

Une Reformation 

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EDITORIAL

Another year has ended and we have entered into a new millenium. Long before this we expected the Lord to come, but we are still here. Perhaps it is His mercy and longsuffering that He has delayed His coming because many of us have not been ready for Him.

Some have calculated that the year 6000 from the création has been reached some years ago, but these calculations are not very accurate. In the Bible, years are mentioned for the age of the patriarchs but the months have not been recorded, Therefore errors have come to the reckoning of the time.

I.M.S. Publishing wishes a happy and blessed New Year to all the readers and gives spécial thanks to all who contributed articles and pictures to the Reformation Messenger. We also thank all who helped in the Print Shop to produce our literature in the past year. We hope and pray that in this New Year we will have the same co-operation from everyone. Also we thank all who supported us financially during the past year. For that reason we have been able to donate free literature to différent churches and countries.

We have printed a complète index of the articles that have appeared in the Reformation Messenger to the end of the Year 2000. It is very useful to those who have kept these magazines to find articles of différent topics. It is available from I.M.S. Publishing.

What are your plans for this New Year? Is it going to be anything différent than the last year? We hope that we all désire a closer walk with God. Also more activity in missionary work. Our print shop will make sure that you will have plenty of literature to work with.

"Our publications have a most sacred work to do in making clear, simple, and plain the spiritual basis of our faith. Everywhere the people are taking sides; all are ranging themselves either under the banner of truth and righteousness or under the banner of the apostate powers that are contending for the supremacy. At this time God's message to the world is to be given with such prominence and power that the people will be brought face to face, mind to mind, heart to heart, with truth. They must be brought to see its superiority over the multitudinous errors that are pushing their way into notice, to supplant, if possible, the word of God for this solemn time." Test. V. 7p. 150.

Not only is the world in darkness, but Satan is constantly trying to confuse the members of the Church of God and introduce hérésies among them. Therefore to counteract his devices we need timely, pointed, and spiritual articles in our publications to open the eyes of our own people to see the truth clearly and escape the errors of Satan.

Also we need articles about the signs of the times which are fulfilling all around us and of earnest appeals to arouse the people from their carnal sleep.

We expect gréât things to happen this year. May the Lord protect and help His remnant people in this solemn time of the end. AMEN



2001 !



Today dear friends, we stand on the verge of the unknown, a testing time, a mysterious new year, wrapped up in reserve and surprise.

Many feel threatened, disappointed, and do not have the strength to run the race, the power to do the right, then courage to last through the fight, the heart to stand till evil ceases, nor the strength to see the face of God.

There's a predominant feeling of uncertainty in the air. Even fear, a lurking fear. A fear of what demands will be made of one's self, and without resources to meet this year and to enter it with joy and contentment, and to walk the earth's troubled path. Many cry out from the depths of despair for help, for the Lord to hear and listen to earnest cries of help and to take away the interminable problems from their lives, to disperse them and deal with them, to be released from them. Others, too, are even fearful of losing their sanity and strength, and see no way through their problems, faced with difficult decisions which will seriously affect their lives and the lives of their loved ones: decisions about jobs, about their marriage, about where to live, about money. Many others are persecuted, homeless, and without hope, scattered in remote corners of this world in prison or ruled by tyrants.

Families of the nations are divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin. Statesmen, leaders, and rulers, are not clear in judgement or spirit, nor understand the issues that face them, nor can they think clearly of the common people on whose behalf they must speak and act. Will they allow the king of Kings, and Lord of lords to govern their hearts and mind, to have the patience, courage, foresight and great faith to make plans and act to keep the Law of God for man's only good and happiness?

Yet, wars and rumours of wars abound, and the paths of reconciliation are fraught with suffering as a result of war--injured, disabled, mentally distressed, homeless and hungry, mourning for the dead, and many without hope or friends to sustain them in their grief. Vast resources of power for potential destruction replace those

areas of human need. Nationalist and racist posturings predominate in an imperfect world of pathological fear and arrogance, in vain searching for the perfect solution.

This is, in part, the world today, squandering the precious, divine gift of life. A world that is troubled and divided, people and nations; in peril, sorrowing, the helplessness of the weak, the despondency of the weary, the failing powers of the aged, young people gone astray, hungry, and weak. Many in fact, have not trusted yet with an undoubting faith, and have not prepared themselves for the soon revealing of the Lord, the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness, and where the Prince of Peace rules.

We live in a revolted world; a dark blot in His universe. The daily avalanche of technological innovations and advancements that make men's lives easier and at the same time more complicated puts most people into a state of troubled disquieting and affliction. Most importantly, high technology has tended to destroy the canons of morality. With the phenomenal explosion of knowledge, mankind is striving to "learn more and more about less and less". Scientists are, furthermore, striving to give mankind the highest standard of living in history at mind-numbing levels...."even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Dan. 12:4. In this quest, however, the bitterly competitive spirit has added to rough and smooth interactions of greed, disputes, and grief. In many millennial orientated lives, wearied by disordered and sedentary living, much like that of the "day of Noah, and Sodom", overwhelming earthly possessions has been the consequences of their experiences with scientific and technological endeavors. Adding to man's binge of creativity, around the world, has its dire effects too; overpopulation, devastating diseases with no cures yet, acid rain, disappearing forests, tattered ozone layers, sophisticated missiles, questions of genetic manipulation, cloning, euthanasia, artificial intelligence, and the creation of entirely new species...frightening prospects. How will the moral aspects, and

other issues of human dignity and life be weighted? Questions, and attitudes that are to be "weighed in the balances", Dan. 5:27, remain to be answered.

Even apart from this, there are some crowning triumphs of technology, particularly in Medicine: boid surgical advances, and devices that have saved countless lives, prolonged others, and often made many exploratory and other opérations unnecessary. Furthermore, many uncertainties have been eliminated, and medicine has now even been provided with incredibly powerful and new diagnostic tools. Médical "miracles" inevitabiy will continue.

Although many in the Médical fraternity are skilled, talented, faithful, but overworked, it still needs to advance in the principles of health reform, and preventative medicine. Still "Christ is the true head of the médical profession." MH.

Unfortunately, however, the chaos existing in the destroyed world reflects the général crisis of modern man: in which values have become meaningless, in which the individual has been almost reduced to nothingness, in an almost unreal world. Many persons are in danger of losing both worlds. (3T 329) We cannot have both worlds. (1T 706) The belief by many is that, "the only constant in modern life is change", and that more than ever, in the transition of a culture from one of information scarcity to one of super abundance. In a global population of 6 billion, many are asking of the scientists and technologists, "If only we knew what they were going to do next".

The faithful believers in the Christian world have a force that is constant, and unchangeable, "Jésus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever". Heb. 10:8.

There is a danger, however, for believers when they have "friendships with the world, as they then become enemies with God, and their faith becomes corrupted." (2T 444, 2T 283, GC 388) All that "glitter, and tinsel captivâtes, charms men, and attracts the youth." (3T 250, 1SM 255, 3T375)

But, this "love of the world loses its power as you contemplate the glories of the home of the redeemed". (SL 91) "This world is our

preparatory school. While here we shall meet with trials and difficulties. Continually the enemy of God will seek to draw us away from our allegiance. But while we cleave to Him who gave Himself for us we are safe. "(In Heavenly Places 33) "Fear not, little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." Lk 12:32

There lies before us, too, the New Year and we are going to possess it. But, who can tell what we shall find? What new expériences, what indescribable changes shall come, what new needs shall arise? But here is the cheering, comforting gladdening message from our Heavenly Father, "The land whither ye go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for, the eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deut. 11:11-12.

All our supply, our sustenance, is to come from the Lord. Here are springs that shall never dry; here are fountains and streams that shall never be cut off. Here, troubled and anxious ones, is the gracious promise of the Heavenly Father if He be the Source of our mercies, they can never fail us. No heat or drought can parch that river, "The streams whereof make glad the city of God." PS. 46:4.

The land is a land of hills and valleys. it is not all smooth nor all down hill. If life were all one dead level and all of us the same character, the dull sameness would oppress us; we want and need the hills and the valleys, the ups and downs of life. The hills collected the rain for a hundred fruitful valleys. Ah! So it is with us! It is that hill difficulty that drives us to the throne of grâce and brings down the showers of blessing; the hills, the bleak hills of life that we wonder at and perhaps grumble at bring down the showers. How many have perished in the wilderness who would have lived in the hill-country; how many would have been killed by the frost, winds, swept desolate of tree and fruit but for the hill - strong, hard, so steep to climb. God's hills are a gracious protection for His people against their enemies.

Much of life is like that. Most of us live it, climbing, day-by-day, wondering, "how long,

Lord?" We set our goal, and even wonder that we can make it, not seeing far ahead to Jesus' coming. But, as important as the destination, is the keeping of the faith while on the journey, being grateful, gaining strength for the journey, and with patience, to "keep climbing"! We cannot tell what loss and sorrow and trials are doing to us or our loved ones. Trust and obey only. The gracious Father comes near to take our hand and lead us on our ancient way today.

Many saints are content to live like men in coal mines, in the darkness, who don't see the sun. Tears mar their faces when they might anoint them with celestial oil. Rise up dear believer, from thy lower condition! Put away thy slothfulness, thy lethargy, thy coldness, thy indifference, or whatever interferes with thy pure love to Christ. Stop rebelling! Make Him the source, the center, and the circumference of all thy souls' range of delight and desire. Rest no longer satisfied with thy minor accomplishments. Strive to a higher, a nobler, and a fuller blooming life. Reach upward to heaven! Nearer still nearer to God!

Not many of us are living at our best capacity. We linger about in the lowlands because we are afraid to climb the mountains or peaks. We stay in the misty, damp valleys and do not learn the mystery of the hills. We don't realize what we lose in our self-indulgence, what glory awaits us if only we had more courage for the mountain climb, what blessings we would find if only we would move up to the fruitful radiant uplands of God. "Too low they build who build below the stars."

God, in His celestial love for man, has blessed him with the dawn of a New Year. Many new opportunities, and challenges are before him. Just think, a chance to try again, to make another effort to successfully accomplish the tasks, which were perhaps put aside with discouragement in the year past; that soul you always wanted to witness to, that book you wanted to write, to work harder for the church, and, oh, so much more, dear believer. Life is just full of beginnings. As we look into the unknown of a new year, and reflect for a moment, pausing in our busy lives, at the 365 days that have past, stumbling here and there with our mistakes, recovering, falling, but ever climbing upwards,... "forgetting the past...I

press onward". As in Philippians, Always pressing toward the mark.

He has brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home. It's not our own achievement. Our Father has been faithful, that we give thanks to Him every morning and evening for His mercies, because He never fails! However, it is our peculiar and binding nature to want to live in the past of our life, in "the days that come not back again". We would rather relive the strifes, the bad habits, the heartaches, and stumbling blocks than to face the unknown. With almost unforgiving tenacity the past does cling, and like sea barnacles, would hinder us from pushing out from the shore and launching into the deep.

Some are not only afraid to climb but always look back, and dwell on the past, continually. Many only speak of the "good-old-days". It's unproductive to look back! Someone here might say, "I don't look back. I dwell on the future". They, in reality, exist in "space", counting the days, dreaming life away. Each day is precious, when we realize it's a gift from God. Each minute of our lives is unique, if lived to the fullest. Whatever situation we find ourselves in, remember God gives us life; to dwell on the future can be as dwelling on the past, a waste. If we look too far ahead we may overlook God's blessings today.

Standing at the parting of the ways there is a choice to make, some road to take, we must consider which. How do we intend to live? Will it be merely repetitious of the past? Searchingly say, "I do not see my way: I do not care to; but I know that He sees His way, and that I see Him." Shining destinies are ahead! We must keep our eyes upon Jesus as we now face the new Dawn.

Our Father! Through the coming year
We know not what shall be,
But we would leave without a fear
Its ordering all to Thee

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psalm 90:12
AMEN

By: Br. John Theodorou
Athens, Greece



PERSECUTION

Persécution against God's people has continued since the beginning. From the time when Cain killed his brother Abel to our day, persécution has continued to a greater or lesser degree.

Apostle Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jésus shall suffer persécution." 2 Tim. 3:12.

Apostle Peter said, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glâd also with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:12-13.

Jésus said to His followers, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persécute you." John 15:20.

God has not promised us an easy, comfort filled life, but on the contrary, the Bible speaks of trials, afflictions and persécutions as a part of Christian life. "Hatred of the pure principles of truth, and reproach and persécution of its advocates, will exist as long as sin and sinners remain." G.C. 507.

Millions of faithful children of God have lost their lives in the times of persécution. "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in déserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Heb. 11:36-38.

The early church accepted the persécution which they suffered as something inséparable from the Christian life. "Under the fiercest persécution thèse witnesses for Jésus kept their faith unsullied. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of faith, patience, and hope they encouraged one another to endure privations and distress." G.C. 41.

