

***From James
to Jude***

Christadelphian Expositor



FROM JAMES TO JUDE

**THE
CHRISTADELPHIAN
EXPOSITOR**



**A VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPOSITION
OF THE SCRIPTURES**

by
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Set up and Printed by
EUREKA PRESS PTY. LTD. SOUTH AUSTRALIA
for
LOGOS PUBLICATIONS
West Beach & Beverley, South Australia 5024

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FROM JAMES TO JUDE

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for restoration, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”.

2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Paul wrote epistles to seven Ecclesias, Christ directed messages to the seven Ecclesias of Asia, and from James to Jude there are seven general Epistles, each of which supplements the other.

Foreword

From James To Jude

Though the books of the Bible are not always placed in the chronological order in which they were written, it seems as though there was a God-designed overshadowing in the positioning of each of them that witnesses to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures as a whole. For the overall theme of each book provides a foundation for the development that follows in the theme of the next.

That is certainly the case in the books between *The Epistle to the Hebrews* and *The Epistle of Jude*. Though *The Epistle to the Hebrews* probably was among the last penned by Paul, and *The Epistle of James* possibly among the first of the books of the New Testament, it is appropriate to the theme of both that James should follow Hebrews. And that the Epistle of James, Peter, John and Jude should follow in that order.

Notice the appropriateness of this order in the main theme of each.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS — Taught Jewish believers that faith rather than formalism is necessary to gain for them the victory over flesh (see Heb. 10:19-39).

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES — Revealed to the same Hebrew believers that abstract faith is not sufficient. A living faith will be exhibited by works, without which it is dead.

THE EPISTLES OF PETER — Warned Hebrew believers of the need to sustain those works under test. Faith is purified by trial, and through that means will shine forth as gold in the age to come, to the praise, honour and glory of the possessor of it. Hence suffering (1 Peter) must precede glory (2 Peter).

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN — Showed that walking in love provides the means whereby works will be revealed and faith will triumph over trial.

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE — Added the warning that love must not hide the need to contend earnestly for the faith when it is under challenge.

THE APOCALYPSE — set forth the unveiling of Christ and final triumph “to him that overcometh”.

So, in a beautiful and effective manner, the necessary steps to salvation in Christ are set forth in the various epistles to which we now give our attention. The foundation laid in *The Epistle to the Hebrews* is carried on in the books of the Bible from James to Jude.

There is another link between these epistles apart from this development. All give emphasis to “the time of the end” in relation to the Mosaic age. Hebrews emphasises that Christ came at the end of the Jewish age (Heb. 1:1; 9:26), and this is the theme of James (Ch. 5:7,8,9), Peter (1 Ep. 4:7; 2 Ep. 3:3), and John (1 John 2:18), whilst Jude reveals that the warnings of the earlier apostles had come to pass in the sad developments that were seen within the Ecclesias in his days (Jude 18). Accordingly, they were all “end of the age” epistles, relating to the closing of Mosaic times, and the end of the Jewish State in A.D. 70. As such, they provide a foreshadowing of events that may be expected at the end of Gentile times, for what happened to Jerusalem in A.D. 70, awaits the world at large when it experiences “the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1). Then the cup that Jewry was compelled to drink in the days of its visitation and distress, will be held to the lips of all nations that they, too, may drink of the same cup (Jer. 25:15,26,29). We live in those times, hence the instruction, warning and counsel of these epistles are very relevant to our times.

The Epistle of James

Setting forth the Principle of

“Faith without
works is dead . . .”

JAMES

The Greek *Iakobos* is a variation of the Hebrew *Yaakov*, Jacob. The word signifies *One who takes by the heel* or *A supplanter*. James, the brother of Jesus is listed first among Jesus' brothers (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3) probably indicating that he was next in age to the Lord. He is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament simply as James, and is generally accepted as the writer of the Epistle.

Introduction

The Epistle Of James

THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE

James' name means *Supplanter*. It is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament, Jacob. It is a good name for a man who learned to supplant Law with Grace so thoroughly as did James.

But who was this writer? There are at least three persons of that name mentioned in the New Testament. There were James the son of Zebedee, James the son of Alphaeus, and James the Lord's half-brother.

It is generally thought that the writer of the epistle before us is the third James. He is identified with the James of Acts 15, the author of the tolerant letter to the Gentiles.

