pray: “Even, so come Lord Jesus”.

Superficiality

LOGOS, December 1982

"Of making books," wrote Solomon as he was composing one with the aid of the Spirit, "there is no end; and much study is a weariness to the flesh". His words can almost be paraphrased to apply to versions of the Bible. The Bible remains a consistent "best seller" 1900 years after it was completed with *The Apocalypse*; but, unfortunately, in the various translations, renditions, versions and paraphrases that have flooded the market during the last jubilee, the beautiful words and teaching of Scripture have been sadly lost. Some versions, by the use of colloquial words and expressions, rob the Scriptures of their reverence, so that when we read them, we no longer imagine that we are on holy ground; others are veritably blasphemous, as they completely distort the original Word.

For example, we were doing one of the readings during lunch time at West Beach, and one of the workers wanted a Bible. I loaned him one of the many different renditions that I have; but what an embarrassment for me, when his turn came to read around, to hear the following from 2 Timothy 1:18 concerning Onesiphorus: "Let our Lord grant to him that he may find mercy in heaven, where our Lord is..."

A comparison with the Greek shows that there is absolutely no warrant for that distortion.

Again, a rendition of Ezekiel 38:2: "Son of man, set your face against China, and against the land of Mongolia..."

We look in vain at the Hebrew to find justification for such a translation.

There are traps for beginners in many Bibles that are recommended, and the safest method is to use the A.V. for our platforms, because of the widespread respect afforded it. That cannot be said of all versions. The RSV set the downward trend. Since its publication some years ago, many "modern" renditions have been offered to the public, some of which are extremely "free" in their translation, setting down what the translator thinks the Spirit should have said unto the Ecclesias, rather than what was originally stated. For example, Moffatt will excise entire verses of Scripture if he feels they should not be there, or, for that matter, transpose them into another chapter, and another context altogether if he thinks it improves his version! What is called *The Living Bible*, among the most popular Bibles of today (because it is so "easy" to read!), sometimes completely ignores the original, and sets down what its author thinks

should be there, or what he believes the Spirit was trying to say; so that it is coloured by his own beliefs in the immortality of the soul, or the doctrine of the Trinity. For example, we cite Colossians 1:16-17:

“Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we can’t: the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities; all were made by Christ for his own use and glory. He was before all else began, and it is his power that holds everything together.”

With such maltreatment of the original Scriptures, great care needs to be exercised in the use or recommendation of a Bible. The A.V. remains the most dependable for platform work, and should form the basis of our study. The Revised Version is a very good translation to use alongside of it, but other translations should be used with great caution and conservatism. The modern version rated the highest is what is called the *New International Version*.

If published reports are factual, the greatest blasphemy is about to be launched upon a gullible public. It is styled *The Reader’s Digest Bible*. It is claimed that it is 40% shorter than the 850,000-word RSV, and “smoother, more inviting, more readable” according to the Editor of it.

The 23rd Psalm has become the 13th Psalm, whilst others have disappeared. The Editors claim that they set about excising the three Rs: repetition, rhetoric and redundancy. Hence large blocks of Scripture are removed. According to reports, Exodus, Chronicles and Deuteronomy lost about seven out of every ten words. Luke is reduced 25%. The Editor-in-chief said he was “amazed to find that the famous Epistles of Paul were loosely expressed letters which the preacher dictated extemporaneously to a secretary”. He claims that “sometimes, Paul got a little carried away”.

The publication of such a “Bible”, as with some of the modern “versions”, robs the Truth of its power. There is no repetition in the Bible, no redundancy as is claimed. Even 1 Chronicles 1 is not repetitive, even though a superficial reading may give that impression. In a large public meeting, once, I made the challenge to the audience that they could not point to a chapter of the Bible that is uninteresting or unnecessary. I was directed by an unbeliever to 1 Chronicles 1. Fortunately, I had given it some study, and was able to point out that though it appeared as merely a list of names without comment, behind that record is most profound truth and a most interesting fact. When carefully studied, the list of names shows that tribes and peoples that were mighty in their day, that appeared far more powerful and permanent than the Israelitish “strangers and pilgrims,” ultimately passed from the scene and became buried in anonymity, whereas the continuity of the comparatively “weak” covenant people was preserved. Those apparently uninteresting, unimportant, and seemingly unnecessary chapters (as the *Readers Digest* people believe) in fact set forth the principle of Divine selection in the line leading to Messiah, and reveal how the covenants of promise were preserved intact in spite of the vagaries of history. They reveal that the mighty and powerful are passed over by Yahweh when

necessary for those who more adequately suited His purpose. It is remarkable, in those genealogical lines, how that younger sons received the pre-eminence over the natural firstborn as though as to remind humanity that the “first Adam” is to be superseded by the “second Adam” then yet to appear (1 Cor. 15:45). That valuable record, together with many other profound, glorious, and faith-strengthening truths will be lost in the *Reader's Digest Bible* — as we hope it is named. For *Holy Bible* it is not.

In fact, if certain principles did not prevent us doing so, we would be inclined to legally test the right of the *Reader's Digest* people to do what they have done. According to law, copyright is retained in the right of an author for fifty years after his death. Now God is the Author of the Bible (Heb. 1:1); and though there are clergymen who have claimed that He is dead, the signs of the times speak in contrary terms to that. It would be interesting preparing the case for court. We would show first, that God is the Author of the Bible, that He has ordered that it not be altered “if any man shall take away from the words of the Book”, He will requite it of him (Rev. 22:19). We would then show that the Author is still living (and proof would be advanced to establish that fact) and that it is presumptuously blasphemous and wrong on all counts, for the *Reader's Digest* or any other to chop and change His word as they have done!!

It would be quite a pleasure submitting such a case for consideration, and questioning the defendants as to whether they have received Divine permission to do what they have done!!!

But, seriously, we live in a superficial age. It is an age of Instant Coffee, Instant Tea, Instant Everything. And people want Instant Knowledge. Youngsters go to school with calculators instead of using their heads. Adults don't want to read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, because they want an abbreviated copy. People want their news in snippet, dramatic form. They read the headlines but not the history of incidents. They read that Russia has invaded Afghanistan; but they know nothing of the real background of either country. They want Instant Religion, so they seek for notes on a subject instead of reading *Elpis Israel*. Audiences are captivated by a transparency on a screen covered with references in small handwriting; and the audience writes down the references without listening to the speaker — and then loses the notes! The audience has no need to open the Bible, but sit back and look. I find it very comforting, when speaking, to hear the rustle of pages as I quote a passage of Scripture; and where that is lacking (and I have spoken in meetings where it is lacking) there seems something missing in the warmth of the assembly. Don't let speakers do everything for the audience (as *Reader's Digest* thinks it has for the public), make it work for the manna of life. That was the Divine requirement in the wilderness, and is essential today, if young people are to grow in the Truth. Generally people don't want to use their brains; they don't want the agony of thinking a matter out; they don't want the trouble of personal study; they can't read books like *Elpis Israel* or *Eureka*. Consequently they remain superficial students and disciples, even though they have gulped down notes on a dozen

books of the Bible. Let us get back to reading and studying the standard books of the Truth, and we will be better equipped for the important work of the Truth, and more prepared for the Kingdom that is coming.

The Truth is designed not merely to teach us but to change us for the Kingdom... That is why the Bible is a "difficult" book. It is made so deliberately to cause us to think. God has given man a brain capable of understanding and receiving that word. The more we work on the Bible ourselves, (even its "difficult" parts) the more we will find that the thoughts engendered will dominate our actions. God has designed it so; and we are wise to apply ourselves to that task. Our duty is to go on, and not to rest content with the amount of knowledge possessed at Baptism. "*All Scripture*" (whatever the *Reader's Digest* may think) is given for our learning, and is "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17). Quite as essential is it to pursue our Scripture studies after baptism as before. The evidence of the need of this is demonstrated by the action of some who neglect this God-given means of development. Consider the attitude of some as they grow cold towards attendance at meetings, hypercritical and scornful over the writings of the pioneers, and lean more and more to the ways of the world. What is the cause of this? The strength of the world's attractions? The lusts of the flesh? No! The cause is failure to apply the mind to the Word in all its aspects, prayerfully trying to uncover its "secrets", and thrilling to the message it prophesies. This requires incessant reading, marking and inwardly digesting the Word of Truth. No effective headway will be made without so doing. We need to be careful that the principle of the *Reader's Digest* does not dominate our thinking and our speaking; so that we so simplify the exposition of the Truth that thought is no longer necessary to take in the message. No! Let us "think" on these things (Phil. 4:8). To Timothy, Paul wrote: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Tim. 4:13-14). This requires that we read, think and apply; and each stage becomes more difficult than the previous one. But eternal life is bound up in the outcome, and Christ is at the door.

Sowing and Reaping

LOGOS, November, 1983

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Seed-time Of The Future

Our present life is the seed-time of an eternal harvest. As we sow now, we shall reap at the coming of the Lord. To reap as we sow is the postulate of moral responsibility. It asserts, in measure, that we are the masters of our own destinies. It teaches that whilst God has determined the future of saints, our participation therein will be governed by our present independent actions. Our destinies depend upon our present choice. How we spend our time now will decide whether corruption or life eternal awaits us then; for whilst Yahweh has provided us with hope, He requires us to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling”. The use we make of our seed-time determines exactly, and with a moral certainty greater even than the laws which govern nature today, what kind of harvest we shall reap.

But even now we reap, in measure, a harvest according to our sowing. This, after all, is the law of nature. If we sow thistles, we cannot expect to pluck tomatoes; if we fail to cultivate what we have planted, we cannot blame others for the meagre return. It is according to the rule of life, the law of nature. “Doth not nature teach you?” enquired Paul (1 Cor. 11:14). Of course it does — if we heed its lessons; for those laws are Divine laws, for God is the Creator of nature.

Therefore, the Apostle exhorted: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked.” But people are deceived. They sow a certain kind of seed and complain bitterly at the harvest they reap. They refuse to face up to the facts of nature. They sow to the flesh but hope to reap according to the Spirit. They believe that they can mock God with impunity. They set Him aside and ridicule His word. They reject with complete indifference the moral principles He has set down for the observance and happiness of humanity and wonder why they suffer. They refuse to heed the commandments of God; they ignore the restrictions that should rule family life; they avoid personal labour such as He has decreed for the betterment of man in society (Gen. 3:19). And they reap as they sow. The fruits of such sowing are manifested in the evils of modern life: the abandonment of moral principles brings harm and evil; the disruption of healthy family life produces its frightful heritage of heartache and neuroticism; the insistence upon an urban existence and a welfare state instead of the labour of the hands add to the increase of crime,

immorality and violence that idle hands find time and desire to do. The unhappiness, frustrations and agonies of social life today are among the fruits of mankind's sowing. They come from ignoring the law of nature that demonstrates that as a man sows so shall he reap. Of course, whilst a certain amount of reaping takes place now, the final harvest awaits the future when all pollution will be destroyed in the terrible outpouring of divine judgement that shall involve all nations, a pruning made necessary as a curative, for without it "the inhabitants of the world will not learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9-11). The command will go forth: "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe" (Rev. 14:15).

Present Reaping

In the meantime, whilst awaiting the direct divine harvesting of the future, the law of nature still operates, and sin brings a present harvest of sorrow and suffering. An example of this is the emergence of a terrible disease brought about by moral perversion. It is called AIDS which is an abbreviation for *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* which is another way of saying that the body has lost the ability to effectively fight disease. In two years, in the U.S., there have been 1,641 cases reported, resulting in some 644 deaths. At present, an average of 165 cases is reported in the States each month, and other countries, including Australia, have reported the incidence of the dreaded disease. Its victims are rendered largely defenceless against a number of infections and viruses that normally would not be a matter of great concern, but in those circumstances became lethal.