When we read the record of thèse terrible times of persécution we shudder and wonder how the Christians could have accepted them without complaint. Yet prophecy tells us that the greatest time of trouble and persécution that ever has existed is still before us. The time of Jacob's trouble, the Sunday law, the time when we are not able to buy nor sell and the time when all God's children will be sentenced to death.

"The persécutions of Protestants by Romanism, by which the religion of Jésus Christ was almost annihilated, will be more than rivaled when Protestantism and popery are combined." 3 S.M. 387.

"Many will be imprisoned, many will flee for their lives from cities and towns, and many will be martyrs for Christ's sake in standing in défense of the truth." 3 S.M. 397.

The churches combined with the civil powers will inflict grêat anguish and suffering upon God's people, but the hardest and most terrible persécutions will come upon us from our friends.

"The persécution that is carried on among church members is a most terrible thing." T.M. 186.

"Of all persécution the hardest to bear is variance in the home, the estrangement of dearest earthly friends." D.A. 357.

A question that many have asked is, "why does God permit His people to suffer so much persécution?" Apostle Paul gives us a comforting thought, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." Rom. 8:28.

Sister White adds to it, "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him." D.A. 224.

"Afflictions, crosses, temptations, adversity, and our varied trials are God's workmen to refine us, sanctify us, and fit us for the heavenly garner." 3 T. 115.

"God's love for His church is infinité. His care over His héritage is unceasing. He suffers no affliction to come upon the church but such as is essential for her purification, her présent and eternal good." 9T. 228.

"Jésus suffered for us more than any of His followers can be made to suffer through the cruelty of wicked men. Those who are called to endure torture and martyrdom are but following in the steps of God's dear Son." G.C. 47.

When we understand the meaning of the persécution and affliction that we must suffer for Christ's sake then we may even learn to enjoy them.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong." 1 Cor. 12:10.

Apostle Paul learned to enjoy persécutions. He understood the meaning of them. Peter also writes, "That the trial of your faith, being

much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jésus Christ." 1 Pet. 1:7.

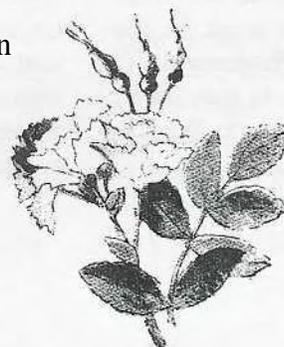
When the persécution by the Catholic Church stopped the spiritual condition of the God's church also suffered and died. Religion became only a dead form.

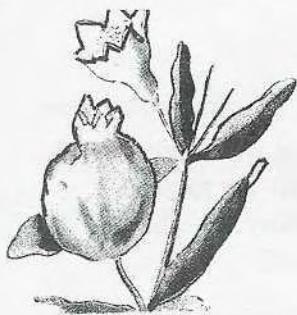
Therefore Sister White asks a question, which she also answers, "Why is it, then, that persécution seems in a gréât degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because the spirit of compromise with sin, because the gréât truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persécution will be revived, and the fires of persécution will be rekindled." G.C. 48

We are not to invite the persécution upon us before its time. We are not to aggravate purposely the unbelievers against us. But when we stand faithful in défense of the truth the forces of evil will try to silence us by persécution, but the Lord will be our défense. The grâce to endure the hardest persécution will be granted to us when needed.

Therefore let us not pray to the Lord that He would remove the fires of persécution but that he would give us strength to endure them.
AMEN

Timo Martin





LIVING FAITH

What is faith? When asked this question we often are given the answer written in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." While these words have been committed to memory, have we taken time to really consider the true meaning of this word - Faith?

In the Christian world there is much talk about faith. Unfortunately they have a completely unbalanced view of faith. They talk about faith to the extent that they say works are nonessential as far as salvation is concerned. There is no law to keep, only believe and your faith will bring you salvation.

We need a balanced view of faith; living faith.

DEGREES OF FAITH

Faith is an absolute necessity as far as salvation is concerned. "For without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. 11:6.

There is more to faith, than simply believing. While the wicked have no faith, some are weak in faith. "Then if God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Luke 12:28. Some are weak in faith, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, .." Romans 14:1. And we are not to deride those who are weaker than us in faith. We are counseled to help them.

To have passive faith is not enough. You need a strong faith. There are differing degrees of faith. Everyone is on a different rung on the ladder of life, but we must all be advancing upward or then we are falling backwards. We must daily be increasing in our faith. "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." Luke 17:5. The faith we have today should be stronger than the faith we had yesterday. However it is not enough for the trials of tomorrow. The faith we have today is definitely not strong enough to stand the tests and trials of the final conflict on this earth: Sunday law, Jacob's Trouble, Death decree, etc. We must pray for one another that our faith will not fail in the coming crisis as Jésus prayed for Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:" Luke 22:32. If we are not daily increasing in faith, our faith will most surely fail us at that time.

It is by faith alone in the blood that Jésus shed for us that will bring us forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. "It is faith that connects us with heaven and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every evil trait and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is still the same mighty Redeemer. Then grasp His promises as leaves from the tree of life: "Him

that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. As you come to Him, believe that He accepts you, because He has promised. You can never perish while you do this - never." MH, p. 66.

FAITH IS A GIFT

Faith is not something that we manufacture ourselves. It is not something in ourselves that we exercise, prompting the Lord to help us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. While faith is a gift, it is ours if we ask for it. The Lord gives us faith initially when we ask. Afterwards it is ours to exercise so that our faith will strengthen and increase.

Our faith is shown by our works. If we say we love someone we will do what we can to bring them happiness. We will gladly serve them and do special things for them without being asked, and the chores will be pleasant because we are doing them for the one we love. James makes it clear that faith without works is dead. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone." James 2:17.

Most of the Christian world today has a false idea of faith. It is not living and active faith. They do not believe that their works show their faith. Satan and his angels have this kind of faith. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." James 2:19. They believe in much the same manner that false Christianity believes. There is no

action in their belief. True faith will spring into action when the love of Christ is planted in the heart.

We must always remember that it is faith that justifies - not works. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jésus Christ, even we have believed in Jésus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 2:16.

We must have a clear understanding of the connection between faith and works. When we do, we will be alive in Christ. True faith in Christ will produce a living Christian, one that is connected to the living Vine.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Eph. 3:17-19. Faith makes Christ's présence a reality. "Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And he came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character." DA, p. 123.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20. The Christian life is a life of faith. "To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him

as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complète in Him. It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grâce must be assimilated.

"But even these figures fail to present the privilege of the believer's relation to Christ. Jésus said, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by me." As the Son of God lived by faith in the Father, so are we to live by faith in Christ. So fully was Jésus surrendered to the will of God that the Father alone appeared in His life. Although tempted in all points like as we are, He stood before the world untainted by the evil that surrounded Him. Thus we also are to overcome as Christ overcame." DA, p. 389.

EXAMPLES OF FAITH THAT WORKS

Woman with issue of blood: When Jésus was on the earth, there came a woman having an issue of blood for twelve years. She suffered immensely for all these years. I am sure she often thought that God was punishing her, since that is what the Pharisees were teaching in the days of Christ. They said, all suffering is a direct result of sin in a person's life. Their religion offered no hope or comfort to this poor woman. She was living a hopeless existence until she heard of the teaching and miracles of Jésus. Hope sprang into her heart and she knew that Jésus could offer her the hope that the Pharisees in their

religion could not. Thus she came quietly to Jésus and touched the hem of his garment. This touch of faith brought her healing from twelve years of suffering. "The wondering crowd that pressed close about Christ realized no accession of vital power. But when the suffering woman put forth her hand to touch Him, believing that she would be made whole, she felt the healing virtue. So in spiritual things. To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul hunger and living faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Savior of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith cannot receive blessing from God. It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe *in* Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates his merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power." DA, p. 347.

"Here is distinguished the casual contact from the touch of faith. Prayer and preaching, without the exercise of living faith in God, will be in vain. But the touch of faith opens to us the divine treasure house of power and wisdom; and thus, through instruments of clay, God accomplishes the wonders of His grâce.

"This living faith is our gréat need today. We must know that Jésus is indeed ours, that His spirit is purifying and refining our hearts. If the ministers of Christ had genuine faith, with meekness and love, what a work they might accomplish! What

fruits would be seen to the glory of God!" T5, p. 228.

"There is a wide différence between a pretended union and a real connection with Christ by faith. A profession of that truth places men in the church, but this does not prove that they have a vital connection with the living Vine. A rule is given by which the true disciples may be distinguished from those who claim to follow Christ but have no faith in Him. The one class are fruit bearing, the other, fruitless. The one are often subjected to the pruning knife of God that they may bring forth more fruit; the other, as withered branches, are erelong to be severed from the living Vine." T5, p. 228.

On the sea of Galilée: When Jésus was crossing the Sea of Galilée with the disciples one night, He fell asleep. He was thoroughly exhausted from the days' labour. Suddenly a storm came up and the disciples became frantic, fearing for their lives. It was then that they remembered Jésus. Upon finding Him sleeping they woke him up and explained to Him their plight. Jésus did not rebuke them, He simply calmed the storm and sadly asked them, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" Mark 4:40. Thèse disciples were followers of Christ. They spent almost every waking minute with their Master while He was on this earth during His three and a half years of ministry, and here we see Jésus telling them they have "no faith." Is it possible today that some who claim to be followers of Christ and may even be church members have no faith? They may claim to have faith, but do they really have living faith? It is time for us to examine our own hearts and see how strong our faith is. Is our faith shown by our actions? Do we turn to Jésus at every crisis point in our lives, trusting that He has matters under His control?

"As Jésus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jésus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help.

How often the disciples' expérience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jésus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best." DA, p. 336.

Pool of Bethesda: One Sabbath day, Jésus went to the Pool of Bethesda where He found a man who had been sick for 38 years. (John 5:2-9). Jésus simply asked the man if he wanted to be cured. Yes, the man certainly did, but there was no one to help him when the waters were troubled in the pool. Jésus looked at him in pity and simply said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." V.8. "Jésus had given him no assurance of divine help. The man may have stopped to doubt, and lost his one chance of healing. But he believed Christ's word, and in acting upon it he received strength." This man did not hesitate. He had faith in Jésus. As soon as Jésus said thèse words, he knew them to be true and

he acted on this belief. "Through the same faith we may receive spiritual healing. By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. There are many who realize their helplessness, and who long for that spiritual life which will bring them into harmony with God; they are vainly striving to obtain it. In despair they cry, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Rom. 7:24, margin. Let thèse desponding struggling ones look up. The Saviour is bending over the purchase of His blood, saying with inexpressible tenderness and pity, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait until you feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled. Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength. Whatever may be the evil practice, the master passion which through long indulgence binds both soul and body, Christ is able and longs to deliver. He will impart life to the soul that is 'dead in trespasses.' Eph. 2:1. He will set free the captive that is held by weakness and misfortune and the chains of sin." DA, p. 203.

TODAY

Our duty today is to be constantly increasing in faith in préparation for tomorrow's trials. Our faith is made perfect by our works. "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" James 2:22.

Some people are very négative Christians. They only believe and have faith after they see the answer to their prayers. They do not pray in faith believing that God hears immediately as they pray. Often this

leads to discouragement and fear that God has left them because they do not receive immediate answers. Their faith is based on sight, as was that of Thomas. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John 20:29. Our faith must be based on the sure promises of God in His Word, not upon sight. When we see answers to our prayers, it is simply a confirmation of the faith we already have.

"The habit of brooding over anticipated evils is unwise and unchristian. In thus doing we fail to enjoy the blessings and to improve the opportunities of the present. The Lord requires us to perform the duties of today and to endure its trials. We are today to watch that we offend not in word or deed. We must today praise and honor God. By the exercise of living faith today we are to conquer the enemy. We must today seek God and be determined that we will not rest satisfied without His presence. We should watch and work and pray as though this were the last day that would be granted us. How intensely earnest, then, would be our life. How closely would we follow Jésus in all our words and deed." T5, p. 200.

We need greater faith. We should

have a fuller sense of God's relationship to those whom He has purchased with the blood of His only-begotten Son. We should exercise faith in the onward progress of the work of the kingdom of God." T6, p. 466.

When the Lord gives us a task to do, or has a place for us to travel, we are not to question, "Do I have enough money? Will everything be provided for?" etc. These are details that will be taken care of by the Lord. All we have to do is to go forward by faith. Sometimes it may seem like an impossible task that the Lord has given us, however we must continue to go by faith, believing that if the Lord asked us to go ahead and do something, He will most certainly open the doors and remove the obstacles when we pray in faith. He will provide.

This principle also holds true with church projects. When the Lord directs in a new area or, requires a certain project to be done, we are not to give up due to lack of means. It is important to step forward by faith. It is only work by faith that will be effective. If we do not step forward by faith, trusting the Lord to provide, the work will not go forward. Instead it will go backwards. The Lord will not remove every obstacle until we have put our foot forward and

stepped out by faith. The Lord is never lacking in means to provide for His work. It is us who often lack the faith that He will provide. We are trusting too much on sight - the sight of what we presently possess in the way of material goods or finances in the bank. The Lord's treasury goes far beyond our human sight.