Despite the Roman Catholic teaching that Jesus was the only child of Mary, there is no doubt that she had children other than the Lord. These are called his kinsmen, and included both brothers and sisters (Matt. 13:55-56; Mark 6:3). They were associated with the Lord at the beginning of his ministry (John 2:12); but as it gathered momentum they doubted, and finally became ashamed of him. His dedicated ministry, his burning zeal (cp. Psa. 69:9), were misunderstood by them. They allowed themselves to be swayed by the attitude of the Jewish leaders, who contemptuously ridiculed him as being under the influence of Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24), and therefore of being insane (John 10:20). Moved by this talk, they fell prey to the common attitude of the flesh mentioned by the Lord: "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house" (Matt. 13:57). Believing in the Judaism of the Pharisees, they must have listened with impatience to much of the Lord's criticism of their teaching and way of life.

This attitude of his half-brothers and sisters must have made the Lord's lonely path even more difficult. Their familiarity with him bred such a contempt and misunderstanding of his mission, that, at a time when the enthusiasm of the people was at its greatest, they attempted a most unwarranted interference and

endeavoured to place him under restraint (Matt. 12:46; Mark 3:21,31; Luke 8:19). In this endeavour they apparently prevailed upon the Lord's mother to join with them, calling forth the well known and well-merited rebuke of Matthew 12:48: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The Lord refused to allow human relationships to stand in the way of his ministry and service to humanity as a whole.

The reason for this family opposition is stated in John 7:5: "For neither did his brethren believe in him." Though with him at first, subsequent circumstances convinced them that they had made a mistake. In this attitude, James, apparently, took a lead. He, evidently, was the eldest of Mary's children apart from the Lord, for he is mentioned first in the enumeration of the family in Matt. 13:55, and as such, on the death of Joseph, assumed a position of authority.

In view of this family unbelief, it is very touching to learn that the Lord, after his resurrection, personally appeared unto James (1 Cor. 15:7). What a revelation that would have been for the Lord's half-brother! His previous disbelief would have been swept aside in the incontestable evidence of the Lord's resurrection. This not only witnessed to the truth of his claim to be the Son of God (see Rom. 1:3-4), but also brought all Scripture into proper focus. At the same time, the experience must have been most humbling for the austere James who had been so completely committed to Judaism. And the humility induced by the revelation finds expression in his epistle, for not once does he mention his close relationship to the Lord, but introduces himself as "the slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1).

With his conversion James tried to make amends for his previous unbelief, and threw himself into the work of the Truth with great zeal. He, probably, became an emissary of the Lord to the rest of the family, converting them to the Truth, for when the Ecclesia assembled in Jerusalem after Christ's ascension his brethren formed an important part of it (Acts 1:14). They all became preeminent in the early Ecclesia (1 Cor. 9:5), and none more so than James. Though previously opposed to the Truth, his dedication to it once he was converted projected him to the forefront of the new, rapidly expanding, Ecclesia in Jerusalem. At first, according to the record in Acts, Peter took the lead, but with the passing of time, James assumed the preeminence. It was to him that Peter requested the brethren to report his release from prison (Acts 12:17), and with him that Paul conferred when, later, he visited Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19). The status of James is shown in Acts 15 where he is described as presiding over the conference, and directing the form of communication that should be sent to Gentile

believers to counter the claims and the demands of the Judaisers.

The Epistle of James illustrates that he was well versed in the Law. Accordingly his support of the tolerant letter that was sent out following the conference described in Acts 15 would have constituted a very telling answer to Judaisers because of his knowledge. Nevertheless, the decree so issued, seems to have been a temporary measure designed for the immediate crisis. It is significant that it is never quoted by Paul or the other writers in the N.T. epistles, and never appealed to in their expositions of the Law. In fact, it was completely ignored by Paul when he dealt with the problem of eating meat that had been offered to idols, and with other matters upon which it would have a bearing. In short, it was conciliatory in tone, and therefore incomplete. It was a concession and not a full exposition of the Law. The fuller exposition is found in *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, and the Epistle now before us. In those epistles, and elsewhere in the N.T., the power of the Law as a guide of conduct and as an exposition of the Atonement is clearly set forth. James' exposition shows that he was thoroughly conversant with the Law in all its teaching.

That, possibly, is the key to the opposition that James earlier showed to the Lord's ministry. Like Paul, his Judaistic opposition to the Lord at that time did not allow him to see beyond its narrow confines. The broader vision came with the knowledge of the resurrected Lord. Prior to this, James and the other members of the family of Joseph and Mary, manifested a certain strong opinionativeness, a Judaistic obstinacy which prevented them recognising "the truth in Jesus". This Epistle, however, places that earlier concept of the Law in its proper perspective. Though James strictly kept to its requirements himself throughout his life (Gal. 2:2), he saw the need for the spirit of its teaching to govern the lives of disciples, and recognised that the scope of salvation had been widened to include Gentile believers.