Male homosexuals are those mostly affected. Among such groups, the disease is increasing in frightening proportions. It seems that nature is asserting itself, and men are "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which is meet" (Rom 1:27). This does not mean that God is directly punishing them, but that those involved have experienced the result of a natural law that teaches that we reap as we sow. The licence indulged in today has resulted in an increase of other related diseases which are striking down their victims in increasing numbers.

Homosexuality was the grossest sin of Sodom. God's attitude towards it was shown by the destruction He poured out upon the guilty and depraved city. God is not mocked; as a man sows so shall he reap. The world suffers today because it chooses to sow to the flesh rejecting any restraint. "Because of these things," warned Paul, "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (Eph. 5:5-7).

Paul is not teaching that God personally moves to punish every individual found in the category of the sinners he lists, but that there is a law of nature, established by God, which will result in mankind reaping a frightful harvest of suffering when it rejects restraint. The works of the flesh produce their harvest of "hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling and such like" (Gal. 5:20-21); whereas the "fruit of the Spirit (even

now) is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (vv. 22-23). Both the evils and the virtues comprise the present results of the particular sowing in which we may engage, whilst awaiting further fruit to come. So Paul exhorted: "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8), and he adds: "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Tending To The Sowing

Plants need proper attention if they are to prosper and bear fruit. So also does the seed of Truth. Let us be enthusiastic in its proclamation, and we will reap of the same in the Ecclesia, for our zeal will beget a like reaction in others. Let us manifest warmth in our relationships to our brethren, and we will receive warmth in return. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly", declares the Proverbs (Prov. 18:24), and adds: "A friend loveth at all times (not merely when it is convenient to do so!), and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17). The seed we sow in Ecclesial relationships will find reaction in others, and we will rejoice in a harvest now whilst awaiting one to come. Let a brother show keenness in the study of the Word, and a joyful brightness in expounding it, and he is likely, by example, to plant the seed of example in the minds of others. They will seek to know the secret of his enthusiasm and warmth, and will be led to the study of the Scriptures themselves.

If we do not sow to the Spirit we may deceive ourselves; but we will not deceive God. Moreover, life will lose its zest even now. It will present the doleful appearance that an untended garden does which may have been planted with seeds but has not received the attention necessary to ensure a crop. Dismal anaemic plants droop their heads and leaves to the ground, whilst in contrast weeds flourish with virility. We may wonder why Truth does not prosper in our lives; why our Ecclesia lacks the excitement and drive of others; why the members are cold and distant towards us; why it is we discover little pleasure in our associations with it. It is so easy to blame others; instead let us look inwards. We are either reaping a harvest of our own sowing; or we have failed to water, weed, and tend the crop we planted. In other words, we need to look well to our labours.

"Be not deceived," exhorted Paul. It is so easy to do so. Christ declared: "The children of this world are wiser than the children of light". That is true in that they are more ready to sacrifice self to obtain a present advantage. They may aim at power, prestige, or wealth. They firmly fix in the mind what they want, and sow to that end. It may demand of them introspection, restraint, endeavour. They give that because they know what they want; and, they become what the world calls "successful men". They have denied themselves in order to sow, and they have reaped a harvest. It is not the harvest of God, and therefore it is very limited. But we can take a lesson from them. We need to clearly define the harvest we seek, and sow and work to that end. There is a pleasing harvest we can reap now if we sow for it. It is the satisfaction of knowing that we are trying

to please God to the best of our ability; it is the joy and happiness that can be radiated in our gatherings by the manifestation of enthusiasm; it is the warmth and encouragement that each can give the other as all strive in unity to build each other up in the faith.

Tending The Soil

A man would be accounted a fool who expected grain from seeds, or fruit from thistles; yet some think they can give themselves to the world, and expect to reap everlasting life in the age to come. Equally foolish would the man be accounted who expected seed to take root and flourish in hard-trodden earth, or if he expected a delicate and tender plant to grow healthily in a bed of noxious weeds. So Yahweh exhorted the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns" (Jer. 4:3). The plough must ruthlessly drive its blade into hard soil and turn over the ground to obtain good sowing and harvesting. Equally ruthless must we be with ourselves. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek Yahweh, till He come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos. 10:12). These lessons of the Word are obvious. Good seed, if it is to prosper, must have satisfactory soil, careful tending, and not hurtful companions such as weeds that will choke its growth. If God's Word is to profit us, we must see to it that our minds are impressionable, and that we are ready to accept, wholly and unreservedly, all that He has said. There is work to be done — on ourselves. In this there must be no "folding of the hands" (Prov. 24:30-34). Today is the day of opportunity; tomorrow may be too late. Without toil our mental soil will soon harden, and weeds (false ideas and bad habits); will quickly multiply. Our duty it to watch, and recognise such when they are manifest. To that end, let us give ourselves to self-criticism, self-analysis. What part do we play in the Ecclesia? Are we noted for our attendance at the meetings? Do we show an interest in the subject discussed so that we come prepared to contribute to what the speaker has to say? Are we helpful? Solicitous of others? "Always abounding" in enthusiastic labour? Ever ready to help where such is needed? These are avenues of sowing that can produce most helpful fruit. They can assist in developing a Godly character on our part, or in invigorating the Ecclesia of which we are a member. Moreover, the harvest does not cease there, but extends to life eternal. Of that final crop, the Apostle declared: "We shall reap if we faint not".

Anger

LOGOS, March, 1984

He looked round about on them with anger..." (Mark 3:5).

It is sometimes thought and often taught that anger invariably is a sin. That is not so. Anger becomes a sin only when it is unreasonable and uncontrolled. "Be ye angry and sin not", warned Paul. And of Yahweh it is said: "He is angry with the wicked every day". Anger, therefore, is a divine characteristic; but because, as yet, we are not sufficiently mature to properly use or fully manifest divine characteristics, we tend to misuse the emotion of anger. We allow it to control us instead of us controlling it.

Anger is a reaction to the way we evaluate a matter, and how it affects those persons or things we value most. There is, therefore, a Godly anger and an ungodly anger. We may manifest anger when our status is under challenge because we think a lot of ourselves; when our word is called in question because we value our reputation; when our carefully planned schemes go awry and we face loss of prestige or of wealth in consequence; or when we feel that the foundations of the Truth are being undermined, or its standards lowered.

It is neither good nor bad to feel angry. Circumstances or motives determine whether it is one or the other. It can be good and useful if it creates energy and motivation to change a situation or relationship which is bad; or it can be bad if it gets out of control and leads to actions that are inconsistent and are to be regretted. Even in a good cause, anger needs to be controlled. Even in circumstances that justify the manifestation of it, say in defending the Truth, it is a bad thing if it is allowed to rule so completely that the one manifesting it cannot trust his speech, or use the energy generated by it in a constructive way. Obviously if we care enough for something, we are going to feel angry when it is challenged or distorted. If we love God sufficiently, we will be angered when He is blasphemed, or His truth is ridiculed. We will not be indifferent to such attacks nor view them dispassionately. Christ loved righteousness and hated evil, and was made angry when those who should have had righteousness in their hearts, gave themselves over to working iniquity.

The manifestation of anger, therefore, is normal and correct. But when it arises we must develop the facility of remaining sufficiently intellectually cool to properly use it. Otherwise that which may be commendable in its commencement will become evil in its outgoing. Christ was made angry by the

hypocritical silence of his adversaries. They were shrewd and cunning and tested him thereby. His action in doing good in the face of their unfairness and wickedness made them angry, for they had no effective answer or explanation of his wisdom and power. His anger was good; their anger was evil. They saw a man healed of a distressing complaint and hated the Lord for it. Because they could not meet the argument of compassionate help given by the Lord, their anger rose to a fury and they retired from his presence to plot his death. Unreasoning anger got the better of them and dominated them. It so blinded their minds as to what is true and proper that they were prepared to break the Law that they were at such pains to uphold, in order to rid themselves of a hated enemy.

So we must constantly ask ourselves the question posed Jonah: "Doest thou well to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4). In the case of Zebul (Jud. 9:30), the answer was in the affirmative; but his emotion was squandered in a bad cause. David's anger against Nabal was justified; but the object of it was not worthy of his wrath, and so Abigail wisely turned the exiled king from it (2 Sam. 12:5). Moses' anger was formidable (Exod. 32:19), but completely correct. It reflected his feelings as to what the people had done. Nehemiah's anger was proper, and his perfect control of it was commendable and profitable (Neh. 5:6).

Therefore, as Paul warns, anger, even in a good cause, can lead to sin.

Because the flesh is weak, and its emotions difficult to control, it is best to avoid anger. When it dominates us beyond our control it can be cruel (Prov. 27:4), lead to unseemly and unprofitable quarrelling and wrangling (Prov. 30:33); divide those who should be united (1 Sam. 20:30); and lead to folly (Prov. 29:8). Such anger therefore, is the acknowledged mark of fools (Prov. 12:16; 27:3); and we are advised to avoid the company of the habitually angry (Prov. 22:24).

Uncontrolled anger can blind a person to reason or discretion. His emotion dominates his thought and distorts his understanding. It motivates him to claim that he is "justified" in whatever action he takes. He is "sure" that he is right. Because his mind concentrates upon the object of his anger, and drives away every other consideration, his thinking seems clearer than ever. Actually, his very fury tends to destroy his power of true analysis, and to so block out sound assessment, so that he is unable to place matters in their proper perspective. So his anger gives way to temper, and any appeal to reason is swamped by mere emotion.

Christ was made angry by the hypocrisy of religious leaders who should have known better, and should have guided the people into channels of useful service before God. But though he was made angry on a number of occasions, he never lost his temper. Invariably his reason was greater than his emotion. He remained sensitive to all aspects of the circumstances, and this freed him to act in a way his enemies could not match. The control of anger that he exhibited caused them to lose their temper, and withdraw in a fury of passion that was satisfied by nothing short of his death. In them, antagonism begat anger, and that gave birth to

temper which finally found expression in murder.

The Lord “hated” the deeds of the Nicolaitanes; their apostasy angered him (Rev. 2:6), as the earlier apostasy of Israel made Yahweh angry. He commended the Ephesian brethren because they “could not bear them which are evil” (Rev. 2:2). Their emotion was a good thing so long as they kept it under control. What was necessary to do that? Faith. Faith would remind them that the Lord “walked in the midst of the Ecclesias” (Rev. 2:1), and had the ability to control and correct the situation. That does not mean that those rendered angry by the circumstances should impassively do nothing about it, but leave it to Christ alone to perform; it means that the motivation brought about by their anger should find expression in actions he would approve. The brethren of Ephesus were commended because they had vigorously faced up to these errorists. They had “tried them” and had found them to be false, perverting the Word of God. They were commended for this. Their anger had been a useful tool helping the Ecclesia as a whole. The Corinthian brethren likewise were commended when they were brought to recognise their own failings. They became motivated by a Godly sorrow which so energised them as to “work repentance to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10). They were roused to anger against themselves: “What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, what revenge. In all these things ye have approved yourselves” (v. 11).

Therefore, it is good when anger moves a person to correct a fault or a situation; it is sad when brethren attempt to dissipate their emotion by self-justification or by surreptitiously attacking the reputations of others. Certainly, this will not properly assuage anger. Therefore, great care needs to be taken that it does not get the better of us. If a brother can only reprove when he is in a temper, let him, in moments of calmness, first direct his reproof selfwards. “Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all *long-suffering and doctrine*”, is the Apostolic command. “Long-suffering and doctrine” imply gentle persuasion, much patience, God-like reasoning, under circumstances which to the reprover are difficult and awkward. Yet they produce results.