"Let us waste no time in deploring the scantiness of our visible resources, but let us make the best use of what we have. Though the outward appearance may be unpromising, energy and trust in God will develop resources. Let us send in our offerings with thanksgiving and with prayer that the Lord will bless the gifts and multiply them as He did the food given to the five thousand. If we use the very best facilities we have, the power of God will enable us to reach the multitudes that are starving for the bread of life." T6, p. 466, 467.

Our faith today must be living and active if we ever hope to continue in the faith during the final crisis. It is not enough only to keep the commandments, we need also the faith of Jésus and the faith of Jésus is a living faith. May we all have this kind of faith is my prayer.

AMEN

Wendy Eaton.



**Sonya, Michel,
Yonka and Ivo
At the
Wedding
Oct.1, 2000**

A TRILOGY FROM LONG AGO VALID FOR OUR TIMES

INSISTENT CALLS

"For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights..." Genesis 7:4.

For 120 years Noah had been preaching that the world would come to an end, that the wrath of God would be poured upon every creature which did not repent and abandon his evil ways. He showed, with his own life, that he believed in what he was preaching. He built an ark, according to divine instructions, in which both he and his family, as well as all those who wanted to be saved, could find shelter. He invested all his possessions in its construction. Big extensions of forests were cut down to provide timber to build this huge vessel in a place where there was no sea, and in a land where it had never rained.

Noah was considered a fool by his fellowmen who used to mock him and his family; but this faithful servant of God, in spite of all the doubts that sometimes assailed him, continued working meticulously, fully trusting what God had announced to him would happen.

It was his faith in God's word which made of him "a just man, perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9), because "Noah did according to all that God commanded him, so he did." (Gen. 6:22)

The ark had three floors, and as the end was drawing nearer, its construction was growing upward, thus becoming a more persistent call to salvation. Each floor was a message, an appeal for reconciliation with God. Many persons, in spite of their jokes and doubts, heard the voice of the Lord speaking to their conscience through this mysterious event; above all Noah's friends, who considered him a correct, noble, logical,

mature man. But the examination of their own hearts showed them there were many things they had to depart from. This was a very hard step to take. They clung to their habits and paid a deaf ear to the message that said: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." (Rev. 16:7)

Time went by but nothing happened, people continued getting married, having children, building houses, and planting vineyards. Nobody paid much attention to the sound of the hammer and the axe, as the second floor of the ark was being built as an invitation for more people to put aside the vanities of a perverted world. There was the ark, waiting for them, God's grace inviting them. Once again, some consciences were awoken and they considered answering the invitation, but they saw that nothing changed, the sun continued to shine every day, each season offered its best. Spring had its beautiful colors and fragrances and autumn its rich harvest. They would go back to their labor and amusements, deceiving themselves, thinking that later on, when the signs would be more visible, they would respond. But the signs were there, under their own noses, in the violence, thefts, immorality that surrounded them, and even in their own cold indifference.

Noah did not give up his mission. In spite of the many times he doubted, he always overcame himself, and would not permit the echo of God's voice to vanish. He had told him, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I

will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark..." (Gen. 6:13, 14) vanish. So he went on building.

The moment came for the third story of the ark to be built, the last invitation to humanity, an alarm call, a loud cry that spoke clearly to the conscience of each single man telling him that if he continued on his way, following the whims of his own heart, he would drink of the cup of God's wrath which would be poured upon humanity "without mercy". But once again, they paid a deaf ear to such an appeal. A big contrast could be seen between the world, wasting its last hours of gr ace and Noah's patience, who in spite of all the attacks and mockery, kept God's commandments, and walked in faith, hand in hand with His Redeemer. "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of J esus." (Rev. 14:12)

When the ark was finished the only window through which the light of heaven would come in was closed. The animals that were to be saved for procreation and pr eservation of the species entered the ark in perfect order. Then, Noah and his family boarded the roomy ship, and a powerful hand closed the door tightly. But the rain did not fall immediately. They had to wait for the fulfillment of the time: "For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights..." (Gen. 7:4) In God's promise there is also a waiting period, a time of expectation in which the faith of His children is tested, giving them thus the opportunity to grow in patience and trust in God. "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." (Heb. 10:37)

May the Lord give us faith and trust in Him to patiently wait for the time in which He will manifest His gr eat power and we may receive the promise we have treasured in our hearts.

THE END OF THE ADVENTURE

"And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat." Gen. 8:3, 4.

The gr eat adventure had come to an end, and an adventure with God is a guaranteed success. Actually an adventure always involves a risk, it is "an enterprise of uncertain results", and in Spanish the expression says to "embark on an adventure". This is exactly what Noah and his family did, they boarded (embarked) the ark, that huge vessel whose construction had been commanded and led by God even in the most insignificant d etails.

It had been raining for forty days and nights unceasingly, and the ark was sailing guided by a powerful invisible hand. The huge vessel had no steering wheel, the gr eat Captain who makes the planets travel on their orbits was guiding the vessel with its precious human cargo, to salvation. The journey had been hard, sometimes that huge mastodon of gopherwood covered with pitch inside and outside (Gen. 6:14) moved as a leaf on the wind, and the animals in panic would cry in unison. The bleating of the sheep could be heard mixed with the mooing of the cows, the neighing of the horse mingled with the barking of the dog and the mewling of the cat with the crowing of the rooster, and not even the roaring of the lion could silence the howling of the wolf. There were moments in which Noah wanted to flee, to get off, above all when he lost his balance and ended up on the other end of the "room" or on the floor. How long would his voyage last? Would he finally reach his destiny? And what was the sens e of it, after all? He remembered the voice of the Lord telling him: *"The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopherwood..."* (Gen. 6:13, 14), and he had faithfully followed His instructions. But, was he to be the only one to be saved? He had abandoned every thing and invested all he had in the construction of the ark,

and now that he was secure and protected among those thick walls, and it was obvious that the Almighty God had his life in His hands, again doubts assailed him. How was it possible?

Since the vessel had only one window that pointed to heaven, he could not see what was going on around him. The people were hopelessly struggling for one more minute of life. They climbed to the roofs of the houses or desperately clung to a tree that had been uprooted and were carried along by the waters that flooded the earth. His trials were nothing compared with those of the people who had rejected God's gr \acute{a} ce. For them there was no hope of salvation, and as they clung to life, they just prolonged their agony. Noah had been chosen by God, due to his faithfulness, since, as Abraham, he had believed in God and his faith had been counted as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6).

When things calmed down a little, and the ark slid gently upon the waters, Noah would "come to himself" and feel ashamed for having doubted God's infinite love. Doesn't it also happen with us, as we are traveling toward the heavenly Canaan, that we sometimes find the trials too hard and tiring and want to get off the ship? But thanks to God's infinite gr \acute{a} ce and mercy, we find the door tightly locked and no way out, no way back, because "*the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hands of God.*" (Eccl. 9:1) As the psalmist says: "*You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.*" (Psalm 139:5, 6)

"*Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.*" (Gen. 8:4) The mountains of Ararat are two peaks in the territory that now belong to Turkey. They reach a height of 5,182 and 4,000 meters respectively, higher than any mountain in Europe.

When, by faith, we start a journey with God, we "embark on an adventure" in which we face all sorts of dangers but without fear, trusting

completely in the power of His love, He will make us reach the highest peaks, as He promises to His children who keep the Sabbath day, "*According to the commandment*" (Luke 23:36), and He will make us "*Ride on the high hills of the earth*" (Isaiah 58:14). God's promises are Yes, and Amen. (2 Cor. 1:20)

May the Lord give us faith and trust in Him so that we may reach not only the mountains of Ararat, but Mount Zion, because "*on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness.*" (Obadiah 1:17) AMEN.

DOVE OR RAVEN?

***"So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth, He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had abated from the face of the ground."* Genesis 8:6-8.**

After the flood, five months went by before the earth dried up. The ark stopped on Mount Ararat, in the seventh month, and for three months, until the tenth month, the waters were gradually decreasing until "*the tops of the mountains were seen*" (Gen. 8:5), but the valleys were still flooded. Another forty days went by and Noah wanted to know what the situation was, so he opened the only window in the ark and sent a raven. The raven, according to the classification of animals in clean and unclean, in Leviticus 11, belongs to the unclean ones, therefore there was only one pair in the ark. *You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of the animals that are unclean, a male and his female.*" (Gen. 7:2)

The black bird with a shiny plumage and a long tail in the shape of a wedge, the span of whose wings may reach up to a meter, is nowadays mostly carnivorous and not very appreciated by man.

Among the many birds in the ark, Noah, after the raven, chose a dove to explore the earth, and the verse says: *"He also sent out from himself a dove",* and the dove *"returned into the ark, to him"* and he *"put out his hand and took her; and drew her into the ark to himself."* (Gen. 8:9)

The dove, much smaller than the raven, with a round head and a pointed tail, is a bird that since creation has remained vegetarian. It feeds on grains, seeds and fruit and it may be tamed to be used as a messenger. The description given here shows a personal relationship between man and the dove, which was sent a second time and it *"came to him..."* with *"a freshly plucked olive leaf in her mouth."* (Gen. 8:11)

While the raven was flying *"to and fro"*, the dove continued its relationship with her master, faithfully fulfilling her mission and bringing the good news that the olive had survived the flood. There is a symbolical spiritual meaning both in the dove and the olive leaf.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jésus, when He was baptized in the waters of the Jordan, in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16). Also the church of God, that treasure He has on the earth, the Lord's bride, is tenderly called "dove" by her bridegroom: *"O dove, in the cleft of the rock in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely."* (Song. 2:14) In the same way that a dove has her hiding place in a cliff, the child of God hides himself in Christ, the Rock, and his voice, even if it is not melodious as the one of the nightingale, sounds sweet to the ears of her beloved.

Some characteristics of the dove are to be seen in the children of God, such as *"harmlessness"* (Matt. 10:16), in the words caution, discretion, patience, innocence. Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord gives advice to his children who inhabit Moab upon which destruction is coming: *"You who dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove*

which makes her nest in the sides of the cave's mouth." (Jer. 48:28)

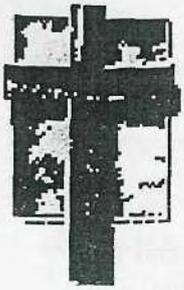
As the time of the end is coming nearer and the children of God will suffer persécution, they will have to abandon the cities and find refuge in isolated places, in caves in the mountains.

The olive, on the other hand, produces oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. God's children are many times compared with this humble and unpretentious looking tree. *"His branches shall speak; his beauty shall be like an olive tree..."* (Hosea 14:6); *"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine...your children like olive plants..."* (Psalm 128:3); *"The Lord called your name, green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit."* (Jer. 11:16) The olive tree survived the first destruction of the earth, and God's faithful children will, by His infinite gráce, survive its second destruction.

Two kinds of birds came out of the ark, one that belongs to the clean animals, which kept its contact with its master, and faithfully fulfilled its duty bringing signs of life; and the other, belonging to the unclean animals, which was going *"to and fro"* (Gen. 8:7), spreading out its huge black wings over the désolation of the earth. They may symbolize two kinds of people who are to be found in the house of God, traveling toward salvation. Some are very busy and achieve nothing, but they only project a dark shadow over the rest since they lack a close connection with their Master. The other ones are real messengers of peace because they are in direct contact with their Lord, and spread out good news of a better world, carrying in their mouth olives leaves, words inspired by the Spirit of God.

May the Lord make us harmless, without malice and pure as a dove so that we may be real co-workers with Him. AMEN

By: Teresa Corti



At the Cross, Now and Ever

In my own helplessness and dependence, I think and meditate upon the cross often. I travel with Christ to Golgotha. I see human spits and blows falling on Him. We come to the hill. No need to push his arms back. He stretches them upon the cross, he is Love personified. For this moment He came. The cross. Iron nails rip his flesh, electrifying his nerves, "Father forgive them" He says in the worst of his agony¹. Have we heard him correctly?? In all of history, did any man ever speak such? Such love melts stone-cold hearts, heals the sick at heart, and turns sinners into saints. I love Christ most on the cross. What can be made of the cross? I do not know of topic with greater spiritual power and significance. I urge you to read til the end and meditate with me on the beauty of the cross. It is the power of God unto salvation².