The status of James in the early Ecclesia, and his attitude to the Law is implied by the action of Paul in reporting the success of his mission among the Gentiles to him among others; and their advice, which the Apostle followed, to demonstrate that he was not opposed to Jewish believers maintaining their attendance at the Temple, by submitting to certain rites of purification (see Acts 21:18-26).

Finally James suffered for the faith he espoused. According to Josephus, and Hegesippus, a Christian Jew who lived about A.D. 160, and whose story Eusebius accepts, Ananias, the high priest, with the Scribes and Pharisees, taking advantage of the interim between the death of Festus and the arrival of the new Governor, assembled the Sanhedrin, and commanded James to come before it and denounce Jesus. According to Hegesippus (Euseb. Hist. 11.23), James obeyed the order to appear before that body, but instead of denouncing the Lord, he loudly proclaimed his belief

that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the future Judge of the world. He had been conducted to one of the Galleries of the Temple for the purpose of his confession, the Sanhedrin being convinced that he would capitulate, and the intention being that all assembled in the courts below should hear the abjuration.

When, instead, James boldly and loudly proclaimed his belief in the Lord, his enraged enemies flung him down to the court below and there began to stone him. A priest tried to stop the murder, but a fuller ended his sufferings, and his life, with a club. It is declared that he died crying, "Father, forgive them they know not what they do". If so, the prayer of the Lord upon the cross was echoed by at least three great men of faith, each of whom gave their lives for the truth they espoused: Stephen (Acts 7:60), James, and Paul (2 Tim. 4:16).

The Epistle discloses characteristics of the man from whom it proceeded. He was mild and tolerant. Firm in his attachment to the truth in Christ, his command of the Law earned for him the respect of Jews generally. He clearly saw the ethics of the Truth and the need to manifest it in action. Therefore he was a practical man. He was also a shrewd observer of human nature, and vigorously tore aside the facade of hypocrisy. It was characteristic of James that once he grasped the Truth he gave himself to it completely.

He was martyred for his faith about the year A.D. 62.

THE SETTING OF THE EPISTLE

The Epistle of James is unique in several particulars. First of all, it was most likely the first of the New Testament books to be written. Some suggest that it was written as early as A.D. 43-50. This is of importance. For it is sometimes advanced that James, in his Epistle, was at variance with Paul, and set out to combat Paul's exposition of justification by faith, as outlined in Romans, Galatians and elsewhere. But if James wrote first this theory is proved untenable by time as it is also by fact.

Next, it was written by a converted Jew brought up in strict Judaistic principles, and was designed for Jews similarly educated. James was highly qualified to write such an epistle demonstrating how the Law reached its greatness in Christ.

Third, and very important, if the Epistle was written as early as suggested above, it was penned before it was generally accepted by the Apostles that the Gospel should be preached to Gentiles on the same basis as to Jews. It would have been written before the Jerusalem conference reported in Acts 15 (about A.D. 51) took place. Therefore, it illustrates the way in which the mind of James was working towards the part he played in that important discussion, and the conciliatory letter that he composed, and which was sent to those Gentiles who had accepted the Truth.

The conversion of Cornelius took place about A.D. 40-43.

But until Paul's mission was completed by presenting the Gospel officially to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and in Rome (the two great capitals of the Roman world), the Apostles found it "necessary" to give priority to Jews in preaching the Word (Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16). This practice ceased with Paul's presentation of it to the Jewish leaders in Rome (Acts 28:17,25-27,30-31). Henceforth, this practice "to the Jews first" ceased. The nation had rejected the opportunity set before it.

Meanwhile, Jewish believers were still attending the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 21:19-26). "Many thousands of Jews believed" remaining "zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20), and these included many Pharisees and similar leaders (Acts 15:5). There was a need to show the essential difference between Judaism and the Law as it was illustrated, or fulfilled, in the life in Christ. And such an Epistle was needful for Jewish believers throughout the world. When the Truth had been proclaimed by Peter on the day of Pentecost, Jews from all parts had listened (Acts 2:8-11), and thousands were baptised. These took the Truth back with them to the cities of their dispersion, and were representative of the "twelve tribes scattered abroad" to whom James' epistle is directly addressed.