So anger must be controlled and limited. Paul gives sound practical advice as to how this may be done. He wrote: “Be ye angry and sin not” — and as a means of preventing the latter, he added: “Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath” (Eph. 4:26). This limitation of anger is useful for every situation. Consider a domestic problem. Husband and wife have a quarrel. It leads to anger, and perhaps temper. Both are convinced they are each in the right, and are prepared to warmly justify themselves. As they press their individual viewpoints, their anger intensifies, and the day draws to its close in a fury of bitterness. What is to be done? If Paul’s advice is followed the argumentation and recrimination will cease before night-time is over. One or the other must swallow his or her pride. Best if it is both; but let it be at least one. And the initiative should come from the husband (1 Pet. 3:7). Let it be done “for Christ’s sake”; because the Word

requires it; and as tempers cool, the victory won over self will bring instant benefits.

Consider an ecclesial problem. The Truth is under challenge, and it has made us angry. What shall be done? Before the night closes in, share the problem with Yahweh. Take it to God in prayer, speak to Him of it, requesting strength to rise above the problems besetting us at the time. To share such thoughts with God is to relieve the problem of its power over self. When God is sought in prayer, the indignation and anger may remain, but it will be brought under proper control. The problem will then be revealed as a valuable experience assisting to the moulding of a character fit for eternal life at the coming of the Lord. And the secret of Samson's riddle will be discovered: Out of the strong will come forth sweetness (Jud. 14:14).

Behold: Goodness and Severity

LOGOS, December, 1984

Our Position of Privilege

Divine worship enables us to mentally stand in the presence of God. It enables us to visualise Him, as He is presented in the Word: a great King over the host of heaven; Head over the divine family of angelic beings that encircle His throne; Supreme and remote from the world of flesh; Controller of the immensity of creation about Him. Thus things visible to our eyes: the mighty deep, the everlasting mountains, the glory of the heavens above, are but manifestations of His invisible power which is everywhere present.

But our contemplation of God does not limit Him to that. He has revealed Himself more intimately to us. He is not merely the great El, the focal centre of all power and glory, but "He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand" (Psa. 95:7). Divine love has bridged the gulf between us, so that we approach Him as our Father, and, in worship, gather before Him as His sons.

John reminds us of our privileged position:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

Sometimes we fail to "behold" this. Many things help to cloud it from view — the natural weakness of the flesh, personal shortcomings, preoccupation with the things of this life, physical and mental weariness, trials of various kinds.

When we thus fail, we deny ourselves the strength, comfort and help that true worship will provide. We try to fight the battle of life in our own strength, and we wonder why we fail. Therefore, the invitation of the Psalmist provides a means of real help in the fight of faith:

*"O come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before Yahweh our Maker!" (Psa. 95:6).*

Privilege Confers Responsibility

John says that we are "begotten of God" (1 John 5:1). This entails responsibility. If we are true sons of God, we must reproduce a family likeness to Him, building into our lives the divine characteristics revealed in the Son of God. And God has provided the way whereby this can be done; it is found in the Word of Truth. Christ prayed:

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Peter taught:

"Ye are born (begotten) again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the WORD OF GOD, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

The Word is designed to change us for the Kingdom. It does this by causing us to turn from our own thoughts, to think in conformity with the mind of God, and view life from the standpoint of God instead of that of the flesh. It will motivate us to act as He would have us act, to love what He loves, to hate where He would have us hate, to reject what He reveals as objectionable; to be no longer self-centred but to seek His way in all things.

Above all else, the Word will reveal the need to develop the attribute of Love. John wrote:

"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:6-11).

God is love, and true sons of God are known by that characteristic. God loved us first. When we were sinners, when we were enemies to His truth, His love drew us to Him. As we contemplate this (and Paul commends this aspect of Divine Love to our attention — Rom 5:8), we recognise how great, how unselfish was that love. We see in it such a measure of compassion as we cannot adequately comprehend now, and certainly cannot fully repay. It is this unselfish quality of love (which sees for its objective the eternal good of another), that we are called upon to exhibit.

This love is not mere sickly sentimentality revealing itself only in platitudes! It will zealously seek to become the channel of God's love to others, whilst manifesting itself in a hatred of things that are evil!

This love will have submission to God as its primary object, and will manifest itself in obedience to His will!

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2).

"If ye love me, keep my commandments... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me... If a man love me, he will keep my word" (John 14:15,21,23).

This is a divine definition of that love, which God desires to see manifested in our lives. This is the love expounded by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 — a chapter that has been subjected to such platitudinous sentimentality, as to rob it of all power.

The love Paul envisaged is not necessarily manifested in acts of charity, for he declared:

"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing" (v.13).

The love that Paul had in mind was the love referred to by the Lord Jesus, when he called upon his hearers to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (affection), thy mind (intellect) and thy strength (action).” God wants our heart, mind, and strength; not merely our word. He desires obedience to His Word, and not selfwilled deeds of charity devoid of this.

Such a love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6).

True love will not stand supinely by when the Truth is in danger, but will boldly stand for its defence, opposing those who challenge its supremacy and authority whether in doctrine or in standards. Love will do this irrespective as to whether its motives are distorted and reputations suffer as a result.

Such a love moved the prophets of Israel to boldly oppose their false contemporaries, and proclaim the will of God without fear or favour. It caused the Lord to publicly indict the Pharisees when they were leading the people astray. It even moved Paul to oppose Peter “face to face because he was blameable” (Gal. 2).

Love motivated all those men: a self-sacrificing love that caused them to forego their own convenience, pleasure, desires, happiness, friends and even pursuits to serve the will of God.

Love Should Permeate the Family of God

We are called upon to love our enemies, to forgive one another to the utmost extent for sins committed. There is no place therefore for personal hostility against another, except where the authority of God or His Word is challenged. It should never exist merely because of personal dislikes, or because of others failing to conduct themselves towards us as we imagine they should do to us. If a brother upsets us, let us “heap coals of fire on his head” by overlooking it. There is no scope for endless feuding in the family of God; rather should understanding, compassion, unity of belief and outlook characterise it.

Here is the standard set us:

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:31-32).

It is easy to talk of love, to indulge in platitudes of high-sounding words concerning it; but true love must be seen in action, as James reminds us (James 2:15-16). It is not sufficient to be merely well-wishers; we must be well-doers helping others along the path of life in a practical way, for true love will be found “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Love is sometimes interpreted as though it is based upon what is pleasing or convenient to flesh, and not what conforms to the Word. We will love as far as it is comfortable to do so, but are not prepared to sacrifice our convenience or ideas for what Truth demands. We will love, and even help in a practical way, so long as we are not vitally affected. But true love demands more than this — it is measured on the Word, and will extend beyond human boundaries.

Nor will it hesitate to criticise and warn if the need be. At the same time, it will hearken to rebuke and accept reproof. This is an element of love that is sometimes overlooked. The Scriptures are quoted and applied as though love is a boundless tolerance, providing a cloak of silence in the face of apostasy and apathy, or expressing peace and goodwill when even principles and standards are at stake. But such is not a Scriptural love as evidenced by the words of Paul:

"I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:15).

Paul's love was manifested, not in pleasing platitudes that pandered to the flesh, but in sober words of exhortation and reproof that had as their objective the salvation of those to whom they were addressed. These exhortations were hard to take on the part of those who were governed by the flesh, so Paul, in gentle rebuke voiced the complaint: "the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved!"

Christ the Pattern of True Love

Christ was the manifestation of the Father's love (John 3:16). "God so loved (i.e. — in this manner) the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." To that end Christ came into the world, and served His ministry on earth. We see him moved by compassion; guiding, encouraging, helping those about him. His love was so compelling as to have a transforming effect on those who experienced it. He carefully considered the problems and weaknesses of his disciples, gently assisting them over the hurdles that were strewn in their paths, wearing himself out in selfless service on their behalf.

But he could also be moved by anger, causing him to publicly denounce the hypocritical Pharisees, openly rebuking those who refused to bow before the will of the Father.

All were manifestations of a love that knew no limits and accepted no bounds.

He revealed the two sides of his Father's character, for God is "merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth," but He is also just, and therefore "will by no means clear the guilty," visiting the iniquity upon those who justly deserve it.

We must not blind our eyes to this two-fold character of the Father; His children will be found exhibiting both aspects. There will be overflowing love and mercy, there will be stern, unrelenting refusal to deviate from the Truth and its demands. Love demands both. We are apostolically commanded to "behold both the goodness and severity of God," and the Scriptures are full of examples of both (Rom. 11:22).

The warmer our love for the things of God, the greater will be our hatred for the ways of unrighteousness. Like the Ephesians, whom Christ commended, we will "not bear them which are evil" (Rev. 2:2), we will hate deeds which Christ said "I also hate" (v. 6). So our love will develop a hatred of evil, whilst ever before us there will be set the high standard of true love: "for this is love, that we walk after His commandments" (2 John 6).

Seeing the Invisible

LOGOS, February, 1985

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

Temporal Things

Paul wrote the words above to the brethren in Corinth. The Ecclesia existed in the midst of a sophisticated society which prided itself on its culture, commerce and permissiveness; a city whose prosperity seemed unassailable, and whose majestic architecture excited the admiration, and induced the imitation of people near and far. Its elegant temples, massive warehouses, attractive shops and dwellings together with its commercial activity spoke of permanent security and affluence; they seemed set for eternity.

But, wrote Paul, “the things which are seen are temporal; they will not last!”

Paul’s words proved prophetic. An earthquake destroyed Corinth, so that today only the ruins of that once prosperous and elegant city remain. Divine judgment was poured out upon that guilty city of sin whose notorious permissiveness was an affront to a righteous God; and Corinth was overwhelmed.

The Apostle’s observations regarding Corinth are applicable to our times. Despite the affluence and boastful arrogance of modern civilisation, despite the manner in which its cities are becoming super-centres of affluence, arrogance and sin, with mighty and ever-higher buildings thrusting their bulk defiantly towards heaven like Babel of old, the logic of history and the witness of prophecy reveal that modern civilisation cannot last.

Even unenlightened man acknowledges that when he thinks hard enough. Expression to it was made in an Editorial in the *Melbourne Age* some time back, when commenting upon the completion of the Victorian Arts Centre. Though strength and elegance were combined to produce a building that would last, designed to be admired to the end of time, the *Age* stated that all things human are terminable, and in the course of time, even that modern wonder of Melbourne would fall into decay. The Editorial stated:

“Everything humans build ultimately is destroyed.

“The ancients spoke of the Seven Wonders of the World. Those marvels were undoubtedly soundly constructed, but today they are no more. Armed forces, natural disasters or the elements have effaced them all — except the Pyramids.

"Although the great pyramid of Cheops has dominated Gizeh for some 5000 years, centuries of rain, heat, wind-blasted sand and warfare have reduced the famous memorial to a remnant of its original splendor. In time — perhaps a long time by the calendar but short in the total perspective of Earth's history — even that old landmark eventually must be reduced to ruins.

"The process has gone on throughout history. It continues before our eyes, nearer home. Early pictures of Melbourne portray streetscapes we hardly recognise: buildings once the pride of their architects have been demolished and replaced by others. Many of those, in turn, have been demolished and replaced by others. Many of those, in turn, have been bulldozed by developers of today's skyscrapers. Destruction and reconstruction has been continuous. Even reinforced concrete will not last to the end of time.

"A similar process occurs with the institutions humans build. History is largely an account of systems — political, economic, social — which 'have their day and cease to be'. Then architects saw them as the last word in sound planning and development — as the masters of communism see their system today. So also did the founders of the empires of Persia, Greece and Rome — now only records in history books. Macaulay's might not have been an impossible dream when he pictured a New Zealander standing on a broken arch of London Bridge wondering why so great a city should have passed away.

"Not only do man's masterpieces of construction pass away, so also do the people who conceive, erect and admire them. At different times Alexander the Great stood and stared at the Pyramids. So did Antony and Cleopatra, Napoleon and General Gordon — and countless others whose names alone remain.

"Viewed against the backdrop of Eternity, people appear as a passing phenomenon — a flash of lightning in the sky of existence. Their human bodies, like the structures they erect, return to the dust as surely as did the civilisations of Babylonia and Assyria.