Before we can ever meditate on the wonders of Christ's sacrifice, we must recognize the holiness of God, spotless and undiminished. God's holiness means that God's character is without defect or deficiency. God's character is free from taint of any sort. **God's love is free from sentimentality; God's anger is free from ill-temper; God's judgement is free from arbitrariness; God's patience is free from indifference; God's sovereignty is free from tyranny.** God's holiness means that all the aspects of God's character just mentioned are gathered up into a unity. Just as every shade of the spectrum from infra-red to ultra-violet is gathered up into what we call "light", so every dimension of God's character and God's transcendence is gathered up into God's holiness. God's holiness is what scripture is actually about from cover to cover. To be sure, the Scriptures are also about the holiness of God's people. **In my own faults and imperfection, and surrounded by faults and imperfections of others, how shall we even come close to God? The answer of the cross is the only answer.**

The public ministry of Jésus lasted only about three years. But did you notice that over 50% of the written gospels concerns just one week (the week Jesus died)? The Old Testament anticipâtes the cross on page after page, from the Edenic story to the story of Abraham and Isaac to the pronouncements of the prophets. They insist, together with Paul, they will preach only "the word of the cross." They understand the resurrection of Jésus to seal the sacrifice of the cross; they understand the Holy Spirit to magnify the preaching of the cross. **We, as people of God, should be the people of the Cross,** In view

¹ Luke 23:34

² Romans 1:16

of the centrality of God's holiness, everything about him and us must be understood in terms of his holiness. Our sin is our *défi*ance of God's holiness and his Law. God's anger (his reaction to our sin) is the reaction of his holiness. God's patience with us is the persistence of his holiness. And his love? God's love is his holiness refusing to compromise itself even as it refuses to abandon us. If God's holiness refuses to compromise itself even as it refuses to abandon us, where does it ail come to expression? What is the outcome? It all comes to expression in the cross. Let's be sure we understand something crucial. Because God is holy, he is jarred by our sin. Jarred? Sin does more than assault him; sin offends him. He's repulsed by it. He finds it loathsome, so very loathsome, in fact, that he can't tolerate it. Since there's no sin apart from sinners, God finds sinners loathsome and can't tolerate them. Then he has only two choices: **either he annihilâtes sinners, or he remédies their sinfulness.** There is nothing in between. It's plain that God has chosen not to annihilate sinners (for the time being, at least.)

To be sure, God has every rîght to annihilate us. For we are ungrateful, defiant, insolent people who owe him our existence and our every blessing. He can't prétend that we are glad and grateful, obedient sons and daughters when we aren't. He can't prétend that we are *fit* to enjoy his présence when we are not more *fit* for him than a deaf person is fit to enjoy a concert or a blind person fit to enjoy an art gallery. God's holiness has brought us to this point: either in his holiness he has to annihilate us or he has to remedy us.

Because God's character is holy (and therefore it is absolutely good and loving), he provides what the apostle John calls "the remedy for the defilement of our sin." The reason that the cross dominâtes all of the Scriptures is that in the cross, God's holy love absorbs his holy anqer. In the cross the iudâement of the holy God is enacted and displayed. In the cross of Jésus the judgement of the holy God is borne by the Son of God — which is to say, borne by the Father himself, for Father and Son are one in nature, one in judgement, one in its exécution, and one in its absorption. In the cross, however, God honours all that his holiness entails even as he fulfils his purpose in fashioning a holy people who love him, obey him, serve him and lend glory to his name.

In the cross God's judgement is unsoftened. as Christ's cry from the cross testifies³. To say that salvation is "free" îs a serious mistake. God himself paid its cost one Friday afternoon. The opposite is true: the cost of the cross is infinité beyond any

³ Matthew 27:46

human comprehension or thought. In the cross God's love is undiminished, for how much more could he Himself love us than to submit *Himself* to humiliation, torment, and self-aliénation in the Son?

There is no word in biblical Hebrew for "doubt." There are, however, many words in biblical Hebrew for "wonder." There's no word for "doubt" because God's inescapable holy présence, charged with his power and purpose and love, renders doubt groundless. On the contrary, the love of God calls forth wonder without end. We hear such adoring wonder in the hymn, "How Gréât Thou Art":

And when I think
That God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die,
I scarce can take it in,

God's holy love is brought to effectuai focus on the cross. One wise lady asked: "Who can measure the love Christ felt for a lost world, as he hung upon the cross, suffering for the sins of guilty men? This love was immeasurable, infinite."⁴ It truly is. By beholding the cross, we désire to forsake evil and sin. Beholding the infinité sacrifice of Christ, His love without measure on the cross, our hearts can only melt with gratitude and désire to follow Him. The cross is the triumph of God's holy love over sin and ingratitude and unbelief. The cross is the Soul Winner. Why not turn our eyes fully to the bleeding crucified Saviour? **Where else can we obtain the power and the inspiration to live a victorious Christian life? Let us grasp the cross with both arms and hang on! This life is a rough ride, but let us hang on! And not one will ever perish.**

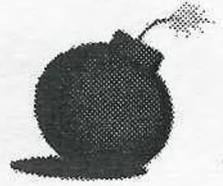
Let us remain at the cross, now and ever.

⁴ The Signs of the Times, August 28, 1879

Radek Dobias
radekdobias@hotmail.com



DEVILISH BOMBER!



"How would you like to have a bomb go off and blow you **all** to bits!? Eh? Well, you just have 48 hours before it goes off!" **CLICK!** The telephone answering machine recorded this mysterious, hurried message **only** hours before the Sabbath opening and the beginning of the prayer week.

The deaconess and the church secretary called me immediately, and asked me to **call the play back device** and listen carefully. The voice I heard was that of an **older man**, firm in context, brusque, raspy, and a bit hissing-like; a peculiar combination of terseness, and **hate**. It was threatening!

I thought for a moment; **racing thoughts**, **earth-born** thoughts of **décisions** to be made, and quickly! "What shall we do?" was the cry. "Listen," I replied, "**don't** panic, and don't call the members, but just meet at the church as scheduled, and, oh, keep it hushed! Remember, there are some members that are spiritually weak, others still '**babes**' in the truth, and one or two interested soûls, and, of course, the children. I'll call you back **after** a few minutes."

I then called the vice-président, and another officer of the Greek field. Quickly calculating the time, I **determined** that 48 hours would take us to 5:00 p.m. Friday, just 10 minutes before sunset and the Sabbath opening. The two church officers quickly and reassuringly agreed, that it was just a '**prank-call**'... "meet as scheduled...let's pray." We prayed; a reaction that first would normally follow, wouldn't it...I thought again? After all, prayer week was to follow. What more appropriate time to pray! Here was a madman, a fanatic, a killer, a professional terrorist, or merely a "**prankster**". We prayed, again. The brethren's answer seemed too simple, too hasty.

We needed an answer quick. Could our prayers now be **opinionated**, **doubting**, **shallow**, or **anxious**? My faith was now being tested. Time was rapidly ticking away. I now "**wrestled** by prayer."

More bizarre thoughts and solutions raced through my logical mind, again, but not really the Lord's thoughts as I vainly waited for His answer. I was now **fiercely** wrestling by prayer. The lives of our members were at stake. I would be responsible. I began **wavering** from side to side. More thoughts raced through my head. I thought it best and 'wise' not to meet at the church Friday night or Sabbath, but preferably at one's house, as a precautionary measure, until the '**crisis**' ended. After all, thoughts racing wildly again, Jésus fled with His disciples in the face of danger in a few recorded biblical instances. Furthermore, Jésus frequently removed **Himself** from inappropriate situations. Now, I was beginning to rationalize. We are to be "wise as serpents and gentle as doves." Mt. 10:16.

More thoughts and elusive solutions began flashing before me again. It might be wise to report this blunt "**crank**" call to me police and the anti-terrorist squad; they're super-sensitive about such threats. Then, again, more questions, an investigation, and a scandai for the church. This absorbing idea was immediately abandoned.

Furthermore, or perhaps coincidentally, was it another ominous sign that one field member of the church was Colombian, and another, Greek? Colombia ranked number one Worldwide for terrorist acts and attacks, and Greece ranked number two. Greece experienced 27 separate assassinations and bombings with hundreds of victims injured or wounded in the last 10 years only. Attacks were openly made on embassy couriers, diplomats, industrialists, corporate offices, institutions, and affluent personages. Not one offending terrorist, to date, has ever been apprehended, yet. Further, never was a religious institution or church fired on or bombed...yet. I've been sensitized to such incidents before, having had my VW camper stolen, then found completely destroyed, smeared with derogatory graffiti. Anti-Americanism still prevails, and Church and state are united. Greece, therefore, is a highly sensitive area of the globe.

Worldwide bomb threats are taken very seriously...even the commonest presumed prankster calls are treated as serious life-threatening acts. Office buildings, schools, governments agencies, airplanes and airports are evacuated quickly at the first sign of anything alarming, the bomb defused and the culprit is apprehended. Why shouldn't this security measure be followed in our church; the House of the Lord, the House of Prayer? I continued wrestling by prayer; my only weapon against two common enemies... fear and déjection on the one hand, and our egoistic instinctive nature on the other hand.

It all became suddenly clear to me as the Holy Spirit swept through me like a wind-storm, and brushed aside all of my racing and lingering thoughts. That was exactly the soul-sufficing answer I was waiting for. I finally realized that, what was involved was the House of the Lord, the House of Prayer! Further, it was the approaching of Sabbath, and Prayer Week! We are the children of God, sons and daughters of the Lord. He has promised that, "No-one can pluck them out of the Lord's hand." John 10:28, 29. Then Psalm 23 led me to remember, v-4 "Yea, though [I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." THAT WAS IT. WE SHALL MEET!

It was Friday. The Sabbath was approaching. My wife, Maria, and I arrived early at the church. The Greek sky was as brass, as the sun began to set. The golden rays of sun played sinister shadows on the gray church walls. As we approached the church, a massive build-up of garbage and débris was piled high just to the side of the entrance. The build-up was due to a week-long garbage worker's strike, still in effect. The stench was nearly over-whelming, but that didn't trouble me. But, my thoughts wandered again, what a perfect place to plant a bomb! Next, I looked up at our Windows on the first floor. The shutters were all shut tight. Ah! Good! We'll leave them closed during the service. How ridiculous, I thought, again. The most popular mode of bomb attacks in Greece were not those thrown, or dropped, but propelled rocked launched missiles!

Then I quickly looked up at some cracked walls of the ancient building, that were still remaining

as a conséquence of a sévère earthquake that occurred last year in Athens. Reconstruction and restoration was still being pondered over, and financial resources being explored, adding to the opportunity. Just one bomb. I thought, *whether* planted, thrown, dropped or fired, even a 'small' one, would jar the entire building into a total collapse and mass of débris and bodies.

NO! IT WON'T HAPPEN! We are that remnant; and "here is the patience of the saints: Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jésus." Rev.4:12. It's our foundation, rock, and fortress. That's who we are, and that's what we believe. We shall not fear or be intimidated. WE WILL MEET!

We meekly walked up the worn marble steps through a dusky hall; strangely counting the steps, never giving this any thought before. There was exactly ten...the LAW! The heavy door to the entrance was slightly ajar, squeaking as we ventured into the dimly lit sanctuary. A lone figure was mutely sitting at a removed corner of the darkened church, leaning over pensively with bowed head. It was the faithful deaconess sitting in her favorite seat, praying. It was still early, yet, hopefully more will come. We'll wait, as it's only 4:45 p.m.... We have 25 minutes until sunset, the Sabbath opening service and ...the 'appointed time'.

One, two, three, more dim figures, members, trickled into the church quietly sliding into their chairs. To calm any anxious hearts we began singing the hymns, "He Lives", "Holy, Holy, Holy", and "Nearer, Still Nearer". How appropriate, and edifying, I thought. It, the 'appointed-time', however, was indeed, and grimly nearer. The clock on the wall was loudly ticking the seconds away in our silence. One more member shuffled quickly to his seat in the roar, then another slipped in for a total of 8; 6 members, one interested soul, and one child; the sum-total for the Sabbath opening and the beginning of the prayer-week. It's odd how a whole church of 32 members can be so quickly informed of a "hushed-event". Is this the "falling-away" Jésus spoke of before the end?

Then the dark cloud lifted and streaming rays of divine light touched our souls and barren hearts, raising cries of grateful praise and thanks in glorifying the Lord. It was exactly 5:00 p.m...

"the appointed-time"! It was also the, . . . "appointed-time" for sunset and the Sabbath opening service.

Our church prayers collectively rose heavenward. The Lord hears such prayers. The Lord, indeed, was "Nearer, Still, Nearer". i no longer wrestled by prayer. The trial was over! It ended, for what could have been an unhappy and disturbing circumstance. It was a lofty ending...5:10 p.m. sunset.

Compassion reached out from each of us in prayer at the opening worship;...for the devilish bomber. What must he be thinking now? Could he be suffering for what he said? Is his heart bitter, hardened still? What moved him to utter those barbarous words of hate? Dreadful words and thoughts of hatred only came from the devil. The Lord knows his heart. and forgives sinners. We forgive him, too. Why? For we have learned to abide with the Lord. We are recipients of God's perfect peace, because of His covenant of grace with us. Hallowed be thy name, Lord. for strengthening our faith and trusting with thee through this 'blessed trial'.