It is appropriate therefore, that James should be the author, both of the conciliatory letter to Gentile believers recorded in Acts 15, and of this Epistle to Jewish believers revealing their responsibilities to the principles of the Law as manifested in Christ.

Indeed, such an Epistle could assist in the conversion of unbelieving Jews. The fact that James was once noted for his opposition to the Lord, but now embraced the Truth in him, was an outstanding witness to the veracity of the resurrection of the Lord (no longer openly disputed by Jews in Jerusalem — see Matt. 28:13-15). As such, its value continues to the present time, and provides useful instruction for the way of life in Christ which is of great value to believers of the Gospel.

The State Of The Jewish Ecclesias

James, of course, wrote particularly for a certain class of Jews: for those who had embraced the Truth in Christ. They experienced trial, hardship and persecution. Many of them were opposed by their wealthy fellow-Jews who had not embraced the Gospel, and who, doubtless, manifested their hostility towards believing Jews because of their bitter opposition to the truth in Christ (James 2:6-7). James wrote to encourage those who suffered trial. However, there were faults among the Jewish believers that had to be corrected. The tongue was being used in a manner that led to a state of quarrelsome contention which destroyed the very basics of the life in Christ (James 1:19,26; 2:13; 3:2-12; 4:11-17; 5:12). James warned that the unwise use of this little, but active, member of the body had to be repressed. There was a

blatant class distinction manifested in the synagogues familiar to Jewish believers, and James warned against any imitation of such an attitude (James 4:5-6). There was a tendency in Jewish believers to be influenced by a Judaistic formalism that robbed the Truth of its power, and this required that the "more excellent way" in Christ should be clearly understood (James 1:26-27; 2:14-26). Above all else James showed that there was a need to develop faith as an energising power that would find its outworking in a changed life. He explained that it is possible to be a hearer of the word, and not a doer of it (James 1:22). This, he declared, is the symptom of approaching spiritual death. Having so diagnosed the state of some, he provided an antidote to cure such a decline.

Perhaps, today, we do not fully appreciate the particular problem that faced Jewish believers in those times. When a Gentile embraced Christ, he had to separate himself completely from his previous pagan religious associations, and establish an independent local Ecclesia. There was complete severance of the two forms of worship. Paul expressed this in his comment to believers in Thessalonica: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). This expressed a complete reversal of worship: a separation from paganism and a seeking after the true God. It was not quite the same with Jewish believers as *The Acts of the Apostles* clearly shows (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 21:20-21). There was no change in the God Whom they worshipped, nor in the future for which they hoped. The great change was in the realisation that the Messiah had come, and that baptism in him provided for the forgiveness of sins and a newness of life in divine worship. This was a great difference, it is true, but inasmuch as the Temple and its worship was God-founded, believing Jews saw no reason to dissociate themselves therefrom. Accordingly "they continued daily with one accord in the Temple", giving a greater service in that regard than ever before, whilst "breaking bread (a term expressive of partaking of the memorials) from house to house" (Acts 2:46). In *Elpis Israel*, Brother Thomas observes:

"The apostles and Christians (Acts 21:20) of the Hebrew nation in Palestine continued a ceremonial observance of the Mosaic festivals (Acts 21:24-26) (the annual atonement for sin excepted) and of the seventh day, until the destruction of the commonwealth by the Romans, on the same principle that New Testament Christians among the nations now observe Sunday and the laws; not as a means of justification before God, but as mere national customs for the regulation of society" (p. 26).

On pp. 188-209 he shows that there was a period of transition from the ascension of Christ until the official rejection of the Gospel by the leaders of Jewry both home and abroad, which finally terminated at the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. During this time the understanding of the Apostles in the purpose of Yahweh to call a people from among the Gentiles was gradually developed. In commenting upon the question asked the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost: "Men and brethren what

shall we do?" Brother Thomas observes (pp. 201-203):

"The answer given by Peter announced for the first time, what believers of the gospel of the kingdom and in the things concerning Jesus, must do, in order to become joint-heirs with him of the promise made to the fathers. To these devout Jews, who now believed what both the prophets and apostles had spoken, who were now humbled in disposition as little children, swift to hear, and anxious to do, whatever the spirit should dictate; the holder of the keys to unlock the mystery of the gospel, said, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins' (Acts 2:38).