"In such a relatively impermanent world the human spirit intuitively longs for immutability. It reaches out for an immovable rock to build its hope upon. To that indestructible Rock, the Book points the way".

Related to Eternity

These are words of sober truth which we, of all people, should heed. In being drawn by the Truth to a relationship with Yahweh, we are linked with that which is eternal, and which neither time nor man can efface. "From everlasting to everlasting, I am God", He declared (Psa. 41:13; 90:2; 102:24-27). He revealed Himself to Daniel, not only as "He Who rules in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17), but also as "The Ancient of Days" (Dan. 7:9). As such, the progress of the years means nothing to Yahweh. He is above and beyond all measurements of time. Nations may come and go, measured off by epochs and ages (Acts 17:26), but He continues on having neither beginning nor end. He only hath underived immortality, a nature unique and indestructible; and yet to be revealed in His saints (1 Tim. 6:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:4).

In Daniel's day, Nebuchadnezzar boasted:

"Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the Kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30).

Yahweh's answer to that challenge was:

“Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation...” (Isa. 13:19-20).

The very boldness of this prediction is staggering yet the record is literally true as the lonely, desolate ruins, of the once mighty and elegant city on the banks of the Euphrates testify. One of the greatest cities of antiquity Babylon is now only an archaeological wonder, witnessing to the truth of God’s Word.

We need to heed the lessons of history, prophecy and archaeology, and recognise that all things human are terminable. We may toil, and sweat, and save to acquire material security, yet never live to enjoy it. Not so in regard to the things of God. Paul was able to see the unseen; Abraham to anticipate the city of God (Heb. 11:10); Moses to view the invisible (Heb. 11:27). In contrast to this, ponder the parable of the rich fool. He is represented as indulging in a colloquy of self-delusion: “What shall *I* do, because *I* have no room where to bestow *my* fruits? This will *I* do; *I* will pull down *my* barns, and build greater; and there will *I* bestow all *my* fruits and *my* goods. And *I* will say to *my* soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry!” (Luke 12:17-29).

He had laboured hard for retirement, but when everything was nicely settled in his own mind, there came the devastating call: “Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee..”

Ponder the parable; it is a parable for today. It depicts those who though called to the Truth fail to sacrifice anything to obtain it. It describes the state of the modern world which ignores the lesson of history, let alone that of the Bible, and will be taken off guard at a moment when it least expects it. The world about us is pulling down its barns and building greater. But there is no permanent future for it; and if we are deluded by the prevailing attitude and affluence we are in danger of hearing the words: “Thou fool...”

Notice the progression of the rich fool. He had no real thought of God, nor of the Divine goodness from whence came his wealth. Though rich in material things, he was a spiritual bankrupt. He was caught up in the “love of money” (1 Tim. 6:10) and the deceitfulness of riches (Matt. 13:22), which blinded his eyes to future realities.

Therefore, commencing as a rich fool he became a self-centred fool. This is shown by the repetition of the personal pronouns “I” and “my” in his statements (vv. 17-19). Eleven times they occur in the matter of a few verses. His vision was filled with self, and this prevented him seeing beyond present advantage.

In turn, the self-centred fool became an ambitious fool (vv. 11-19). He planned to pull down his barns (adequate to that point of time) and build greater; forgetting God in his search for a permanent security. Ambition in itself is not evil; but when it succeeds in blinding a person to the realities of the Divine future, it becomes a sin that can bring sorrow and rejection at the Judgment Seat. The fool in the parable looked and lusted after security and ease for years to come, not recognising the will of God that he should labour in faith.

So the ambitious fool finally became a doomed fool, for he did not live to enjoy his wealth. Instead of his barns he was given a burial: the retirement he anticipated was spent in the grave; in place of his coffers he inherited a coffin. And who finally benefited from the things he had stored up for himself? He did not know and was past caring!

He was cut off when least expecting it. The parable of the wealthy fool is the parable of those who fail to keep sight of the realities of the future, the eternal realities and abounding riches of the Kingdom. It is the parable of the world about us which rejects God and is hastening to its doom. Even the *Melbourne Age* hints at that fact.

“The children of this age, are in their generation wiser than the children of the light”, declared the Lord on one occasion. Wise is the wording of *The Age* Editorial. But who will heed it? Let us do so, and in our life seek for that Rock that is higher than we, and upon whose strength we can build with every confidence for the future. We do that not merely by hearing the Word but taking clearly defined steps to implement its principles (Matt. 6:24). Christ is at the door. Let us carefully review our actions in the light of the Scriptures. Do not let it be said of us: “Thou fool!...”

The Divine Poem

LOGOS, December, 1985

A poem is designed to express facts and feelings clothed in the language of music. Its lines are set to harmonise in rhyme and rhythm. Its words are selected to match so as to blend in sound as well as in syllable; and great care is exercised so that the whole is symmetrical. As a consequence, a poem flows along in a manner pleasing to the ear and intriguing to the mind. It has beauty and balance that blends with the harmony of its music. Most poems do not reveal their full meaning by a mere casual reading: they require close attention and sustained thought to unlock their full significance. Their messages need to be carefully pondered.

A poem is more expressive than prose, and usually its words are retained in memory for a much longer period. It describes emotion as well as fact; it describes not only incidents, but the impact of such upon its author. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines poetry as:

'The expression of beautiful or elevated thought, imagination, or feeling, in appropriate language, such language containing a rhythmical element and having usually a metrical form'.

That requires that a true poem be both balanced and beautiful. It should not merely describe but also interpret; expressing a third dimension of feeling and emotion associated with the object described. If the subject is that of a storm, an attempt is made to cause the reader to feel the shake of thunder as well to hearken to its roar; a war-poem may express the horror of carnage, as well as the excitement of victory.

Hebrew Poetry

Hebrew poetry is different from English in that it does not depend upon rhyme or rhythm. It is essentially the poetry of ideas, of Divine revelation, in which an original thought or idea is stated, and then built upon, or contrasted, by successive lines. In general it represents a parallelism of ideas, and ignores the need of rhyme. It, therefore, is not dependent on words at the end of lines rhyming with each other, such as *running* and *cunning*, or *cat* and *mat*. Because it is not so dependent, it is universal poetry for it can be expressed in any language without losing its true force and power. As such, it is wonderfully suited for translation into other languages, which is not the case with English poetry. English poetry, like that of most languages, is extremely difficult to translate without losing its force and meaning. But not so the poetry of the Bible

which retains its significance and power in any language.

Depending upon the Divine revelation of ideas rather than the rhyming of words, Hebrew poetry has various forms, all of which are most intriguing. Two very common ones are the Compleitive and Contrastive forms. A sample of the former is Psalm 1:1:

*Blessed is the man!
That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

In each of the three lines that make up the triplet that follows the initial exclamation there are three sets of related words that build one upon another:

<i>walketh</i>	<i>counsel</i>	<i>ungodly</i>
<i>standeth</i>	<i>way</i>	<i>sinners</i>
<i>sitteth</i>	<i>seat</i>	<i>scornful</i>

A little thought upon this will reveal a remarkable development. The *walking* of the first line suggests mere acquaintance with the *ungodly*. A person meets an acquaintance in the street, and because it is convenient to do so will walk with him, and exchange greetings of the day. However, if he is on a more familiar footing, when the parting of the ways comes, both will pause for a moment to complete the more intimate discussion that has taken place. They both will “*stand in the way.*” Supposing he is a close friend, the suggestion may be made that they sit at the table of a convenient cafe and enjoy a cup of tea together. Therefore *sitting* suggests a closer relationship. So the first thought-word provides a basis upon which is built the succeeding ideas. In this case it reveals that sin is a matter of slow development: there is a negative wickedness (the *ungodly*), positive wickedness (the *sinners*), and worst of all, contemptuous wickedness (the *scornful*).

The second list of words similarly build up into a completed thought. Merely hearkening to the counsel of ungodly acquaintances can influence one to walk after the example of sinners. Then it will not be long before sin becomes a habit, and one is found sitting in the seat of the scornful. Such ignore the fact of sin, and become contemptuous of restraint.

Gradually, and significantly, the lines of this poem express the degrees of sin, from negative, to positive, finally to complete indifference and contempt of Divine authority.

Another form of Hebrew poetry frequently makes play upon contrasts:

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful (Prov. 3:5).*

Note the contrasts between *faithfulness* and *deception*; *wounds* and *kisses*; a *friend* and an *enemy*.

Again:

*The house of the wicked shall be overthrown;
But the tent of the upright shall flourish (Prov. 14:11).*

A house is a permanent abode; a tent is a temporary dwelling. The wicked imagine that the symbols of power they build today, whether in huge fortunes or in mighty edifices, are designed for perpetuity; they have security. They view with contempt the hope of the righteous, and emphasise the insecurity of their form of life.

But the poetry of the Bible, by setting forth the contrast, reminds us that it is the former that shall be overthrown; whilst the latter will become a lasting and substantial structure.

Poetry aims to express much in few words, and this is particularly the case with the poetry of the Bible. For example, who can exhaust the thoughts enclosed in the examples given above. Through them Yahweh speaks to His people.

We As Poems

In view of the wonder of such language, our attention was recently drawn to the statement of Paul: "For we are His workmanship..." (Eph. 2:10). In looking at the Greek we are intrigued to learn that the original word is *poima*, a noun which in that form only occurs twice (Rom. 1:20), and from which is derived the English word: *poem*. So "we are His poem"! It is certainly an intriguing thought that our characters are designed to reflect credit to the Father as a poem does to its composer. A poem owes its conception to its author's intellect and design. It is intended to reveal both harmony and beauty.

If we are His poem this should be our ideal. A poem is symmetrical, properly balanced in its composition; attractive in its wisdom, appealing in its depth of thought; and pleasurable in its form. What a lofty ideal, therefore, is suggested in the words of the Apostle.

A poem adds to the reputation of its Creator: do we? A poem expresses the harmony of His mind: do we? A poem has depth in its meaning and purpose: are we shallow in the things of the Truth? A poem provides pleasure to those who study it: how do people see the truth reflected in us? A poem expresses the deep feelings and emotions of its composer: are we, moved and moving in our witness to the goodness of God? A poet's own image, his deepest feelings are unveiled in the words he carefully selects to express his composition. He ponders long and earnestly the form it should take. Above all else, he desires it to give expression to his feelings, deriving pleasure in what he does editing and re-editing it until at last he perfects it.

How beautifully this is expressed by Paul in the verse before us.

"We are His poem, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

The perfect form of Yahweh's poem is revealed in the character of the Lord. He is the pattern for others to follow. A true believer becomes likewise a poem. His life is transformed by God's influence upon him. It expresses harmony and beauty in a dark age of disharmony and evil. There is very little of real beauty, moral symmetry or spiritual grace in humanity today; but they must be revealed in His people if they are to be His poem.

The design is laid out clearly for us; for "God hath before ordained" every detail of it for our consideration. In Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Rahab there are men and women whose lives are like poems of the Almighty: there is harmony, beauty, appeal, and depth in all that they reveal. There are also faults in the lines of poetry as well, until in Christ there is seen the perfection of beauty. It is almost as though the Composer originally penned the lines of His poem, but improved upon the qualities expressed in it, until, finally, in the "altogether lovely one" (Song. 5:16), there it is seen in all perfection "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

And to that poem of symmetry and harmony we must aim to conform, for "We are His poem created in Christ Jesus unto good works." It is no mere theoretical truth to which we are called; but one that requires a practical outworking in the domestic, social, commercial and Ecclesial avenues of life. We must earnestly consider ourselves, examine our thoughts and actions, and ascertain how closely they conform to the poems of the past: the men and women who have striven to be like Christ, as did Paul. "Be ye imitators of God as dear children," he wrote (Eph. 4:1). This calls for a revelation in our lives of family characteristics such as stem from our heavenly Father: a living in poetic harmony with Him. To attain unto this needs the motivation of the Word within, combined with our personal determination to conform thereto. Our lives will then become as poems pleasing to their Composer. Such characters are worthy of being clothed upon with a nature that will continue "throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). Such poems are fit for eternity.