2 Tim. 1:7, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but, of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It is the devil who fills our heart with terror. The Lord promises power, love, and mental equanimity. But He gives these only to those of" His own who are empty of self. The time of Jacob's trouble has not yet arrived, but the signs are growing closer to its reality. In our wrestling by prayer, the Lord, as with Jacob, presses onto the thigh area of our leg. The sinew of this muscle is the strongest in the entire body. The Lord touches this area, an area so strong that it might take a horse to pull it apart, so that the Lord can with any of us at this point, break us of the habit of self, before he bestows the blessing. For "my times are in your hands." Psalm 31:14-15 "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Psalm 34:19.

We closed the Sabbath service and beginning of the prayer week with the swelling hymn, "Nearer My God to Thee." Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! AMEN.

By: Br. John Theodorou
Athens, Greece



Some of the believers in Romania

REVELATION CHAPTER 4

"After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." Rev. 4:1.

Which door was opened in heaven? We find it also in Rev. 3:7, 8. "He that **openeth**, and no man **shutteth**; and **shutteth**, and no man **openeth**; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door." This door leads us to the throne of God or the very presence of God and His glory. John hears a voice of a trumpet. Why the voice of a trumpet? Why not the voice of a piano or voice of a guitar? Of all the instruments, the trumpet has a sharp voice when played. It penetrates inside the soul. That's why it was used in olden times to announce wars. "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matt. 24:31. Now even the dead cannot sleep. **It's** so powerful that it can penetrate the ears of the dead and bring them to life.

"And immediately I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." John sees a throne **set**, but has not the throne of God always existed? Why then this word "set" was now used? "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." Dan. 7:9. The next verse clearly states what "set in place" means. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the

Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Dan. 7:13,14. All the kingdoms of this world will be taken away and the kingdom of Christ will be established. Then it was given to John to view the Father and he sees Him seated upon the throne. His face is like a jasper or sardine stone. Jasper is one of the precious stones and it is found in three colours, **yellow**, brown and red. Sardine in Greek is "**sardion**" which means red ruby. A ruby is red but it is a colour that cannot actually be compared with anything else and is hard to describe. It is strictly unique in nature. Both stones mentioned had the colour of red. When God created man, He created Him in His own image. The name Adam in Hebrew means red, rosy, or **ruddy**. **Adamah** means red soil. Adam was formed from the soil of the earth which was the colour of red and his complexion was red in colour. So from "**adamah**" comes Adam which means "being red in appearance". When we see people red in colour we say they are full of life. When John saw the Father He portrayed Him as ever living. Also a rainbow was seen round about the throne. A rainbow mean a covenant keeping God." (D & R pg. 408) Next the prophet describes the colour of the rainbow that was **like** unto an emerald. The emerald belongs to the most noteworthy and beautiful gems we know. Its splendid full green is the colour of trees, grass, and meadows, but **also** of hope and expectations. With other stones we admire a majestic splendor, a deep shine of purity and a sparkling fire, with the emerald it is the unfathomable depth of its soft and lovely colour. The emerald was the fourth stone Aaron carried on his heart and it is also the

fourth in the New Jerusalem. God sitteth on the mercy seat and His love no one can fully understand. In the psalms it is written, "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Psalm 145: 15, 16. He satisfies the desire of every living thing on this planet Earth and also in the whole universe. It is God who sustains us. That's why His presence is ever merciful.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." Who are these twenty-four elders? "The graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matt. 27:52. They were all clothed with Christ's righteousness and they had the victory crown on their heads.

"And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

When the Lord came to Israel to give them the Ten Commandments, His glory was manifested. "And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking." Ex. 20:18. The same manifestation occurred to John in the vision. It was to give the Everlasting covenant this glory. Now if you look at the next sentence, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by the seven lamps. If you look at light it has seven colours. Then if you look at the sound there is seven notes. All the vibrations or the sounds can be categorized in these seven notes. Then also creating our world in seven days. That is why the number seven is the number of completeness.

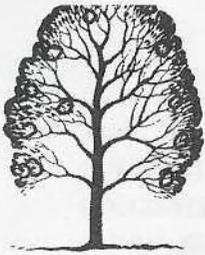
"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind."

The throne was a massive place there is no dust nor dirt but clear crystal. There were also four beasts before the throne. "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle."

If you refer to Eze. 1:5-10, "Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance they had the likeness of a man. And everyone had four faces, and every one had four wings... 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." This is the description of these angels. We come to the conclusion that each had a face of lion, which is a symbol of power and justice. This is also the banner of Judah. Then the calf is a symbol of service and strength. It is the banner of Ephraim. The third face of a man symbolizes sensitivity, intelligence, and feeling. It is the banner of Reuben. Then the fourth eagle symbolized sharp eyesight, swiftness in protective care. It is the banner of Dan. The four beasts who live near the Father have these characteristics also.

"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever. The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying, Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." AMEN

By: Augustus Ratneiyya



THE KNOWLEDGE OF EVIL

Part 4

"Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel." 1 Christ is coming with power and great glory. He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father. He is coming with all the holy angels with Him. 2 "Unless you arise to a higher, holier state in your religious life, you will not be ready for the appearing of our Lord." 3 For our God is a consuming fire. 4

Hear this, all ye people. Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor, together." 5 "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate. And He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." 6 "If you choose sin, and refuse to separate from it, the presence of God, which consumes sin, must consume you." 7 "For our God is a consuming fire." 8

"If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." 9 Do you ask: "How does God regard those who are perishing in their sins?" 10 "Do you believe that God's judgments are hanging over the inhabitants of the earth?" 11 "Shall the people be left in ignorance of the great event before them and have to meet that awful day unprepared?" 12 "Are you putting forth earnest efforts to win others to the Saviour?" 13 "You profess to believe the truth; yet your works testify to the fact." 14

I was convinced! The Bible, which is the word of God, and the Spirit of Prophecy, which is the Testimony of Jesus, were speaking directly to me. Standing on the promises, I forsook all that I might work for my Lord. Unfortunately, I did not fully

comprehend the promise recorded in Luke 22:35. Nevertheless, the Lord did not leave me, nor did He forsake me. My brother, my sister's brother, took me into his home.

My brother told me, he found "Satan's bible" inside a wall locker at school. Out of curiosity, he began reading it, and his eyes were opened. He saw that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Nevertheless, he continued looking. Then he saw "a house divided against itself." The servants in the house were striving for "the chiefest seats in the synagogues." But more importantly, he saw the master of the house, "the Devil, as a roaring lion," "going to and fro in the earth," "seeking whom he may devour." He saw "the Thief who cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy". He saw Satan wanting to fill him with his spirit, and work in him "to will and to do of his good pleasure." And my brother cried, "wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 15 "Never did a soul utter that cry unheeded." 16

The sons and daughters of Adam are fully as inquisitive and presumptuous as was Eve in seeking forbidden knowledge. They gain an experience, a knowledge, which God never designed they should have... 17 The true high education is gained by studying and obeying the word of God. But when God's word is laid aside for books that do not lead to God and the kingdom of heaven, the education acquired is a perversion of the name. 18 Sentences are imprinted in the memory. Thoughts are suggested. Almost unconsciously the reader is

influenced by the spirit of the writer, and mind and character receives an impress for evil. 19

"As wax retains the figure of the seal, so the mind retains the impression produced by intercourse and association. The influence may be unconscious, yet it is no less powerful." 20 The work of the enemy is not abrupt; it is not, at the outset, sudden and startling; it is a secret undermining of the strongholds of principles. It begins in apparently small things- the neglect to be true to God and to rely upon Him wholly, the disposition to follow the customs and practices of the world. 21 "The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence." 22 "As the mind becomes perverted, it is ready to grasp any reading of a simulating character. Thus the way is open for Satan to bring the soul fully under his domination." 23 "Those who would not fall prey to Satan's device must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts." 24

In the truths of His word, God has given to men a revelation of Himself; and to all who accept them they are a shield against the deceptions of Satan. 25 "In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God." 26 His power, His very life, dwells in His word. 27 "The principles of the word of God - principles that are as high as heaven, and that compass eternity - we are to understand in their bearing upon our daily life." 28 Those indulge perverted appetite in eating or drinking. If they do this, the brain will be confused; they will be unable to bear the strain of digging deep to find

out the meaning of those things which relate to the closing scenes of this earth's history. 29 "Said the angel" Prepare, prepare, for what is coming upon the earth. Let your works correspond with your faith." 30

Chester Cosby

1	Jeremiah 2:4	16	DA 335
2	COL 420	17	5T 504
3	5Y 717	18	COL 107
4	Hebrews 12:29	19	7T 203
5	Psalms 29: 1,2	20	4T 587
6	Isaiah 13:9	21	PP718
7	MB 62	22	GC 555
8	Hebrews 12:29	23	7T 203
9	Mark 4:23	24	PP 460
10	9T 50	25	GC 465
11	9T 27	26	COL 38
12	9T 60	27	MB 150
13	9T 39	28	MH 454
14	1T 192	29	TM 114
15	Romans 7:24	30	1T123



Wedding of Michal and Yonka



Current Scene (Part II - Continued from last month)

Biblical Arguments for Homosexuality ?

9. Scriptural references to homosexual acts do not suffice to determine God's will for homosexuals today. They are 'culturally conditioned.'

Probably the major reason why Christian churches accept homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle is the sophisticated scriptural arguments many employ to justify the practice. Proponents either maintain that the Bible is "silent" on the issue or that scriptural passages which condemn homosexuality (Gen. 19 [cf. Jude 7; 2 Pet 2:6-10]; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:8-11), if "rightly" understood, are either ambiguous, irrelevant to contemporary homosexual practice, or refer to pederasty or cultic prostitution.

In short, advocates of gay theology argue that because Bible passages on homosexuality only deal with specific historical situations, they are "culturally conditioned" and no longer relevant for Christian sexual ethics today.

Response to Argument #9

Undergirding these new reformulations of biblical teaching on homosexuality is liberalism's unscriptural view of biblical inspiration, interpretation, and authority. One writer correctly noted: "There are only two ways one can neutralize the biblical witness against homosexual behavior: by gross misinterpretation or by moving away from a high view of Scripture." Indeed, many of the homosexuals' biblical arguments are "strained, speculative and implausible, the product of wishful thinking and special pleading."

Jesus refuted the 'culturally conditioned' argument when He stated unequivocally that God's will for our moral life is the original ideal He instituted in the Garden of Eden. He asked the Pharisees, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Mt 19: 4-5; cf. Mk 10:6-8). With the expression "at the beginning" or "from the beginning" (Mt 19:8; Mk 10:6), Christ teaches that all cultures must bow before the unchangeable standard He instituted at creation. That standard is that only "male and

female" can legitimately "cleave" and become 'one flesh.' Indeed, if Christ intended a homosexual relationship He would have created "Adam and Steve, not Adam and Eve."

10."Jesus said nothing about homosexuality in any of the Gospels"

The argument is that, as followers of Christ, Christians should base their beliefs on the teachings of Christ. If Jesus Christ, the founder of biblical Christianity, was silent on the issue of homosexuality, why should we go beyond our Master by condemning the practice? Response to Argument #10

The lack of record in the Gospels of a statement from Christ on homosexuality does not mean that He never addressed it during His earthly ministry. According to John, if the Gospel writers had attempted to record all the works of Christ, the world could not contain all the books (John 21:25).

Moreover, the recorded teachings of Christ in the Gospels are not the Christian's only source of authority. "All Scripture"--from Genesis to Revelation--constitutes the normative authority. The fact that one section of the Bible says nothing explicitly on a subject does not mean the other sections are silent.

Furthermore, it is incorrect to say that Jesus is silent on homosexuality. As we pointed out earlier, Christ's statement in Matthew 19:3-8 and Mark 10:2-9 : "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" reveals that God's intention at Creation regarding human sexuality--namely, a monogamous, heterosexual relationship--is the only context for the expression of human sexuality.

11. The Bible writers did not know about homosexuality as we know it today"

Some argue that the kind of homosexuality the Bible writers condemned was that which was connected with rape, prostitution, or idolatry. They claim that even if the Bible writers did condemn homosexuality as we know it today (i.e., the so-called loving, committed, and faithful homosexual relationships), this is not the first time Bible writers have been wrong. They were wrong on many things, including the practice of slavery,

polygamy, and the subjugation of women. These practices were later allegedly corrected by the "Spirit's leading." If the Bible writers were wrong on these issues, they argue, why can't they be wrong on homosexuality? And if under the Spirit's leading the church came to embrace slave emancipation, monogamy, and women's equal rights, why should not the church, led by the same Spirit, accept homosexuality?

Response to Argument #11

First, if we believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word and not simply the personal opinions of ancient writers, and if we believe that the Bible is the all-sufficient guide in doctrine and practice for all people living at all times (2 Tim 3:16-17; cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21), then "it is unthinkable that God--who is no respecter of persons--would be so careless as to offer no guidance in His revealed Word to the thousands of homosexuals He knew would exist throughout time, if indeed their relationships were legitimate in His sight."