"Such an annunciation as this had never been made before. In this way 'repentance and the remission of sins' were 'preached in the name of Jesus'. This is God's way of righteousness, and besides this, there is no other way of salvation; 'for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). God's salvation is placed in the name of Jesus; and this name is accessible to mankind only upon the condition of believing 'the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus,' and being baptized in his name — 'He that believes the gospel and is baptized shall be saved' is the unrevoked fiat of the Son of God.

"The words of the Spirit by the mouth of Peter went home to the hearts of these devout Jews. 'They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to the congregation about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts 2:41,42). These disciples were "a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures begotten of his own will by the word of truth," (James 1:18) which 'lives and abides for ever.'

"But, though the mystery of the gospel was thus made known in the name of Jesus, even Peter, to whom the keys of the mystery were given, did not yet understand 'the fellowship of the mystery.' The keys were not given to him when Jesus spoke the words; nor were both of them given to him on the day of Pentecost. The mystery was revealed to the Jews first: and several years elapsed before it was known, or supposed, that the Gentiles would be admitted to a joint-heirship with Jesus on an equality with the Jews. During this period of about seven years, the body of Christ consisted solely of believing Israelites, sons of Abraham by flesh and faith.

"At the end of this time, however, God determined to 'visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name'. He graciously resolved to invite men of all the nations of the Roman territory to accept honour, glory, and immortality, in the kingdom and empire about to be established on the ruins of all others. Hitherto He had only invited His own people Israel to this high destiny; but now He was about to extend the gospel call to the nations also.

"Before this, however, could be accomplished according to the principles laid down in God's plan, it was necessary to prepare Peter for the work. Although an apostle, he was still a Jew, and had all the prejudices of the Jew against the Gentile. He considered it 'unlawful for him to keep company, or come unto one of another nation'. The Jews had no more social dealings with the Gentiles than with the Samaritans. And if any had suggested the propriety of his going and preaching the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus to the Gentiles, he would have positively refused. If, however, he had been ever so willing, he could not have done it for various other reasons.

"In those days, no one could preach effectually unless he were sent; and, as he had not been sent of God, his mission would have been a failure. Then, he did not know whether God would accept the Gentiles on the same conditions as the Jews, if, indeed, He would admit them to a joint-heirship at all. But, the law was a sufficient wall of separation to keep Jewish preachers and Gentiles apart until God's time should arrive to do it away, and to bring them together into 'one body'.

"Peter, then, had to be prepared for the work. The narrative of his preparation is contained in the tenth chapter of Acts. A direct attack was made upon his prejudices. He became very hungry about 12 o'clock in the day. While waiting for something to eat on the housetop, an amazement came over him. In this state, he saw a great sheet full of all sorts of unclean creatures, fit and appropriate emblems of the moral condition of the Gentiles. At this crisis, the spirit said, 'Rise, Peter, kill and

eat'. But Peter preferred hunger to defilement; and would not consent, until it was repeated for the third time, that the legal distinction between clean and unclean was done away:— 'What God hath cleansed, call not thou common,' or unclean.

"The impression made upon Peter by this vision is best expressed in his own words. 'God hath showed me', said he, 'that I should not call any man common, or unclean. Therefore came I to you, Gentiles, as soon as I was sent for.'" In this way the second key of the kingdom was imparted to him. Its use was to make known the Fellowship of the Mystery.

"As soon as Peter's preparation was complete, even while he was debating within himself the meaning of the vision, three Gentile messengers from Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian regiment, arrived from Caesarea, to request him to visit him. The Spirit told Peter to go with them, nothing doubting, for He had sent them."

James wrote during the early days of this period of transition, and it is necessary to recognise what this means in order to understand some of his expressions and allusions. Believing Jews who continued their association with the Temple and its worship, saw in its ceremonies and sacrifices types pointing to the Lord, and they observed them accordingly. Paul, for example, made no attempt to destroy the influence of true Temple worship, or to set aside the ceremonies of the Law, but rather to show the true significance of these matters of worship as fulfilled in Christ. He saw nothing inconsistent in going up to Jerusalem "to worship" (Acts 24:11-21), and the context of that statement aligns his worship with his presence in the Temple: "I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings" (v. 17); "certain Jews found me purified in the Temple" (v. 18). To Agrippa, Paul emphasised the essential Israelitish nature of his hope (Acts 26:6-8).

Jewish converts, therefore, in contradistinction to Gentile converts who would have had to submit to circumcision to do this, "continued daily with one accord in the Temple" (Acts 2:46), as well as conducting their Memorial Meetings from "house to house". In the lands of their dispersion, those Jews who had been baptised in Jerusalem after the preaching of Peter, continued their association with the synagogue until extreme opposition forced them to establish their own independent Ecclesias.