Abraham's Faith

LOGOS, August, 1987

“Get thee out...” (Genesis 12:1)

The significant charge given to Abram as recorded in Genesis 12:1 commands: “Get thee out of thy kindred...”

In the Hebrew, the directive is expressed in two words *LH LH*. The consonants are identical (and Biblical Hebrew is expressed only in consonants; the vowel points were not added until much later), but the vowel points in the second word give the command as *Lech Lecha*. The phrase literally translated signifies *Go you!!*

A recent issue of *Bible Review* has some interesting statements to make on this.

First, it points out that these two words occur in conjunction only twice in the Bible: In the related commands of Gen. 12:1-3 and 22:2.

The commands are stated in the imperative mood, a form of expression denoting urgency, and implying that it is to the benefit of the one addressed to act in accordance with the instructions given.

In answer to the first, Abraham, motivated by faith, obeyed; and moved down into the Land of Promise. By so acting he was justified by faith as Paul declared (Rom. 4:3-5).

The second is recorded in Genesis 22:2, and in the amazing response of obedience to the difficult command requiring Abraham to offer up his son, he was, declared James, “justified by works” (James 2:21). So his faith was perfected by his actions (v. 22).

There is a remarkable and appropriate symmetry in the commands issued as described in Genesis 12 and 22.

Genesis 12	Genesis 22
Go thou!	Go thou!
Out of thy country	Take thy son
From thy kindred,	Thine only son
From thy father's house	Whom thou lovest
Unto a land	Into the land of Moriah
That I shall shew thee	Even Isaac

In the English version the latter order is not so clearly expressed as it is in Hebrew; for in the former, Isaac is mentioned in the second line, but in the

Hebrew his name is placed last, as set out above.

According to Jewish tradition, these statements comprise dialogues between Abraham and the angel who conveyed the command, in the following manner:

Angel: Take your son.

Abraham: I have two sons.

Angel: Your only son.

Abraham: I have two only sons: Ishmael is the only son of Hagar, and Isaac the only son of Sarah.

Angel: The son whom you love.

Abraham: I love both sons (see Gen. 17:18).

Angel: Even Isaac!

To this there was no response but obedience.

The command of Genesis 12 can be similarly divided into request and reply; for like that of Gen. 22 it is complete in construction, one statement adding to the original thought and command: *Go you!*

These two short Hebrew words thus connect two pivotal episodes in Abraham's life. They are taken up by Paul and James as expressive of Abram being justified first by faith, and Abraham (his name was changed) finally by works. The summary is stated:

"Faith wrought with his (energised) works; and by works was faith made perfect."

Notice, too, the challenge inherent in the two directives.

The first cut Abram off from his past; the second, threatened his future by requiring him to sacrifice his son.

On both occasions, the faith of Abraham was equal to the test.

Motivated by faith he "believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (or justification). His faith was in God. He "believed that God is (*esti*, exists) and that He is (*ginomai*, becomes) a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

Believing in the reality of God, he reasoned logically that in view of that fact, it is obvious that He is a Rewarder of those who seek Him, even though Abram did not, at that time, comprehend what the reward would be.

In the second incident, he was motivated by a faith that had been strengthened by experience and knowledge. In addition to his recognition of the reality of God his knowledge had developed into an absorbing vision of the future. That is obvious from the narrative of Genesis 22. The angel spoke to him twice on that occasion. The first statement (vv. 11-13), in its antitypical application relates to the first advent of the Lord. The "second" statement (see v. 15) sweeps on to the future when "all nations of the earth will be blessed" (vv. 16-18).

He therefore anticipated the two advents of the Lord. Abraham's faith made a reality of the future. Like Paul "he looked not at the things that are seen", recognising them as but temporary, "but at the unseen things" (discerned only

by the eye of faith), realising that “they are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

So Abraham called the name of the place Yahweh Yireh: *He who will be will provide*. In explanation of this he declared: “In the mount of Yahweh shall it be seen” (Gen. 22:14).

Upon this, Christ commented: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). He saw the triumph over sin and death of his greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ; he saw him in eternal glory reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords in the very place where the notable test was so wonderfully answered.

Abraham’s faith, motivated by increasing knowledge, enabled him to match up to the difficult test imposed on him. He had the gratification of hearing the angel declare: “By myself have I sworn, saith Yahweh.....that in blessing I will bless thee...”

Paul comments concerning these things:

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe (have faith) on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom. 4:20-24).

Abraham saw this in type, and recognised its significance. He “accounted that God was able to raise him (Isaac) up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:19).

His wonderful example, in obedience to the twice uttered command: “*Go thou*” is the measure of faith to which we must aim. It was accomplished, not by the Son of God “strengthened” by Divine begettal, but by a man of faith motivated by his understanding of things divine.

To follow him now becomes our test.

The King's Intense Desire

LOGOS, December, 1987

Foreword

On Sunday, 11th October — just five days before his death — Bro. H. P. Mansfield exhorted the Brethren and Sisters of the Tea Tree Gully Ecclesia. He chose the daily reading of 1 Chronicles 28, the last words of David, for the basis of his remarks. It was an exhortation well up to the standard we had come to expect of him and was much appreciated by all present.

But his words have taken on a far greater significance since he fell asleep on Friday 16th October, and the brethren and sisters at Tea Tree Gully desire to share with all the powerful and almost prophetic message left for us on that occasion.

“...And so He giveth His beloved sleep,” but we who remain have the solemn responsibility to heed his words: “to redeem the time,” as he did in these evil days, and prepare “with all our might” for the day for which our brother longed, when the “house of prayer” of living stones will be complete and Yahweh’s Name will be exalted in all the earth. — J. Knowles.

My Dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We have this morning read a very exciting and stimulating chapter. It records the last dramatic act of David in that long life of activity before his God. It records also his advice to Solomon — the advice of a father to a son — for David is about to pass off the scene and leave the work to him who is to follow him.

And it also sets forth for every one of us, the conditions of success in life.

The chapter portrays the motivation of David’s own life. We find throughout his life, there was one objective in his mind — that objective was the glory of Yahweh his Father. It was his objective to establish in Jerusalem, a Temple and a worship that would be honouring unto Him. There was not a time in David’s life when that was absent from his mind, and it is very wonderful to see the dedication of this man, throughout his life, from a teenager — now, here, we have him in old age.

The theme is always there: we never escape it. He is looking to build a temple — a temple in Jerusalem: but in his mind, of course, there is a greater temple, the temple he is looking forward to with greater anticipation than the one that he had hoped to build in the city of Jerusalem. And that temple is the temple of the age to come, the “house of prayer for all nations,” the specifications of which we have in the closing chapters of Ezekiel.

Men of Courage and Faith

David was very much like Paul. As a matter of fact, I find these two men very, very similar indeed. In David's battles, and Paul's efforts for the proclamation of the Truth, there's the same single-minded effort, the same determination to carry out the will of the Father, come what may. Paul says, "we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen: for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal" — so, too, that was the motivation of David's life. We have it as we read in Psalm 27:4, where he speaks of the temple of the age to come, and he sets forth before Yahweh, and before us, the great motivation of his life. He says, "One thing have I desired of Yahweh and that I will seek after that I may dwell in the house of Yahweh all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Yahweh and to enquire in His temple." And he knew full well that that would not apply to the temple he hoped to build in Jerusalem: but it will apply in the temple of the age to come. Because, of course, David was not a priest and therefore would not have been able to minister in that temple of the past, but he will be a priest in the age to come and minister in the house of prayer for all nations.

That was in his mind as he wrote these words — "One thing have I desired of Yahweh and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of Yahweh."

It is his great desire and he is going to seek for that: he is going to carry out everything that will ensure him a place in that temple. In verse 13, as we consider this motivation again, David says, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living" ... I had fainted unless I had believed to see that! He speaks elsewhere in the Psalms concerning his great hope before his God, and how that it was ever before his mind. In the 71st Psalm, we read: "Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles shall quicken me again and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." And on the day when David stood up before the princes of his realm and all the notables of his kingdom, he had gone through many great and sore troubles. He was going to face death itself, but he knew that Yahweh would quicken him and bring him up again from the depths of the earth and increase his greatness and comfort him on every side. He had set that as his great objective in life: nothing was going to deflect him from that objective.

We read in the 84th Psalm some remarkable words as far as this great man is concerned. In verses 10 and 11 we read, "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand (that is, elsewhere). I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Sometimes we hear those words quoted as though David was saying, "as long as I gain the kingdom, that's sufficient for me: if I'm only a doorkeeper that's all I want." But David is not speaking in that way whatever; not at all! A doorkeeper in the temple was one of the most honoured positions. The first person appointed as a doorkeeper was Phinehas, and it was given to him as a particular reward. David, therefore, wants no humble position in the kingdom of God — he has set his eyes upon

something great that he might be with the Lord Jesus Christ in that day of glory. And when he said, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," he meant that.

But what is more, in the Hebrew the words read "I have *chosen* to be a doorkeeper ..." he set that objective before him. He wants to be close to the Saviour in the Age to come, and he sees the kingdom in all its power and glory and he wants to attain unto that wonderful position as far as he is concerned. So it does not matter at what time you look at David the King — it does not matter — there before his mind is the great motivation, that he is going to attain unto the kingdom of God and he is going to see that temple built, even though he cannot build a temple in his own day and age. He wanted to see that, and in every point of his life, that is in his mind.

A Motivation All His Life

As a young man of 20 years of age — perhaps younger — the great objective was the temple in Jerusalem. When we first come upon David as a young boy of about 17 years of age, and shortly afterwards when he suffered the jealous antagonism of Saul and sought refuge with Samuel the prophet, what was the conversation? What was the subject of consideration at that particular point? It was the temple in Jerusalem. He discussed this with Samuel the prophet and came to an understanding of it in such a way that later on he was able to use that which Samuel had revealed unto him about the temple in Jerusalem, and to pass on to Solomon that which he had received from Samuel.

We learn this in 1 Chron. 9:22. There we read these words, "All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates, were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogies in their villages whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office." These very appointments in the temple had been laid down by David, and David had obtained them from Samuel the seer.

When he met with Samuel and when he took refuge with the prophet in the town of Ramah, David came in contact with the school of prophets Samuel had established. David was an honoured member of that group of scholars, and there with Samuel the prophet he set about to understand the things that Yahweh would unravel in his life. He learnt then about the temple that was going to be built in Jerusalem, and received the honoured position of knowing all the appointments of that temple which he carefully gathered together and retained in his memory — until the time came, in the chapter before us, on his very deathbed, that he passed them on to Solomon.

That is the man David — that is the hero of faith we are reading about; a man that was never deterred by anything because he had such a vision of the future that had sustained him in every difficulty and every problem. He rose superior to these things because, of course, he had that motivation.

We too, need a motivation like that: a motivation that sees beyond the present to the glory that is going to be revealed in this earth. So that we see, as it were,

the kingdom itself and we are moved by these things to do that which Yahweh would have us do.

Later, when David became king in Israel, when he was in Jerusalem and all the enemies were subdued before him, what was his theme then? We read in the 132rd Psalm what his theme was then, because once again, the temple comes up for consideration, and he spoke of this to others until all around him heard of his great objective. “Yahweh, remember David in all his afflictions, how he swore unto Yahweh and vowed unto the mighty one of Jacob, Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, I will not go up to my bed, I will not give sleep to mine eyes nor slumber to mine eyelids until I find a place for Yahweh, an habitation for the mighty one of Jacob.” So, as an old man that same great motivation was there; the vision was there; and he thought and spoke about it until all around him heard about this temple — heard about the objective that Yahweh had, to be manifested through this man David.