Second, it is without foundation to argue that the Bible writers (Moses and Paul) were ignorant of today's more "enlightened" scientific and theological view of homosexuality. These men were erudite in their intellectual training and discerning in their calling as God's prophets. The reason why they never made the fine distinctions cited by today's pro-homosexual advocates is because there is no validity to recent distinctions between the homosexual act and the condition, the latter being something about which homosexuals allegedly have no choice. The Bible writers condemned homosexuality of itself. They also offered God's miraculous transformation as the cure for this sin (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Third, the suggestion that the Bible writers were wrong on a number of issues arises from contemporary higher criticism (keeping with the fashion for revisionism). In an earlier work I have challenged this discredited method of liberal interpretation as incompatible with the tenets of biblical Christianity.

Moreover, the claim that the Bible writers accommodated or tolerated (some say encouraged) slavery, polygamy, and the subjugation of women--practices later allegedly corrected by the "Spirit's leading"--is a scholarly myth that responsible Bible scholars have disproven. The Bible writers never once commended the practices of slavery, polygamy, and the subjugation of women. But they did

repeatedly condemn the practice of homosexuality (see, for example, Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26ff. 1 Cor 6; 1 Tim 1:8ff.).

13. Sodom was destroyed because of pride, inhospitality, and/or gang rape, not because of homosexuality

When the men of Sodom demanded of Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them" (Gen. 19:5), pro-gay advocates argue that the men of Sodom were only violating the ancient rules of hospitality. Some assert that the Hebrew word *yadah*, which is translated "have sex with" (or "know" in KJV) appears 943 times in the Old Testament, and carries sexual meaning only about 10 times. They thus argue that the men of Sodom had no sexual intentions towards Lot's visitors; they only wanted to "get acquainted" with them or interrogate them, fearing that they were foreign spies being harbored by Lot, himself a foreigner. Furthermore, even if they had sexual intentions, the condemnation of their action would be the condemnation of homosexual gang rape, not a consensual homosexuality as such.

Response to Argument #12

I Indeed, Sodom was destroyed because of pride and inhospitality (cf. Ezek. 16:49-50; Jer. 23:14; Lk. 17:28-29). But it is a false distinction to separate inhospitality from sexual sin. What the men of Sodom sought to do was another form of inhospitality. Also, inhospitality and pride were not the only reasons for Sodom's destruction. The city was punished also because of its "abominations" (Ezek 16:50), a veiled reference to its sexual deviations. The Bible describes various things as "abomination," a word of strong disapproval, meaning literally something detestable and hated by God. But since the word is used in the so-called "inhospitality passages" of Ezekiel 16 to describe sexual sin (v. 22, 58), and since the word refers to same-sex acts in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, the "abominations" of Sodom are not exclusive of sexual deviations.

Two New Testament passages make this point explicitly. The apostle Peter indicates that, among other things, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of their "filthy conversation," "unlawful deeds," and their "walk after the lust of the flesh" (2 Pet 2:6-10), a reference that includes adultery, fornication, and other sexual perversions (cf. Gal 5:19-21). Jude specifically linked the destruction of these wicked cities to their sexual deviations: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving

themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The "fornication and going after strange flesh" are obvious references to sexual perversions (so NIV, RSV, NRSV, Phillips, TEV).

Pro-gay advocates incorrectly assert that the Hebrew word *yadah* as used in Genesis 19 means "to get acquainted with," not "to have sex with." But Lot's reply to the men of Sodom shows that he understood their demand in sexual terms: "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing" (Gen. 19:7). In fact, in the very next verse the word *yadah* is translated "slept with." Lot, acting out of sheer desperation and hopelessness proposed: "Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with (*yadah*) a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them" (v. 8). Lot definitely had no reason to think that the men of Sodom merely wanted to question or get acquainted with his daughters! One Bible commentary puts it neatly: "It would be grotesquely inconsequent that Lot should reply to a demand for credentials by an offer of daughters." The fact that Lot refers to his daughters' virgin status also indicates he understood the sexual content of the request. Clearly, then, *yadah* in this passage refers to sexual intercourse.

This much can be said: The men of Sodom were not interested in Lot's desperate offer of his virgin daughters. They were proposing a homosexual rape. But for such rape to have involved "all the men of the city, both young and old" (En 19:4), homosexual activity must have been commonly practiced--one reason why Jude records that their "fornication, and going after strange flesh are set forth [in Scripture] for an example [and warning unto us]" (Jude 7). As we will see, other Bible passages condemn all homosexual activity, not just homosexual rape.

13. The Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 passages, condemning homosexual activity as sinful, do not condemn homosexuality as we know it today. In these passages, God forbids a man to "lie with" another man "as with a woman." Doing so is an "abomination." Advocates of gay theology, however, argue that the practices condemned as "abomination" (Heb. *to'evah*) in these passages of Leviticus have to do with the kind of homosexuality associated with pagan religious practices. In the view of pro-gay writers, God was not prohibiting the kind of homosexuality practiced today by Christians, but only the kind connected with idolatry. Even if the passages condemn homosexuality in

general, they argue, these passages in Leviticus are part of the ceremonial holiness code that has no permanent binding obligation on Christians.

Response to Argument #13

First, if these passages condemn homosexuality only because of its association with idolatry, then it would logically follow that other practices mentioned in these passages--incest, adultery, polygamy, bestiality, and child sacrifice--are also condemned as sinful only because of their association with idolatry. Conversely, if incest, adultery, polygamy, bestiality, etc., are morally objectionable regardless of their connection with pagan practices, then homosexuality is also morally wrong, regardless of the context in which it is practiced.

Second, in context, both Leviticus 18 and 20 deal primarily with morality, not idolatrous worship. When God wants specifically to mention the practices of cultic or idolatrous prostitutes, He does so, as in Deuteronomy 23:17: "No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute." The lack of such mention in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 indicates that God is dealing with homosexuality per se, not with any alleged specific form of Canaanite religious practice.

As for the contention that Scripture always connects the word "abomination" (Heb. *to'evah*) with idolatry or pagan ceremonies, one biblical example will discredit the claim. Proverbs 6:16-19 describes God as hating such "abominations" as a proud look, a lying tongue, murder, etc. Are we to believe that pride, lying, and murder are morally acceptable as long as they are not carried out in idolatrous pagan contexts? Certainly not. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 condemn homosexuality, alongside incest, adultery, polygamy, and bestiality, in the strongest terms. These moral concerns are still relevant today. Also, since the New Testament again denounces these sexual deviations, we may conclude that the moral content of these Leviticus passages is permanently normative, not part of the ceremonial holiness code's temporary provisions.

14. In Romans 1:26-27 Paul does not condemn individuals who are homosexuals by nature; rather, he refers to idolatrous heterosexuals who have "changed their nature" by committing homosexual acts. According to this argument, the real sin condemned by Paul is two-fold: (i) the changing of what is natural to a person into what is unnatural, and (ii)

homosexuality committed by people who worship images, not God.

Response to Argument #14

Advocates of pro-gay theology often argue that if a person is homosexual, he or she can never become truly heterosexual. And yet they often quote the Romans 1 passage as an example of truly heterosexual people committing a sin by becoming truly homosexual. We may therefore ask: If a person who is a heterosexual can change and become a homosexual, why cannot a person who is a homosexual be changed and become a heterosexual? It appears, however, that advocates of the pro-gay view point do not see the inconsistency of their position.

For a number of reasons, it seems inconceivable that Paul could be describing predominantly heterosexual people indulging in homosexual acts. First, he describes the men and women committing these homosexual acts as "burning in lust" for each other. Are we to understand this as heterosexuals who are simply experimenting with an alternate lifestyle?

Also, if verses 26 and 27 only condemn homosexual actions by people to whom they did not come naturally (i.e., heterosexuals who are practicing homosexual acts), but don't apply to individuals to whom those same actions allegedly do come naturally ("true homosexuals"), then consistency and intellectual integrity demand that the sinful practices mentioned in verses 29 and 30—fornication, backbiting, deceit, etc.--are permissible as long as the people who commit them are people to whom they come naturally.

Is Paul's use of "natural" purely subjective (what is "natural for me" in my orientation) or is it objective (what is "natural for everyone" regardless of orientation)? The context of Romans 1 suggests that Paul is describing homosexual behavior and other sinful practices as objectively unnatural. They are part of the practices that result when men "exchange the truth about God for a lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator." He was talking about an objective condition of depravity experienced by people who rejected God's will. In other words, it is the very nature of the sexual conduct itself that Paul considers unnatural. Homosexuality is unnatural to the man as a male (Greek arsen) and to the woman as a female (Greek gyne), not because of what may or may not be natural to their personality, but because of what is unnatural according to God's design when he created male and female.

Finally, if we are to accept pro-gay arguments that Romans 1 condemns only homosexuality committed by people who worship idols, then consistency and honesty demand that we also argue that the other sins listed in that chapter—fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, pride, etc. (vv. 28-32)—are sinful only because they are committed by idol worshipers. I don't

believe that even the most strident advocates of homosexuality will embrace this logic. The point is thus obvious: Homosexuality is unnatural, whether it is committed by idolaters or those who worship the true God.

15. Paul's "arsenokoitai" and "malakoi" statements in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10, denouncing the "effeminate and them that defile themselves with mankind," are actually a condemnation of an "offensive kind of homosexuality," not the "offense of homosexuality." In both passages, Paul lists those who engage in homosexual behavior among such lawless people as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, kidnapers, etc. According to pro-gay advocates, the Greek terms arsenokoitai (translated in 1 Cor. 6 and 1 Tim 1 as "them that defile themselves with mankind") and malakoi (translated "effeminate" or "soft" in 1 Cor 6), which the apostle uses to denounce homosexual activity, refer to homosexual abuse, not its right use. Thus, these passages do not condemn today's "loving and committed" homosexual relationships, but rather offensive kinds of homosexual activity, such as homosexual prostitution.

Response to Argument #15

For good reason the terms arsenokoitai and malakoi have been understood traditionally as a reference to the active and passive partners in a homosexual relationship. The first term (arsenokoitai) literally means "male bedders" (reference to a man who "beds" another) and the second term (malakoi) refers to "soft" or "effeminate" men, specifically males who play female sexual roles with the "male bedder." There is no hint in these words that Paul was condemning only a certain kind of homosexual abuse, as in prostitution, rape, or pagan ceremonies. He condemns homosexuality in itself as sin. Further, note that arsenokoitai is derived from two words—arsen (referring to man as male) and koite (a term that appears only twice in the New Testament, and literally means "bed" or "couch." In Romans 13:13, it appears in "Let us walk honestly. . . not in chambering

[koite]]"; and in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable . . . and the bed [koite] undefiled."). The combination of the two terms arsen (male) and koite (bed) does not even suggest prostitution, rape or idolatry--only sexual contact between two men.

In other words, homosexuality is wrong, regardless of the reason why it is practiced. Note also that when Paul used the term arsenokoitai to condemn the sinful practice of homosexuality, he apparently derived it directly from the Greek translation of two verses in Leviticus 18, which reads in part: ". . . kai meta arsenos ou koimethese koiten gynaikos" ("and you shall not sleep in bed with a man as with a woman"; Lev 18:22); ". . . kai hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gynaikos" ("and whoever may lie in bed with a man as with a woman"; Lev 20:13),

Therefore, Paul's condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10 presupposes Leviticus' condemnation of homosexual acts. Is it any wonder that Paul lists homosexuality among "lawless" deeds that would bar a person from the kingdom of God? Homosexuality in any form is sinful. To attempt to sanitize a sinful practice by describing it as "loving and committed" and to attempt to silence the Bible's categorical condemnation of the practice is an irresponsible exercise in biblical gamesmanship.

In summary, the Bible is not morally neutral on homosexuality. Paul's statements in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1, along with the Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 passages, clearly show that homosexuality in all of its various forms is a sinful practice. Homosexual behavior, like heterosexual fornication, is sin, whether it results from one's orientation or from conscious choice. In other words, the Bible condemns all homosexual lust and behavior, including today's so-called loving and consensual homosexual relationships,

Conclusion

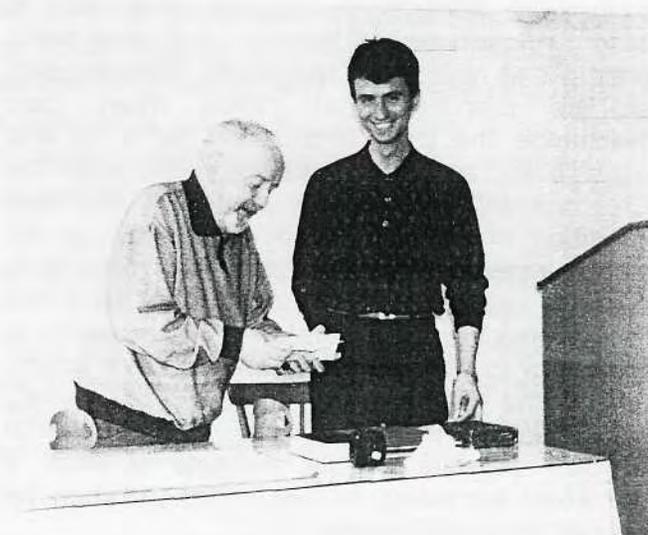
What then should we say in response to homosexuals who are coming to church not only for forgiveness and mercy but to say to the church, as they have to the world, "Homosexuality is not sinful; it is natural to me. God made me this way. He accepts me and my homosexuality as good. Therefore the time has come for the church to accept me as I am and join me in saying that gayness is good?" Should the 'born a gay' lifestyle be baptized? In the light of our discussion in the preceding pages, we cannot but borrow the following words to respond to attempts at domesticating homosexuality and lesbianism in the Seventh-

day Adventist Church: **"The church cannot condone homosexual activity without betraying its biblical, historical, and spiritual heritage. Its conscious acceptance of the authority and inspiration of Scripture would need to undergo such a radical, liberalizing change that the fundamental teachings of the church would be left without foundation."**

The consequences of such change with its ramifications for theological, ethical, and moral teaching might be labeled by some as progressive, calculated to enlighten the church and produce a more compassionate laity accommodated to the modern society in which it lives. But in reality such a move would be a giant step toward paganizing the church. The resulting religion would not be a Bible religion or that of the prophets, the Lord, or the apostles, not Christianity except in name."