With the preaching of Paul to the Gentiles, however, and the setting up of independent Ecclesias, the hostility of the Jews to Christ increased (see 1 Thess. 2:14-16), and Jewish converts found both fellowship and refuge in the Gentile Ecclesias established by the Apostles. Their association with the Temple or with synagogues weakened until it ceased altogether. *The Epistle To The Hebrews* written on the eve of the destruction of the Jewish State warned Jewish believers of the danger of too close an association with the Temple.

That period of transition terminated with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, but its effect is shown in the work of preaching described in *The Acts Of The Apostles*. First the Gospel was offered to Jews only as on the Day of Pentecost; then to Proselytes of the Gates as in the case of Cornelius; finally to pagan Gentiles by Paul and his associates. But even Paul used a formula

since abandoned. He preached first to Jews and only afterwards to Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). To the Jews of Antioch who repudiated his message, Paul declared: "It was *necessary* that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 12:46). That is not the procedure adopted today when, generally, Jews are completely ignored in the preaching of the Gospel. But it was the procedure required during that period of transition. This, however, partly came to an end at the completion of time recorded in *The Acts*. Paul had visited Jerusalem and Rome with the specific purpose of presenting the Gospel officially to the leaders of Jewry in the two great capitals of the world. When it was rejected, he pronounced the indictment of Isaiah 6 against them (Acts 28:25-27), and declared his intention thenceforth of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles without first seeking out Jews to whom to teach it (Acts 28:28-31). It was no longer considered "*necessary*" to preach first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles." That period had come to an end: and later, with the destruction of the Temple, any association of the Ecclesia with Jewish formalism completely ceased.

But in the early days of the Truth, when James wrote his Epistle, believing Jews still attended the Temple or the synagogue. There was a need for an Epistle to instruct them to avoid contamination by an environment which an empty formalism tended to create. Some of the things James described related to attitudes adopted by unbelieving Jews rather than those who had embraced Christ, but because of the association of the latter with the former there was a need to warn against any imitation of such ways. Similar warning is needful today in view of the environment of the world in which Gentile believers live, or conditions of worldliness that may creep into Ecclesias (cp. Jude 4). The environment of James' day was more subtle in its influence because of the claims of sanctity made by religious Jews. The warning prayer of the Lord was as appropriate to the state of Jewish believers then as it is of Gentile believers today: "They are not *out of* (Greek *ek*) the world, even as I am not out of the world (his greatest trial lay immediately ahead). Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth" (John 17:16-17).

As indicative of the unique state of Jewish believers then, James referred both to the Synagogue (James 2:2) and to the Ecclesia (James 5:14). In the former, his readers would observe the effect of cold formalism that they were to avoid; in the latter they would find the spiritual strength so essential for the proper development of faith. The rich men who were defrauding their poorer brethren as described in James 5 were wealthy Jews of the Synagogue, not members of the Ecclesia, and those who were oppressed were the brethren of Christ who were exhorted to patience. This distinction between believing and unbelieving Jews needs to be observed in studying the Epistle.

When The Epistle Was Written

The persecution of Saul, recorded in Acts 8, commenced about A.D. 36. It resulted in Jewish believers seeking refuge outside that immediate area, and taking the Gospel message with them (Acts 8:1). Subsequently, many of them left the Land itself for regions beyond. The statement is made in Acts 11:19: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word *to none but unto the Jews only.*" These believers supplemented the witness of those who had returned to the lands of their dispersion following their baptism on the Day of Pentecost.

There was, therefore, a growing community of believing Jews who had been forced by persecution to leave Jerusalem, and who needed some form of written instruction in view of the environment and trials that they would find in their dispersion. *The Epistle of James* supplies that need. It therefore could have been written about A.D. 40-43, the approximate time when the events narrated in Acts 11 took place. In further support of this date, James wrote: "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?" (Ch. 2:7). And the statement is made in Acts 11:26: "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch". Such an Epistle was required at that time.

To summarise. The Jewish believers to whom it was written continued their associations with the Temple or Synagogue and observance of the ceremonies of the Law, whilst the essential worship of Yahweh and recognition of the saving power of Christ took place within the appointed meeting places of Ecclesias (Acts 2:46). The preaching of Paul changed this. He established Ecclesias consisting partly of Jewish and partly of Gentile believers, or of Gentile believers alone. Because of the hostility this caused, there was complete severance of the Ecclesia from both Jewish and Gentile institutions. Paul instructed the believing Gentiles not to become involved in such principles of Judaism as were current at that time, even though the Law, as such, was "good" and divine (Rom. 7).