As we know, he earnestly desired to build the temple. We recall the circumstances in the 2 Samuel 7, when he said to Nathan the prophet that he desired to build the temple for Yahweh. It seemed to him completely incongruous that he should dwell in a palace of cedar and the house of God be in tents. It was incongruous. The great King of Heaven ought to have a grander position than that, and he was prepared to extend himself in every way that he might supply the deficit. That was his motivation. He desired to do it, and it was the greatest ambition of his life — at that stage he did not know that it was not to be he who would build that temple, and though he later prayed for that as Moses prayed to go over to the promised land, yet because of the types associated with both men, their prayers were refused. He was not permitted to build that temple. Another one would build it — Solomon his son.

Desire Deferred & Trouble Faced

But there is the greatness of David. Though he was not permitted to build that temple, though he was not to carry out what was the greatest ambition of his life, he did all in his power that that temple might be built. He stored up wealth and riches that they might garnish that temple that he would never live to see, as he understood. Though he could not see the results, nor labour in that field, nevertheless he gave himself completely to the work in that way, and gathered everything together that Solomon might have the means whereby this could be done.

We have in chapter 29:1-2, the statement to Solomon his son — the father to the son — the one that is going to carry on that which he had established: “Furthermore, David the King said unto all the congregation” (the word in the Hebrew is similar to the word “ecclesia”), “Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is young and tender, and the work is great, for the palace (that is the temple) is not for man, but for Yahweh Elohim. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold and silver for things of silver, and brass for things of brass, and iron for things of iron,

and wood for things of wood, onyx stones and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver..." given it unto that purpose. Now there is our man of faith. "I have prepared *with all my might ... with all my affection ...* that I might be able to store up that which is going to glamorise the temple of the living God." The whole of his life was bound around these things: the keenness and the dedication and the enthusiasm of this old man that stood up at that time, must have penetrated the whole of that great congregation that was before him.

It was not easy work that he did, even though he was king. There was a difficulty associated with it: and as we read the life of David, we see those difficulties that sometimes almost overwhelmed him.

So when you come to the Psalms and you read in them of how problems and difficulties almost destroyed him, understand that that was very, very real to the mind of David. Though he was king and though at this time he was triumphant in the earth, it was not always like that. He had enemies about him, and those enemies were there to try to undermine him. He had to flee before Saul; he had to endure the rebellion of his own children; and yet, through it all, there was one thing that motivated him — the things of Yahweh.

But it was not easy.

He tells us this in 1 Chronicles 22:14: "Now behold..." — have a look at this — "in my trouble I have prepared for the house of Yahweh, an hundred thousand talents of gold ..." and so forth. Wherever David went, in all the victories that he won, he demanded of the conquered the wealth and treasures for his realm, and he stored that up, that it might be there for Solomon his son; that it might grace the temple that Solomon would build. And, as he says, here, "Behold, in my trouble I have done this ... I have overcome that trouble and I have prepared for the work of God."

He did not see the temple, because he died before it was completed. But he did see it in outline. He saw that temple in exactly the same way as we can see the temple of the age to come, if we study the plans and specifications given in the closing chapters of Ezekiel. David could see the temple just as vividly as that, because, of course, the plans and specifications had been given unto David.

Now I believe that David would have prayed unto the Father when he was not allowed to build that temple — he would have prayed unto the Father, that the Father would give him a vision, and an outline of the temple, that he might mentally visualise that place, that he might at least see it in anticipation.

And I believe the earnest prayer of David would have ascended unto the Father, as the king accepted the fact that he could not build the temple — at least let him have an understanding of the glory of that place! And that was granted him.

In 1 Chronicles 28, David received the blueprints of the structure that his son would build. We read in verse 11, "Then David gave to Solomon, his son, the

pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasures thereof, and of all the upper chambers thereof, and the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat. And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of Yahweh.” So he had been inspired to set out the plans and specifications and made a mental picture of that which had been set before him. He says in verse 19 to Solomon: “All this, said David, Yahweh made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of a good courage, and do it: fear not nor be dismayed: for Yahweh Elohim, even my God, will be with thee. He will not fail nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of Yahweh.”

So by inspiration these plans and specifications had been given unto David. He knew the size of the temple; he knew how it would look; he knew the very pattern that was set down by Almighty God; and he knew the appointments of the various places of the temple; what the priests would do, and what the porters would do. Every one of the ordinances of the temple had been given unto David, and he passed it on to Solomon.

Much the same, of course, as the Truth has been revived by Bro. Thomas in these closing days of the Gentiles, and the pattern and the plans of the house of prayer that is being built now of living stones, has been passed into our hands. And it has been, as it were, that the patterns and the plans of that have been given unto us, and we now must carry on the work that they have put down. “Be strong and of good courage and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed.”

So the work was given unto Solomon.

A Spirit That Overcomes Weakness

In the second verse of that chapter we read this morning, there is a very, very remarkable statement. We read there that “David, the king, stood up upon his feet ...” He stood up upon his feet! He stood up, actually as a servant would stand when the master calls. But there is more behind that statement. We read that “he stood up upon his feet.” David was desperately sick at the time; he was on his deathbed. When, earlier, the act of sedition by Adonijah had been reported, he was too ill to get out of bed for that. He directed his officials to carry the matter out and have Solomon anointed king in Gihon. But he could not get out himself; he had not the physical stamina to do so. He was ill in bed, and so desperately ill at that time that he had to pass that work on to someone else.

But here is a greater work — a greater work than suppressing the sedition, or of setting Solomon as king in Israel. This is the work of Yahweh; this is the temple of the living God; this is the great objective in all his life, which he had hoped to see. So David stands upon his feet; he gets out of that bed; he gathers those people together, and he sets before them what they ought to do and something that they had to carry out, because it was desperately needed in the midst of Israel. And so strong was the motivation of that man; so determined was he to carry out the work of God, that as far as he was concerned, he stood up and

he called his people to him, and he said: "Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house ... I was not permitted to do so, so I have passed it on to Solomon my son, appointed of Yahweh to that end". As he carries this out, David is going to forward the work that it had been his ambition to do from the very beginning as a young man, and he is going to give that into the hands of Solomon, that Solomon might complete it.

You see, there we have a man of faith. And that man of faith saw beyond anything else in life, that motive. That is why David, with all his faults, is called a "man after God's own heart," because he was single-minded, as was Paul — "This one thing I do ..."

Now as he stands before the people, to set forth these principles before them, he also tells them how to carry the work out, and he gives them in this chapter, instruction and encouragement to that end, warning them that the work they are engaged upon is a Divine work: they cannot take it in hand and do it as they want to do it. There are certain plans and specifications he has received from Yahweh and ceremonially on that day of glory, passes it on to Solomon his son, and calls upon him to carry this out. And he says it must be carried out according to the terms and specifications laid down of Yahweh. He cannot please himself. He has got to carry that pattern out exclusively in accordance with the will of Yahweh, the architect of that temple. He is like Moses who received the pattern of the tabernacle. "See that thou build it according to the pattern given thee in the mount" was the specific instructions of Yahweh. That now is passed on to Solomon, in relation to the temple.

And that is passed on to us also, brethren and sisters, in relation to the Truth that we have today. We cannot please ourselves — we might *like* to please ourselves. But there are certain patterns and specifications laid down and we have got to carry them out. Sometimes it is rather troublous to do so, and we would prefer some alternative in order to follow that. But, you know there are *no* alternatives with Yahweh — *none whatever!* And we must carry out according to that. If not ... if we do not do that, then we are going to fail in the building that Yahweh desires to see.

Reward of Labour

In 1 Corinthians, there are some very remarkable words of Paul that, in a way, are similar to these words that David is telling to Solomon his son. He says in 1 Corinthians 3:9, "We are labourers together with God." Now that is a very honoured position — we are labourers together with God! We are under the direction of Yahweh. Naturally, if we are labourers together with God we have to carry out the work according to His specifications. Paul was doing that. He was very careful to see that whatever he did was in accordance with those specifications. He describes himself as a "wise master-builder," and says in verse 10 "I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon." the he issues a warning: "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." You cannot select another foundation. That had been laid. But you can build on that

foundation in a way that is not approved of Yahweh. The foundation is all right, but the erection upon that foundation may not be. "Now if any man," says Paul in verse 12, "build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, hay, wood, stubble, every man's work will be made manifest, for the day will manifest it." It is going to be tested by fire.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth and we are gathered before him, it is not a matter merely whether we will gain the kingdom or not, but there is going to be assessed the very quality of the work that we do for Almighty God. It does not matter what style of work we are engaged upon: it can be the humblest work in the ecclesia. We can do it as "unto Yahweh" or not. We must be extremely careful the way we work in anything that Yahweh has given into our hands to do. There is not a single item of work within the compass of the things of Yahweh — whether it is putting a leaflet in a letter box, or whether it is speaking from a public address platform, or whatever it is — that is unimportant. When a person goes out in that fashion, he goes out for God and the seal of Yahweh is on him. And what he does is taken heed of in heaven. Whatever we do as far as the Truth is concerned, we must give it our best. That is what is meant by "gold and silver and precious stones" which will endure the fire. And the fire of judgment is going to assess the quality of our work as well as also the fact that we might be saved. We need to bear that in mind.

See what he says in verse 14 — "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon ..." he is going to receive a reward.

Something in addition to life eternal. David will receive a position of doorkeeper in the temple; he set his heart on that. His work will sustain the fire of judgment. "But," we read in verse 15, "if any man's work shall be burned, he will suffer loss, though he himself may be saved, yet as by fire." In this chapter the apostle is dealing with three classes of labourers. There are the wise — that's the apostle Paul — who receive wages; there are the unwise, who introduce wrong material, and have their wages reduced ("suffer loss" v. 15); and there are those that destroy, and will in turn be destroyed, and they are referred to as "defiling" the temple of God — the word means "destroy." And they will be destroyed!

Thus, there are various types of labourers. So it is in this day of glory as far as David is concerned, and his anxious desire — as you could understand in the fact that the whole of his life has been given to this project and the wealth has been gathered up in every way, and the gold, and silver and precious stones and so forth. His great desire is for the consummation of his great objective — the establishment of that temple — and he sets before the people, and before his son Solomon, the conditions for success.

When you look closely at this chapter, a very dramatic picture emerges. I can imagine David before the company of people there, a great august company of all the princes and notables of the realm gathered before him. Probably, he would be on a platform lifted up before them so that he could speak to the

people. Before him would be Solomon, to whom he has passed the plans and specifications of that temple.

But I would imagine that Solomon, the son, would kneel before his father, as the father placed into his hands the documents that laid the foundations for the building of that temple.

And now before the whole of the people, and gathering them likewise into his exhortation, he exhorts Solomon what he must do in the days that are before him. He sets before Solomon the conditions of success: and those conditions of success are retained to this very day and they are set before us in this chapter.

Verse 7 and 8 declare: "Moreover, I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my statutes as at this day. Now therefore in the sight of all the congregation of Yahweh and in the audience of the people, *keep* and *seek* for all the commandments of Yahweh thy God."

Now, here is the first essential. He is to "keep and seek." He is to carefully assess what the commandments of God require, and he is to carry out those commandments. He is to perform these things. It is not merely only to seek them that he might see the wonder of the commandments of Yahweh, but to carry them out. To seek a thing is to give yourself to that end. It is not a mere passive action. You are pursuing an objective, and therefore "to seek" in that fashion is to actively pursue the matter that is set before him. To do that, one needs to be enthusiastic for the things of God; one must understand why one is called upon to pursue this. We won't pursue or seek the commandments of God unless we are enthusiastic to keep them. We would prefer not to know about them if we are not going to keep them. So the first essential is to have an active interest in what the commandments of Yahweh entail upon us. That is the responsibility that falls upon us in our day and generation. We need to know what God wants: we need to honour Him by seeking those things out. And we must pursue those things to the ultimate end.