In today's climate of "enlightened" ethical sensitivity, the above words and the theological position adopted in this article may seem "judgmental" or "uncompassionate" to some. If so, we must make it absolutely clear that God's grace covers every kind of sin for any believer in Jesus who contritely turns toward God and makes a decisive commitment to turn away from sin. God can forgive homosexual sin as well as heterosexual sin, sin which is socially acceptable as sin and sin which is not. But the first step in receiving forgiveness is to recognize our wrongdoing as sin. This starting point should be the non-negotiable theological foundation for any "ministry" or Christian "support group" that seeks to reach out redemptively to gays and lesbians.

Edited by Jerry Eaton



IMPLICIT TRUST WORKS



Trust the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5,6)

Would we keep a faithful account of all that we are subjected to day in day out, we in review of the same may be led to a deeper understanding than we literally do. However, often times, we fail to recognize valuable opportunities availed to us that might invoke a spirit of revival within us. Such a spirit may be ignited if we take a critical survey of each moment inscribed right from sunrise to sunset. It may all not be obvious that your day was thus spent. "The natural life preserved moment by moment by divine power; yet it is not sustained by direct miracles, but through the use of the blessings placed within our reach. So the spiritual life is sustained by the use of those means that providence has **supplied**." (AA 284)

We often times wonder with untold admiration on what the pen of inspiration has revealed of them that stood unshaken amid the storm of great darkness and uncertainty. Subjected as they were, their conscious would not faint of one sweet memory that, "Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them. One barrier broken down will give a greater ability and give us courage to go forward. Press in the right direction, and make a change, solidly, intelligently. Then circumstance will be your helpers and not your hindrances". In them was the urge "Make the beginning. The oak is the corn". (6T 145)

While contemplating on the works of the Almighty, David the servant of God declares, "The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over His works. (Ps 145:10) Even when we are determined to separate ourselves from Him by living in the way that is pleasing to us, He has remained good and faithful with the promise, "I will never forsake thee."

For the entire period of **five** years I have been in Pakistan, I am left with no doubt that the mighty hand that rolls the sun from the east to **west**, which put the stars in **place**, hands, though Mighty but seemed weakened hanging on the cross, but which of late are being raised in the Holy of Holies with the plea, "My blood, Father, My blood," is for the sole purpose to assure us that it is meant for us. Soon "One shall ask Him, what are those wounds in thine hands? And He

will answer saying, I was wounded in the house of my friends."(AA 226) Might you be the one?

Prior to coming to Pakistan, I had a scanty knowledge of what an Islamic state is and how the system works. To be brief, being an Islamic state, every governing principle (social, economic, religious, educational, political etc.) give reference to their religious institution (Islam) to ensure that the Islamic views are upheld as high as possible.

On learning that the academic institutions were operating for seven days (Monday - Sunday) except for Friday which was a half-day of work up to 12.00pm, I was caught up as to how I was to observe the Sabbath. Ever before was a stagnant inquiry, "For who in heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the Mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" For I had before been in the school of Christ. A number of alternatives criss-crossed my mind as to what to do but stood at these two - make an application requesting Sabbath off for the purpose of worship, or try to get back home (Kenya). The latter option seemed more attractive for it suggested a number of conveniences to be enjoyed while associating with other fellow believers, an idea if inquired of the apostle Paul would advise saying, "Not only were converts won to the church **in** Caesar's household, but after their conversion they remained in that household. They did not feel at liberty to abandon their post of duty because their surroundings were no longer congenial. The truth had found them there and there they remained, by **their** changed life and character testifying to the transforming **power** of the new faith", (AA 466) Later on while seeking counsel from one of God's servants concerning my **unpeaceful** mind, she among other things wrote, "But you are alone **in** a foreign country far away from your (my) family, friends and fellow Christian believers, you have to an opportunity to depend more directly on God for your (my) spiritual well being. You might find it hard in the beginning, but it is something that we all have to learn and we need to learn it by experience". With these words sinking deep into my senses, the rage of my spiritual turmoil was calm, with a solemn thought in mind - I am **in** the workshop for reshaping and that it is the worst meant good for me.

To this thought I was to pursue the latter option of making an application for Sabbath off from classes. With a little prayer I drafted the letter, which I had to take to the Principal before paying fees to clear up my

admission procedures. As I went to visit the Principal, all the way my mind was stayed on the pledge, "Remember your church covenant, in which you have agreed to walk in all the ways of the Lord, made or to be made known unto you. Remember your promise and covenant with God and with one another, to receive whatever light and truth that shall be made known to you from His written word." (GC 292).

After a while I was before the Principal. Not knowing what to expect, he inquired after reading the letter, "How are you going to cover the lessons missed?" With this, I was fast to respond, "I will spare some extra time and take private tuition". "What about the 75% class attendance requirement?" Sir, this is the favor that I am seeking from you. With no further questioning, my request was granted and thus had all the liberty I was after during the Sabbath.

Though this seemed an easy matter to deal with, it struck some high note in me that God heard my weak prayer given the negative attitude held that Islam is the only righteous religion lately communicated to the world. Moreover, not all civil servants have this privilege of worshiping in the morning hours because they have to report for duty, implying that worship time for many is evening time from 6.00 p.m. onwards. This applies also to all the Sunday churches. Sounding the assurances given in praise was all would do, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. That He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". (2 Timothy 1:12, *Philippians* 1:6)

Amid all things I was convinced that this is the working of the divine power that was meant to sustain me all the days I will be learning in this institution. For a moment I thought of David's rapturous praise given the realization that nothing escapes the searching eyes, the ever attentive ears of his God would not even shun of reminding himself as, "O Lord thou hast searched me and know me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord thou knowest altogether. Thou has beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me". (Psalms 145:--). As my pivot to reason, the laughter from my classmates for saying that I won't be attending class on Saturdays because this is the Lord's day did much to increase my trust in Him that has a claim of implicit obedience from us. Satan well knows this and he " (Satan) is ready to steal away the blessed assurances of God. He desires to take every glimmer of hope and every ray of light from the soul, but you must not permit him to do this, but day, Jesus has died that I might live. He loves me and wills not that I should perish. I have a compassionate heavenly

Father; and although I have abused His love, though the blessings He has given me have I squandered, I will arise and go to the Father, and say, 'I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants'." (SC 27-28)

Not in freedom from trial, but in the midst of it is Christian character developed. Experience to rebuffs and opposition leads the follower of Christ to greater watchfulness and more earnest prayer to the might Helper. Severe trial endured by the grace of God develops patience, vigilance, fortitude and a deep abiding trust in God". (AA 467-68)

The Christian life is a battle and a march. But the victory to be won is not by human power. The conflict is the domain of the heart. The battle, which we have to fight - the greatest battle that was ever fought by man, is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of the love, even to the entire law, our schoolmaster. I had not made any application to the examination office for exemption as made to the administration office. Then comes the end of the semester with one paper falling on the Sabbath. This presented in itself yet another accusing conscience of the "Remember the Sabbath". Before I would make any request in applying for the adjustment of the timetable, I fell sick and would not leave my room for class for four days. While in my room alone came a flood of thoughts reviewing the firm covenant I had made with my God in that morning when the miracle of conviction for right was wrought in my mind and heart. I silently listened to the earnest and sincere prayers offered to God that I may remain firm in days to come, leave alone the sweet songs that escorted these prayers on high. Diverting my attention from the scene would not avail any peaceful moment. All was perplexing. I was alone, yet with a feeling that I was with people listening to the preview of the recent past. In a mild perception, I did reflect what the prophet Elijah witnessed while he wrote, "Not in mighty manifestation of divine power, but by, 'a still small voice', did God choose to reveal Himself to His servant.. then there came a voice a still, small voice, and the prophet covered his face before the presence of the Lord. He knew that a quiet trust, a firm reliance on God would ever find him a present help in time of need. It is not always the most learned presentation of God's truth that convicts and converts the soul. Not by eloquence or logic are men's hearts reaches, but by the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit, which operates quietly yet surely in transforming and developing character. It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart". (PK 168-69) To this, I had enough evidence as to why I ought to obey God rather than men.

Not long afterwards in a calm spirit with my resolution to have the Sabbath honored did my classmates come

to see me, with the news that the paper had shifted to Wednesday. Amazing! All I would say amid pain was "Thanks God for you well knew my need". As such, all my papers were done within the weekdays. For God was behind all this, I managed to complete the course within the stipulated time though there were those who had to repeat for some papers.

Beloved reader, the words written to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and king Jehospat, "Thus said the Lord unto you, be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Chronicles 20:15) Though you be bound with heavy chains and might soldiers set to guard you, with unfailing trust in the Omnipotent, and Omniscient, like Peter in his rock-hewn cell, you afford "sleeping the peaceful sleep of perfect trust". (AA 146) Because the battle is not yours, to sing of this victory eternally, you have a part to play in this great drama within the heart arena. "The will must be placed on side of God's will," However "Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted, be willing to be made willing, and God will accomplish the work for you even 'casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of Christ.'" (2Corinthians 10:5) Then you will 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is which worked in you both to will and to be willing to do of His good pleasure'. Philippians 2:12,13,(MB 142)

On looking back to those trembling moments, I fail to find the right words that can relate my joy in my heart. You may as well find it true that you cannot doubt any more that there is an invisible Being who loves you and desires that you should not be in a such state of burning fire, than you can bear it. Hence, struggling with troubles that are not our own will unnecessarily wear and tear down our precious mental treasures endowed us. The call remains still as putting on "a firm determination to overcome them. The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances." (COL 332) Though sung several times you find a new inspiration as revealed to J.H Summis in his song;

When we trust in the Lord
In the light of His word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear
Not a sorrow we share

But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief nor a loss
Not a frown nor a cross,
But is blest if we trust and obey.

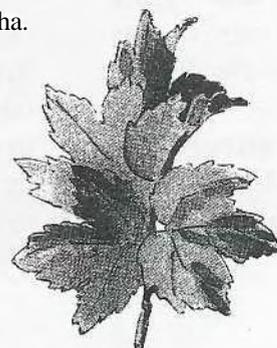
But we never can prove
The delights of His love
Until all on the alter we lay,
For the favor He shows
And the joy He bestows,
Are for all who trust and obey.

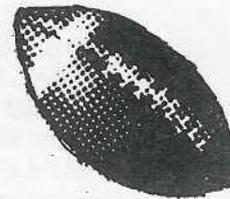
Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do;
Where He sends we will go -
Never fear, only trust and obey.

"The words of Christ are the wellspring of life. As you seek unto those living springs you will through the Holy Spirit be brought into communion with Christ. Familiar truths will present themselves to your mind in a new aspect, texts of scripture will burst upon you with a new meaning as a flash of light, you will see the relation of other truths to the work of redemption, and you will know that Christ is leading you, a divine teacher is at your side". (MB 20) Of the many accounts that the Lord had seen good to be our example is that of Jacob. "When his strength was nearly spent, the Angel put forth His divine power, and at His touch Jacob knew Him with whom he had been contending. Wounded and helpless, he fell upon the Savior's breast, pleading for a blessing.. 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me'. (Genesis 32:26)... That for which Jacob had vainly wrestled in his own strength was won through self-surrender and steadfast faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". (1 John 5:4) MB 144.

Just like Jacob, Jesus cannot turn aside nor cease your intercession and He grants the petition of your helpless penitent soul, according to His promise, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me". (Isaiah 27:5). Leaving our faltering behind, may we give a trust to this promise. AMEN.

John R. Obwocha.
Pakistan





MAKING FRIENDS

It would have been a good game if John had known the rules, but he kept kicking the football instead of picking it up and running with it. Mike watched him in frustration. John charged at the ball and punted it with a flying kick right into Mr. Green's backyard. Dean ran to get it.

When John moved into his block, Mike had hoped they could become friends. But this game was ridiculous.