To Whom Was The Epistle Primarily Written?

The Epistle is directed "to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad" (James 1:1). Accordingly, many believe that it was directed to Jews generally; but a close consideration of its contents makes it obvious that it was directed to believing Jews only. With Gentile believers, they constitute the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), the true Commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:11-15), the twelve tribes "sealed of God in the forehead" (Rev. 7:4-17; 14:1).

Certainly there are references to the practices of unbelieving Jews, such as the rich of Ch. 5, but they are not addressed directly, but are threatened with destruction in the form of an apostrophe,

in order that the believing ones might be sustained, consoled, and warned against imitation of such ways.

It could be that James desired that his Epistle should be read by both types of Jews: that believers might be fortified, and unbelievers attracted to "a more excellent way". He probably wished and knew, that the Epistle might fall into the hands of some of the latter, especially the rich, the oppressor, and the indulgent. Such parties are indirectly glanced at here and there. But this does not distract from the fact that James wrote for the special benefit of the Jews who had embraced Christ. If others be occasionally referred to, it is only in subordination to his main purpose, and in the execution of it. As noted previously, the two classes of Jews (believing and unbelieving) had not yet completely separated from each other. The distinction was not particularly marked in its outward relations. Hence it was natural for the writer to construct a few portions of the letter as he has done.

It seems most appropriate that the Epistle was addressed to the disciples who were scattered abroad after the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1), and before the preaching of the Gospel was extended to the Gentiles. It was directed to Jewish Christian Ecclesias unmingled with Gentiles, but who saw no need to completely isolate themselves from the Temple worship, or to such, at least, as had in them so few converts from among the heathen as to render them of no account.

Parallels With The Discourse On The Mount

James draws largely upon the sayings of the Lord. Almost the whole of the Discourse on the Mount is reproduced in his Epistle in somewhat different language. In noting the following parallels it needs to be remembered that James is not quoting Matthew or Luke, for the Gospels had not then been written. He draws upon the general teaching of Christ.

Compare James 1:2,3,10 with Matt. 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23. James 1:5-8,17; 5:16-18 with Matt. 7:7-11; 6:22; Luke 11:9-13. James 1:11 with Matt. 6:30. James 1:13 with Matt. 6:13. James 1:22-27; 2:14-26 with Matt. 7:22-27; Luke 6:46-49. James 2:8 with Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36. James 2:13 with Matthew 6:15; Luke 6:37-38. James 3:8 with Matt. 5:9. James 3:13 with Matt. 5:5. James 4:4 with Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13. James 4:11,12; 5:9 with Matt. 5:22; 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-38. James 4:14 with Matt. 6:34. James 5:1-3 with Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 6:24-25. James 5:12 with Matt. 5:34-37.

A consideration of the Epistle will reveal many links with the writings of Paul, Peter and John. That does not mean that the Epistle was citing them, or they the Epistle. All writers were moved by inspiration (Heb. 1:1), and thereby set forth similar teaching, sometimes using almost identical words. This peculiarity of Scripture is observable throughout its sixty-six books, and does

not necessarily mean that one writer is quoting the other. For example, Isaiah 2 is substantially reproduced in Micah 4, but both prophets might well have been independently moved by the Spirit to describe the similar vision given to both.

The manner in which the books of the Bible complement each other is evidence of divine inspiration, and witnesses to the truth of Hebrews 1:1, that God was the real Author of all its parts. Its several writers were but His amanuenses moved by the Spirit what to write (2 Pet. 1:18-21).

The Seven Circular Epistles

The seven epistles (from James to Jude) are generally given the title of Catholic Epistles. This description of them has nothing to do with the Catholic Church, but dates back to very early times before Eusebius. They were given that title because, unlike the Epistles of Paul, they were not directed to specific Ecclesias but rather were designed for general use. *The Epistle of James* and *The Epistles of Peter* are directed to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad" which implies a general distribution. Because of this they are called *catholic*, meaning *universal* or *circular* epistles.

In view of the Scriptural significance of the number seven, it is interesting that Paul wrote Epistles to seven Ecclesias (Romans to 2 Thessalonians), there are seven general or circular epistles (James to Jude), and seven letters to the Ecclesias in Asia by Christ (Rev. 2,3).