Come to know David's God

The second need in this exhortation of David, was a personal knowledge of God. Verse 9: "Thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father." Notice the language: "*The God of thy father.*" "Solomon, come to understand *my God* ... the One that has been with me in all the circumstances of life ... the One on whom I have been able to draw and upon whom I have been able to lean ... the One that has brought me to this moment of triumph, where the whole nation is humbled before me, and I am king of the land ... the One whom I have *loved* to have served by building that temple. But you, my son, will carry it out ... so, know thou the *God of thy father.*"

And to me, that's a marvellous thing for a father to say to his son.

The word "know" in this verse is similar, in its Hebrew form to the word in John 17: "This is life eternal to *know* Thee". It speaks of a personal knowledge of God. It is the same word as in the 4th of Genesis where Adam "knew" his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore a son. The association of two people in that in-

timate fashion produces new life. So it will with Solomon if he comes to *know* Yahweh in that fashion: if he comes to understand the God of his father, because the God of his father was the One that sustained him in every circumstance of life, and He was the One, also, that disciplined David when David needed discipline. He was the One that was with David when he walked across the plain of Elah to battle with Goliath: He was the One that was with David in all the circumstances of life. In moments of triumph, and sometimes moments of tragedy. Never at any stage was David separated from his God. In every circumstance, He was there.

Notice verse 20: David said to Solomon his son “Be strong and of good courage and do it, fear not nor be dismayed, for Yahweh Elohim, *even my God*, — *my Elohim* — will be with thee.” David had spoken about this, and he knew concerning this, because in his own experiences of life there was the circumstances of the Elohim of Yahweh that overshadowed the life of David. Now he called upon people to “taste and see that Yahweh is good.” The “angel of Yahweh,” he said “encampeth around the righteous and delivereth them.” “That’s *my God*, Solomon my son.” Then before the whole of that congregation — a dramatic moment, when, I believe, that boy would have been kneeling before his father, he gives him that exhortation and calls upon them all to witness the power, the majesty and the requirements of “Yahweh *my God*.”

Solomon had to understand the God of his father, for He was the foundation of that family. That family would be nothing without Yahweh. Without Yahweh, it is only the “son of Jesse,” as Saul contemptuously called David. But with God, who is going to frustrate that family? That family will be in the kingdom as we learn in the 12th chapter of Zechariah. The Messiah is of that family of David, because God was with him.

Personal Commitment

The third need David set before them is “a perfect heart.” The word “perfect” in that verse does not mean perfect in the sense that there is no sin. The Hebrew word means “to be at one.” It means a perfect heart, a heart complete with God. It is at one with God, and David was at one with God. I believe that even in the moment of David’s sin, he would still be one with God, in this sense — that, when the knowledge of this came home to him (as it did with chilling force), he realised what he ought to do. He was one with God; his heart was generally perfect with his God — whole and at one with Him. And that word “perfect” used there, is really a word that speaks of close fellowship with God. It means to be completely at one; so, bound together in close fellowship with God. *That* perfect heart Solomon *must* develop. And he is to *serve* Him with a perfect heart. He is to “labour” — that’s what the word means — and to work for God, in a way that God will approve — in complete fellowship and oneness with the Father in the heavens.

Always Abounding

The fourth need that he sets before us is “willingly” — to do so “willingly”. “A

perfect heart and with a willing mind.”

A “willing mind” is a cheerful mind. A willing mind is a mind that wants to do the work that is set before it. If a person is willing he is very happy in the labour that he is doing. So his heart is not only perfect or one with God, he identifies himself with the objective of God: and therefore he works willingly and cheerfully with his God. He sets himself that great objective and that is the way that he is going to work. He is going to identify himself with God if he is of such a character as that; if his mind is like that. If, mentally, he is attuned to the things of God, he sees the success of the things of God as his success: he sees the opposition to the things of God as his opposition. That is what David said concerning the enemies of Yahweh: “I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them as my enemies.” While he would extend mercy to *his* real enemies such as Saul, those that were opposed to Almighty God were the enemies of David. But Solomon had to manifest himself in a willing heart, that people might see that he was enthusiastic and cheerful in the things and the work he had set himself.

Examine The Heart

And then the fifth need expressed in that same verse, is to understand and recognise the One whom we worship. So he says, “for Yahweh searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever.”

There were kings in Israel, who externally seemed to be seeking their God, but in heart they never did. And that is what David is talking about here. It’s not merely a matter of externals. It’s a matter of the heart. It’s when a person is in the presence of Yahweh and on his own, and he speaks with Yahweh and knows that Almighty God understands the innermost part of his heart.

“He searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.” That’s the One we are worshipping this morning. He is examining our heart now. He knows exactly the situation with us. He knows our motivation. He knows why we do a certain thing. Is it for our own aggrandisement or is it a service to Him? Are we prepared to sacrifice to that end, or not? He understands these things.

That One whom we serve is the same One as Paul, likewise, brings before our mind. In Hebrews 4:12 the apostle tells us this concerning Him: “For the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit ...” The Word alone can do that; there is no knife that can get there. The Word of God alone can separate that which is soulish from that which is spiritual: that which is merely fleshly from that which is God-motivated. We cannot determine that in each one of us. We may make a mistake. The Word of God does not! It penetrates into the innermost parts of the heart and sets that out very, very clearly. “Piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

That's what this Word is to us. It becomes our critic. It criticises our motives and criticises our objectives. "... neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, for all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." That's the One we are serving.

In similar words to those of David before Solomon, we have in Revelation 2:23, "I will kill her children with death and all the ecclesia shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." The reins and the heart — the kidneys and the heart, because the kidney is the seat of emotion, and the heart is the seat of intellectual understanding, and He examines both.

He examines our intellectual understanding, and our emotion, because our emotion should be with God, too. We are not to be cold and indifferent to the things of God: we have to be warm and vibrant. We have to have an emotion that will motivate us and move us.

Why?

Because God is talking to us, and God is directing us, and He searches the heart and reins. Just as when they took a sacrifice. It may be a burnt offering. They opened that up and they searched it — is it perfect? And *then* it was offered.

He takes our life, which should be a sacrifice to Him, and He searches into that heart and reins — He searches our minds and understanding. He searches our emotions, why we are doing a certain thing; and He understands, and we will not delude Him in any way whatsoever.

Final Message to his Son

We come to the final exhortation of David to Solomon in the 20th verse:

"And David said to Solomon, Be strong and of good courage and do it, fear not nor be dismayed, for Yahweh Elohim, even my God will be with thee: He will not fail thee nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of Yahweh."

There we have the marvellous final exhortation to Solomon; and as the aged father spoke to the son on that day — the hero of many a battle as the people well knew, the one whom Yahweh had spoken to as they also knew — he was able to speak to his son, and say "He will not fail thee nor forsake thee," and they had evidence of that in the man David, as he stood up before the whole of that people, because the covenant had been made with him, and all Israel knew on that day that it was not Solomon his son, but David the father that had accomplished that, and brought that covenant — that covenant which one day will be vindicated in all the earth.

David's Last Prayer

The last words of David in the Word of God is his prayer.

We read in the next chapter, verse 10, "Then David blessed Yahweh before all the congregation and David said, Blessed be thou Yahweh Elohim of Israel our

Father for ever and ever.” Very similar to the Lord’s prayer, it is. “Thine, O Yahweh, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. For all that is in the heaven and all that is in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom O Yahweh. Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thy hand is power and might, and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all. Now therefore our God we thank thee and praise thy Glorious Name. But who am I and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort, for all things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee.” We’re nothing! “We are strangers and sojourners as were our fathers: our days on earth are a shadow, there is none abiding: O Yahweh, our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thy Holy Name, cometh of Thine hand, and it is all Thine own. I know also my God that Thou triest the heart.”

... how he knew that, how he knew that ...

... when he composed Psalm 51: when he was on the floor of the palace, humbly before his God, and before Nathan the prophet!

“I know also my God that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me in the uprightness of mine heart, I have willingly offered these things and now I have seen with joy Thy people, which are present here to offer willingly unto thee. O Yahweh Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, our father, keep this for ever in the imaginations of the thoughts of the hearts of Thy people and prepare their heart unto Thee, and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, Thy statutes, and to do all these things and to build the palace for which I have made provision.”

Then he finally blessed the congregation.

“Now bless Yahweh your God. And all the congregation blessed Yahweh God of their fathers.”

What Remains Today?

Those are the last words of David ’til we see him again, God permitting it, in the age to come.

The last words of David — a prayer, and what a prayer it is! How it gathers all the strength of his life together and all the ambition that he ever had in the spiritual realm in the things that Yahweh had set before him.

What happened, David? What happened? Go to the days of Jeremiah, and see that temple a burnt ruin; see the very ones unto whom had been given the custody of the Truth in those days so act that the Truth was in the ground.

The man of that day wrote a lamentation.

We have the Truth now, brethren and sisters. It is what we are going to do with that, that counts now. The lives of those men are past — ours remain.

May it be that in the strength of Yahweh, we sustain ourselves in integrity before Him, and that in the day of triumph, we might be with David and the Lord Jesus Christ, as of their own.

Olive Trees of Gethsemane

LOGOS, January, 1988

The Olive trees of Gethsemane are impressive because of their great age and splendid dignity. But there are aspects of this popular tourist attraction that are not generally recognised.

The olive tree is one of several in the Garden of Gethsemane situated opposite the Temple area of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley.

It was to that area that the Lord made his way on the night he was betrayed. Arriving there he set the Apostles to watch, for he knew what that night would bring forth. But the Apostles were tired out by the exertions of that day: the long and solemn discussions in the Upper Room, the partaking of the emblems and the singing of Psalms, all of which extended to midnight (Psa. 119:62) and with further involved expositions and prayer as they wended their way through the dark streets of the sleeping city (John 15 to 17), until, as John records, they left its precincts (see John 18:1) to make their way across “beyond where Kidron’s waters flow, to sad Gethsemane.” And, instead of watching “one hour” they went to sleep.

The Garden of Gethsemane was on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, a far larger area than that depicted today. The small clump of olive trees that remain are extremely ancient, and could date back to the times of the Lord. The trees have been studied by scientists, and subjected to a carbon dating process, and have been estimated to be approximately 2,000 years old. In fact, they could well be some of the actual trees, or offshoots of them, which existed at that time.

What Gethsemane Signifies

Gethsemane signifies *Oil Press*. So obviously it was the site not only for the trees to grow, but also for oil to be extracted and processed. Olive oil was used as a symbol for the Divine illumination of the Word. It was an important element of the anointing oil that was used to induct kings, prophets and priests into their high offices as an appointment of Yahweh.

In ancient Israel, the people had the honour of preparing the special oil for feeding the seven-branched lampstand in the Tabernacle and Temple. Such oil would be handmade or “beaten” with greatest care, ensuring that all pollution

be removed, and the perfect golden oil provided (see Exod. 27:20; Zech. 4:12). That oil represented the illumination spread abroad by perfected saints in the Age to come (v. 14).

A careful and lengthy process was required to perfect the oil. First the berries had to be ripened by the action of the sun producing a delightful purple olive; the colour (red and blue) of God manifest in the flesh (cp. Mal. 4:2). Then the tree was beaten, a symbol of trial, so as to shake down the olives, which were gathered up and crushed in an oil press; figuratively humiliated to destroy the outer flesh, and extract the inner oil. But even that did not complete the process. The oil had to be "cleansed" from the pollution that the process had revealed. This was done by baptism! The oil was baptised in boiling water. This brought all the scum and refuse to the surface which was then skimmed off. Finally, after careful preparation, the golden oil remained, the finest unpolluted oil, for the feeding of the Lampstand.

What remarkable symbolism is thus revealed! What lessons it taught for striving of flesh to attain unto God-likeness! How appropriate that the Lord should make his way to the Garden of Gethsemane for the final striving in his conquest of sin!