"I'm going home," Mike said. He saw disappointment cross John's face and he felt a twinge of guilt.

As he began to walk away, Dean ran over to him. "Give him a chance, Mike," he said in a low voice. "This game is all new to him."

"No," said Mike. "It's a waste of time. He'll never learn. We spend half our time chasing the ball." He turned away from Dean abruptly and headed home.

He didn't want to lose John's friendship, but football was important to Mike. He looked forward to playing with his friends every night after school. But not any more! He wouldn't play as long as John played.

When he got home, there was still an hour until supper. Grandmother was sitting in the corner of the living room by the fireplace. "No football today?" she asked as Mike came in.

"No," Mike said. "They don't know how to play."

"Well, how about playing a game with me? My eyes are too tired to sew any more today."

Mike was about to say no, when a glint came into grandmother's blue eyes. She wagged her finger at him. "Come on now, I challenge you!"

Mike grinned. Why not? He had nothing better to do and he knew grandma would like it.

"All right," he said, "I'll go and pick one."

When Mike came back with the game, he set up a small table for them to play on. "Now here's how you play, grandma," Mike began. Then he outlined the rules to her. "Do you think you understand?"

Grandmother nodded. "I think so. But there's a lot to remember. You'll have to overlook it if I make a few mistakes at first. I'll start." She spun the arrow that pointed to the numbers.

"No, no grandma!" Mike interrupted. "We have to spin to see who starts. Whoever spins the highest number is the one who starts."

Mike spun a two and grandmother spun a five. "All right, now you start," Mike said. Grandmother began to move five spaces on the board.

"No, no, grandma!" Mike shouted again. "You have to spin again to see how many spaces to move. That first spin doesn't count in the game."

Grandmother ran her fingers through her gray hair. "Oh dear, I'm so sorry. It's such a long time since I played a game like this." She spun again - a four this time.

"Now what do I do?" she asked.

"Move your man four spaces," Mike replied. He was getting impatient. Surely grandmother remembered better than this.

They played for nearly half an hour, and grandmother kept making mistake after mistake. By the end of the game Mike felt annoyed. He didn't want to play another game. He had to keep telling grandmother what to do. She didn't know how to play at all.

He put the game away and went out into the backyard. He could hear the shouts from the football game. *I hope John doesn't play tomorrow night*, he thought.

But the next night as he walked home from school, he could see John with his thick black hair, standing in the midst of the usual gang. It looked as though Dean was trying to explain the game to John. *How could he be so patient?* Mike wondered.

He tried to slide past them without anyone noticing him, but John saw him.

"Hey Mike!" he called. "Are you going to play?" And he flashed a friendly grin.

"No," Mike said, "I've got something else to do," he mumbled.

John's grin disappeared, and he looked puzzled.

"Never mind him," Mike heard Dean say, and the next minute John turned away.

Mike felt angry and guilty at the same time. *He couldn't play football, not the way John messed up the game. He couldn't!* He kicked at the rocks on the sidewalk. *Now he'd really lost John's friendship. Why couldn't he keep any friends?*

Just then Mitch Murphy came zooming by on his brand new bicycle. Mitch was several years younger than Mike and had received his new bike for his birthday.

"Hey you! Look where you're going!" Mike yelled after him. "Don't you know you're not supposed to ride your bike on the sidewalk?" Mitch skidded around in his driveway and sped back to Mike. Then he screeched to a halt and stood feet astride the bicycle.

"What was that?" he said, grinning, showing the gap in his front teeth.

"You're not supposed to ride your bike on the sidewalk. It's against the law. Now get off it." Mike grabbed the handlebars and shook the bike.

Mitch's toothless grin vanished. "But mom says I can't ride my bike in the street. I'm not old enough yet."

"Then you'd better walk!" Mike growled, and he shook the bike again. "Go on! Walk!"

Mitch tugged at his bike. "Let go!" he yelled. Then Mike suddenly let go. Mitch yanked the bike at the same moment and landed in a jumbled heap on the ground. He began to cry.

"I hate you, Mike Davis. You're mean," he said as he untangled himself from the bike. "I used to be your friend, but I'm not any more. You'll never have any friends. You're too bossy - everybody says so." And with that he moved off, pushing his bike in the direction of home.

Mike stared after him. Was that true? Did everyone say he was too bossy? It was true he liked things to be done correctly -

mom always teased him about that - but did that make him bossy?

Mike began to think over the last few days. No one else seemed to care that John couldn't play football the right way. Then there was that game with grandmother yesterday. He'd been annoyed because she didn't know the rules. Now he'd even tried to boss young Mitch around - and really, he admitted it was none of his business. Maybe he was too fussy, too impatient - too bossy.

Just then footsteps sounded behind him. "Hey Mike!" a voice called. It was John. "How would you like to learn to play soccer?" he asked. "The others all agreed," he said, grinning and nodding in the direction of the football game. "I'm no good at football, but I know soccer. Come on," he begged, "I'll show you a few tricks."

Mike hesitated, then he relaxed and grinned. "Okay," he said, "but I hope you'll be more patient with me than I was with you."

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Luke 6:31.

Forgive me, Lord, when I'm impatient, and help me to be more loving, kind, forgiving. Thank you for being my friend always.



GAD

Of the childhood and personal life of Gad, the 7th son of Jacob, nothing definite is preserved. He was the 1st son of Zilpah, Leah's maid; but from the record given it seems that Gad and the other sons born to Jacob by Bilhah and Zilpah, were far from being exemplary characters in their early lives. (see Genesis 37:2)

The prophetic words of his dying father open up a volume in the life and characters of this son: "Gad a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last." (Genesis 49:19) Gad may be taken as a type of the backslider, who is overcome by a troop of temptations, but awakens to his danger; and in the strength given him from God, overcomes at last, and enters the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, rejoicing in the Lord.

The secret of the Gadites being victorious over their enemies, is given in the account of one of their great battles: "They cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them; because they put their trust in Him." (1 Chronicles 5:20)

When Peter found that he was actually sinking beneath the waves that he had been walking upon, he cried, "Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him." Matthew 14:30, 31. In like manner, the one who finds himself overcome by temptations over which in the past he has been victorious, has the privilege, like Gad and Peter, of crying out for help, and he will immediately receive it, if he puts his trust in God.

To every backslider the Lord sends this message: "Turn, O backsliding children,

saith the Lord; for I am married unto you and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." (Jeremiah 3:12-14) The Lord uses the symbol of marriage to illustrate the close union between Himself and His people, and when they backslide and dishonor Him, - wonderful thought! - He still says, "Go and proclaim these words,...I am married unto you," - the backslider.

Again the Lord asks: "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" He answers the question Himself: "Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourself." Isaiah 50:1.

The Lord requires but one thing of the backslider: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." Jeremiah 3:13. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

To every backslider the Lord says, "Come now, and let us reason together:...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18.

Hear the Lord pleading with the backslider: "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding." Jeremiah 3:22. That is a wonderful promise; but listen again to His pleading voice: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" for Mine anger is turned away." Hosea 14:4. It is no stinted portion that the backslider receives; the Lord heals his backslidings and loves him freely.

Who, that has ever once tasted the peace and joy of sins forgiven, can refuse the offers of pardon and love?

On one of the gates of the city of God, the name of Gad will be written, - Gad, the one who was overcome by a troop, but at the last became the victor.

Twelve thousand of the one hundred forty-four thousand will also be marshaled under the name of Gad, (Revelation 7:4,5) - twelve thousand, who arise from backslidings and defeat, acknowledge their transgressions, claim the promises of God, wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and enter as victors into the city of God. (Revelation 7:14)

It is very difficult for the human heart to re-instate one who has betrayed his confidence and has spurned love and friendship; but the infinite God will not only heal our backslidings and love us freely, but He also says, "I, even I, am He that blot out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah 43:25.

Because they were shepherds, the Gadites requested that their portion be given them out of the land first conquered "on the other side of Jordan." They took part in the conquest of the land on the west side of Jordan, and did not return to their families until they were given an honourable discharge by Joshua, at the door of the tabernacle in Shiloh. (Joshua 22:1-4.) Moses evidently refers to their choice of land and faithfulness in the parting blessing. (Deuteronomy 33:20,21)

Their inheritance lay between the territory of Reuben on the south and the half tribe of Manasseh on the north. At first the inheritance of Gad embraced half of

Gilead; later they possessed all of it. (1 Chronicles 5:11,16). They became so

closely identified with Gilead, that in some cases the name Gilead is used synonymously with Gad.

The character of the tribe was throughout fierce and warlike, - "men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were swift as the roes upon the mountains." Such is the graphic description given of those eleven heroes of Gad, the least of them more than equal to a hundred, and the greatest to a thousand; that, undaunted by the swollen floods of Jordan, joined the forces of David at the time of his greatest discredit and embarrassment. (1 Chronicles 12:8, 12, 13).

Gad, though separated from the rest of Israel west of the Jordan, still retained some connection with them. From the following words of Ahab we should infer that Gad was considered a part of the northern kingdom: "Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?" 1 Kings 22:3.

Tiglath-pileser carried Gad captive into Assyria, (1 Chronicles 5:26) and the Ammonites inhabited their cities in the days of Jeremiah. The prophet bewails the condition in the following words: "Hath Israel no sons? Hath he no heir? Why then doth Melchom (Moloch) inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?" Jeremiah 49:1, margin.

Of all the tribes of Israel, Gad and Reuben alone returned to the land their forefathers had left five hundred years before, with their occupations unchanged. The civilization and persecution in Egypt

changed the occupation of most of the tribes.

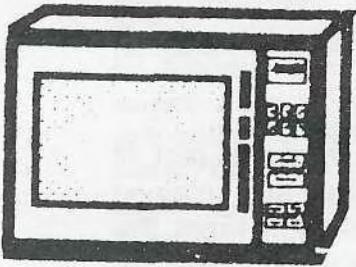
Barzillai, the friend of David, was a Gileadite; (2 Samuel 19:32-39). And so was Jephthau, that "mighty man of valor." Among the worthy characters of Gilead, or Gad, was "Elijah the Tishbite," who by his word locked heaven for three years and a half; and in answer to his prayer, the clouds emptied themselves again upon the earth.

Elijah was honored by God as only one other person was ever honored; (Hebrews 11:5) and when the time for his translation drew near, he crossed over Jordan into the land of his childhood,

where, by the grace of God, he had gained that strength of character which enabled him fearlessly to rebuke Ahab and Jezebel his wife. It was from his own native land of Gilead that the chariots of God bore him in triumph into heaven. 2 Kings 2:7-14. Once he has returned to earth, when he with Moses "appeared in glory," on the mount of transfiguration, and talked with Jesus of the great sacrifice soon to be offered at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:28-31).

Copied by "The Cross and Its Shadow" by Stephen N. Haskell

Submitted by: Sis. Kathleen Ross



MICROWAVES

Microwaves are dangerous to your health! Two Swiss scientists decided to investigate them. They were not prepared for the results they discovered.

They conducted tests. "They suspected that electromagnetic energy, intense enough to make bacteria glow in their food samples, could alter food chemistry - and the bloodstream of anyone eating microwaved food. But they were stunned to find cholesterol counts up sharply in people eating microwaved vegetables.

Microwave energy stresses the food. The "Nutritional components of all milk and vegetables were degraded after being heated in the microwave oven." "So was the blood chemistry of consumers." "The two researchers also discovered marked declines in the number of red blood cells that carry oxygen to the tissues and collect carbon dioxide, as well as in white blood cells that fight infections."

There is much more information in this article. You may find it on the page 38 of the May 2000 copy of ALIVE, a magazine available in health food stores free of charge.

Or, if you are unable to obtain this magazine, write to me and I will send a copy to you.

Sis. Kathleen Ross, Alberta



Teachers and students at the Missionary school in Hungary.



Some of the believers in Romania.

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IMS PUBLISHING
 54 Newcastle St.
 Toronto, Ontario, M8Y 1A3
 Canada
 Tel.: (416) 252-1197
 (416) 235-0667
 Fax: (416) 252-6625
 E-mail: tmartin@netcom.ca
 Web Site

<http://radek.truepath.com/church.html>

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Invitation to the Feast

*Yet there is room, the Master has said,
Room at the feast His bounty Has spread;
Out of the lanes and hedges of sin,
Gather them in, gather them in;
This is the message from Jesus today,
Now in compassion we hear Him say,
Earnestly, tenderly ask them to come,
Tell them there yet is room.*

*Yet there is room where all may be fed;
Why should they pine and languish for bread?
Gather the weak o'er-laden with sin,
Gather them in, gather them in;
Mercy entreateth, oh come unto me!
Joyful to all shall her welcome be,
Lovingly, pleadingly, ask them to come,
Tell them there yet is room.*

*Gather them in, the young and the old;
Gather them in, there's room in the fold;
Eager their souls for Jesus to win,
Gather them in, gather them in;
(gather them in to the banquet of grace,
(gather them in to our Lord's embrace;
Faithfully, prayerfully urge them to come,
Tell them there yet is room.*