In the place called the Oil Press, the Lord, as the light of the world, was subjected to pressure to perfect his ministry. With earnest emotion he sought Divine help and strength to sustain him in his trial. So keenly did he appreciate the significance of that moment, that his sweat appeared as great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Not merely because of the agony of the cross, but because of his deep concern for the success of his ministry, and for the agony he knew his disciples must experience and for the trials of his followers who, in his absence, would seek the salvation of Yahweh. He was moved also for the city and people of Israel whom he loved so deeply. Angels came and strengthened him, sustaining him at that moment of great striving. The final preparation was being made, the final pressure exerted to produce the golden oil to illuminate the world, that the influence of his Light might shine forth more brightly to penetrate the darkest corners.

The awaiting Apostles slept, to be awakened by the noise of soldiers with Judas at the head, to betray him with a kiss. The incompetence of the soldiers was evident. They had not power to take him without his connivance. On the other hand the awful tragedy and final triumph of the cross produced the Saviour of mankind; and the oil to illuminate the world of darkness. "He (John) was not that light, but he came to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:8) — the Light that darkness could not destroy, but which is destined to dispel the darkness that, in these closing days of the Gentiles, already is slowly but surely creeping over this world of Gentilism (Isa. 60:1-2).

Why a Garden?

A Garden was appropriate for the final strivings of the Lord, and his conquest of flesh. It was in a garden that the First Adam succumbed to temptation and

introduced sin into the world; and it was in a garden that the Second Adam conquered sin and brought salvation to light for those who come to the illumination of that Light. It was life in a garden that the Lord promised the repentant thief on the cross: "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise." For "paradise" signifies an enclosed garden.

That thief had come to the light, and in dramatic circumstances had proclaimed his faith in the Lord at a time when even his Apostles temporarily turned from him. And what a garden that will be! Isaiah predicted that it comprises a special allotment in the Land, not the whole earth as some imagine. He declared:

"Yahweh shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the paradise of Yahweh" (Isa. 51:3).

That "paradise," that enclosed garden, will comprise Jerusalem and its environs, in which will be established the House of Prayer for all nations. The thief was not only promised eternal life, but a special position of eminence in that day with the Lord with whom he suffered (himself justly, as he stated).

The House of Prayer

Flesh finds it impossible to understand the Cross, or the appeal of the thief and the promise of the Lord to him. The modern Garden of Gethsemane (only a small part of the original) is a little plot of land in front of a church: *the Church of All Nations*, as it is called. What an impossible application of the Lord's declaration: "My house shall be called of all nations, a house of prayer." When the glory of the Temple depicted by Ezekiel is borne in mind, how petty appears the title of this building today with all its mumbo-jumbo of Christianised pagan rites and false teaching of immortal soulism, trinitarianism etc. All such wickedness will be swept away when the earthquake splits and Jerusalem is revived as a Temple city in accordance with the promise of Ezekiel:

"Son of man, the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of Israel for ever, and My holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings, in their high places ... Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from Me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever" (Ezek. 43:7-9).

In that day the Light shall shine forth brightly, and all shall radiate and reflect it to the glory of Yahweh.

Peace in the Storms of Life

LOGOS, April, 1988

“Yahweh will bless His people with peace” — Psalm 29:11

There is nothing unique in the statement above as far as Scripture is concerned; it is what we would expect to find recorded therein.

What is remarkable about it is its setting. It is found in a Psalm in which David describes the ravages and fear-inspiring fury of a thunderstorm.

He sees it sweeping in from the north-west, from over the “great waters” of the Mediterranean (vv. 3-4). It forces its way through the cedars of Lebanon, smashing the branches, bending giants of the forest in its path, uprooting those not firmly anchored in the soil, spreading dismay and devastation as it moves along. He makes mention of the ear-splitting peal of thunder, as its menacing roll climaxes in a final resounding clap which causes the earth and mountains to shake, and fear-crazed animals to give premature birth to their young. He describes how the dark clouds that canopied the sky above were illuminated and cleft by flames of fire, as forked lightning struck its jagged barbs in sharp arrows towards the earth below (vv. 5-8).

But the storm died away, expending itself in the wilderness of the south towards Kadesh; and in the resultant tranquillity, the Psalmist uttered the statement: “Yahweh will bless His people with peace.” How great by contrast appears the peace which follows a storm, all nature seems to benefit from the upheaval, and to smile with great intensity in consequence. How wonderful is the peace that God gives to His people in the midst of the storms of life both personal and ecclesial.

Yahweh’s Voice in the Storm

In describing the storm, the Psalmist constantly refers to “the voice of Yahweh” (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9). He does so because its very power and fury exhibits the majesty and might of Yahweh. How impressive is a storm as it sweeps in from across the ocean! How awe-inspiring is the clap of thunder that seems to split the very sky above, and acts as herald for the downpour that follows! How fearful is the sight of the dark clouds above when riven asunder, by the brilliance of forked-lightning which streaks across the heavens.

Are we not impressed with the evidence of Divine majesty and power when we come face to face with such irresistible forces of nature? The majesty and power of Yahweh in control of the storm, is suggested in the Psalm before us. The very repetition and sound of the praise *Kol Yahweh* (the word of Yahweh) is as the recurring peals of thunder as they roll across the wide expanse of heaven.

And though a storm of wind, rain, thunder and lightning seems a strange and incongruous background upon which to speak of peace, surely those who can discern Divine majesty in its fury, hear also the still, small voice of Yahweh promising the blessings of peace.

Let us discern the lesson in the Psalm. David saw in the storm a figurative representation of the political storm that shall introduce the peace of the millenium. That this is the idea behind his description is apparent from his reference to the Flood. The first line of v. 10 can be literally rendered: "Yahweh sat enthroned at the deluge." The Hebrew *Mabbuwl*, rendered "flood," is only elsewhere used for the deluge of Noah's day. David thus linked the Flood with the peace of the millenium yet to be manifested, for the second line of this verse states: "Yea Yahweh sitteth King for ever." And the bridge that links these two lines as one is supplied by the words of the Lord Jesus: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26).

At the birth of the Lord, the angels sang: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace and goodwill toward men." This Psalm reveals how this shall be brought about. Notice how that the first verse enunciates glory to God in the highest.

Give unto Yahweh, O ye mighty,

Give unto Yahweh glory and strength.

Notice how the last verse enunciates peace and goodwill towards men.

Yahweh will give strength unto His people;

Yahweh will bless His people with peace.

Yahweh: Giver of Peace

Yahweh is the Giver of peace even now. Therefore we must seek His aid to that end, in the midst of personal or ecclesial storms. It is of the greatest significance that Paul, in the midst of one of the worst Ecclesial storms to break in fury upon the Apostolic Ecclesias, addressed Yahweh as "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). Christ likewise told his disciples:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

He spake to them of "a peace that passes the understanding of man."

How important to seek that peace at all times; especially when the Ecclesial world is distracted by storms.

There is a danger that some may fall by the wayside. How vital to shelter the lambs when the thunder rolls, the hurricane roars, and the barbed lightning

strikes! It is the peace of God that helps at such a time; it is communion with the still, small voice that can be heard above the noise of the tumult that we need to hear.

What is peace? Few such common terms are less understood. Silence is not peace; indifference is not peace; hesitation to speak because of the selfish fear of consequences is not peace. The peace of which David spoke was a peace that followed the passion of the storm. The voice of God was in the storm, and the peace of God rested upon His people, even in the midst of its force and passion.

True peace requires communion of interests, understanding and outlook. Both the Hebrew and Greek words come from roots that signify unity and oneness, and thus relate to true fellowship. It is possible to have peace with God whilst the storm is raging around us. David learned that truth and spoke of it in a Psalm that is almost entirely devoted to the fury and ravages of storm, and which describes the deafening ear-splitting crash of thunder, and the blinding, menacing flash of lightning.

We cannot ignore the storm, but we need not be diverted from the peace of God through it. Nevertheless, we can be deluded with the desire for peace, and depreciate the storm which is sometimes necessary. Because the desire is so great, we can set about compromising the requirements of Yahweh to obtain it, and forget that Yahweh is in the storm. But there can be no divine peace with people who set themselves against Yahweh or His Word. "There is no peace, saith Yahweh, unto the wicked." "The way of peace have they not known." Let us compromise with such and there will be no true peace; let us fail to uphold the standards of God in doctrine and practice, and we will fall on evil days.

We learn from Matthew 5:45, that Yahweh showers His good gifts upon evil and good alike. The rain falls on both; the sun shines on both; the good gifts of nature are enjoyed by both.

But He does not shower his blessings of peace on both. This is an exclusive blessing. David has reminded us that that is reserved for "His people." They discover it even amid the storm. Controversy might rage about us; the cedars of Lebanon might be uprooted; the winds of contrary doctrine might blow strongly; but peace of mind is possible if we understand, accept and do what is right to the glory of Yahweh, and not that which is to the honour of flesh. We must be active in doing good at such times; for it is only in active co-operation with God that true peace will be found.

The Peace Of Harmonious Co-operation

Thus in calling us to peace, Yahweh is not calling us to indolence. We can have what men call peace if we fall asleep. We may not even hear the storm under such circumstances. On the other hand, we may be awakened by its turmoil to recognise the need of making our shelter thoroughly weather-proof. In such a case the storm is a blessing. The need of ecclesial peace was never a problem at Laodicea: it was never distracted nor embroiled in storm by its members demanding standards of doctrine or practice. In similar manner, if we are

prepared to close our eyes to facts we can delude ourselves that all is well. We will be deaf to false doctrine, and blind to deterioration of morals, and deluded as to the true state of Ecclesias. We will have what some men call peace.

But we will have it at the expense of peace with God as we shall find when Christ returns to arouse us from sleep.

If Enoch had remained silent; if Noah had stopped preaching; if Paul had settled down into retirement, there would have been a cessation of that activity in which each engaged, and which had the effect of disturbing men's minds; and then their contemporaries would have been able to settle down into what men call peace. But it would have been the peace of the grave.

True peace comes only from Yahweh, and is possible in the midst of agitation and controversy. In his greatest conflicts, Paul had a peace of mind that passed the understanding of man. David taught that "Yahweh will bless His people with peace" in the midst of the storm and tempest, thunder and lightning. A true Ecclesia, that maintains standards of conduct and doctrine which are in accordance with the will of Yahweh, will find that it is at peace with God in spite of the storms that it might experience, and which might root up some cedars and shake even mountains.

A man can find himself in the centre of a storm, tossed to and fro by its raging; but if he hearkens to the voice of Yahweh, and discerns His teaching in the storm, he will ultimately find peace.

It is our duty to do so. We must "follow after the things that make for peace, and which edify one another" (Rom. 14:19). We need to seek the reason for the storm. If Yahweh be in it, why has He purposed it? What lesson does He wish us to learn from it? How does He desire us to react to it? Our answers to these questions will determine whether or not we benefit from the storms of life — whether personal or ecclesial.

Let us profit from the storms of life by bettering our service to the truth, by improving our worship before Yahweh. Christ walks in the midst of the Ecclesias even now (Rev. 2:1). He knows our circumstances, and having been given "all power in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18), he could quieten the Ecclesial storm if he desired so to do as easily as he did the storm on the lake when he proclaimed to the roaring wind and raging waves: "Peace be still." But he desires to test our reaction to it; he wishes to develop us for the Kingdom and permits such circumstances to arise that we may have the opportunity to demonstrate our loyalty to Yahweh in the midst of the storm, as we, in faith, discern His voice in it. Nevertheless, even in the midst of the storm He can grant us the peace of communion and fellowship with Him, if we react aright.

Let us seek that peace; it will sustain us in all the circumstances of life, and bring us at last to the Kingdom of God. Then will we have practical evidence that "all things work together for the good of those who love God."