Analysis

The theme of the Epistle is expressed in the key verse: James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." A living faith is an energising power that will inevitably express itself in works. *The Epistle of James*, therefore, dwells upon practice rather than doctrine, upon the conduct that flows from faith; the works exhibit its power and perfect it.

The practical issues of life will be resolved through faith; the problems that beset believers in their daily walk can be conquered through faith; the development of a character acceptable to Yahweh is developed by faith.

The general theme of the Epistle, therefore, is Faith in Action, an analysis of which follows:

FAITH IN ACTION

(1) How Faith Can Triumph Over Trials — Chapter 1

Introduction	v.1
Rejoicing in Tribulation	vv.2-4
How Faith Enables A Person To Seek God Aright..	vv.5-8
How Faith Conquers Double-mindedness.....	vv.9-11
How Faith Will Develop Endurance	v.12
The Souce of Sin.....	vv.13-16
The Source of Righteousness.....	vv.17-18
The Believer's Responsibility In Christ.....	vv.19-22
Faith Must Be Exhibited In Action.....	vv.23-25
Without Faith Religion Is In Vain.....	vv.26-27

(2) How Faith Can Govern Actions Towards Others — Chapter 2

The Failure — Partiality	vv. 1-4
The Cause — Despising the Poor	vv. 5-7
The Contrast — Right versus Wrong	vv.8-11
The Corrective — Bear in mind coming judgment	vv.12-13
The Fact — Faith profitless without works	vv.14-20
The Examples — As exhibited by a Hebrew and a Gentile	vv.21-26

- (3) How Faith Can Discipline The Tongue — Chapter 3**
A Warning for Teachersvv.1-2
The Tongue's Power for Evilvv.3-6
The Tongue's Ungovernable Naturevv.7-8
The Tongue's Inconsistent Speechvv.9-12
Faith Teaches the Virtue of Silence.....vv.13-16
Faith Teaches the Value of True Wisdom.....vv.17-18
- (4) How Faith Can Purify Character — Chapter 4**
The Failure: Wars and Conflict etc.vv.1-5
The Corrective: Seek the Gift of Gracevv.6-10
The Principle: Respect for Others.....vv.11-16
The Summary: Sin defined.....v.17
- (5) How Faith Can Create Confidence in God — Chapter 5**
The Warning — Judgment is Comingvv.1-6
Assurance — The oppressed will be vindicated ..vv.7-12
Encouragement — How Faith can empower
prayervv.13-20

The Book of James

Verse by Verse Exposition



FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD!

That declaration is the main theme of James' epistle. Moreover he shows that these works have to do with the practical issues of daily life. Hence, next to a knowledge of the Truth, the practical management of daily life is the main concern. The knowledge of the Truth only opens the door. We cannot be saved before that. There is no hope for us at all apart from the Gospel. But the Gospel only gives us the start. It all depends how we walk after that. What ought the Ecclesia of Christ to be but a representation, on a small scale, of what is to be made politically dominant when Christ comes, and when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven? We are called unto that Kingdom. Therefore, as an assembly of those who are called *unto* the Kingdom, we ought to exemplify those characteristics that will appertain to it in the day of its manifestation. The exhortations of James illustrate what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy living and godliness. He explains how faith needs to be transmitted into action.

CHAPTER ONE

HOW FAITH CAN TRIUMPH OVER TRIALS

James expounds the practical ethics of true Christianity so powerfully as to cause some to criticise his epistle as being entirely devoted to works. But, in fact, he emphasises that the motivating power of a believer's life is faith. It provides the means of victory for every problem, enabling the believer to rise above every temptation and trial. Faith comes from "hearing the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), and manifests itself in a changed life. On the other hand, James warns of the possibility of a dead faith: as seen in one who hears the word but does not apply it. Such a one seems to be religious, but his belief lacks conviction, and therefore is not revealed in action. Pure religion will manifest itself in positive and negative actions that will reflect to the glory of God and the benefit of fellowmen.

Introduction — v. 1

James introduces himself but omits any details of human relationships, claiming to labour for God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He extends greetings to those for whom he writes.

VERSE 1

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" — We have set forth reasons for believing that the writer was the Lord's half-brother. If so, he was once an unbeliever who was converted by the fact of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). Now in humility, he does not claim authority or status in his human relationship with Christ, but emphasises his servitude to God and to the Lord. In that regard he submitted to the teaching of Christ who declared that "the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63). The word *doulos* rendered "servant" denotes a slave; and a slave is one who merges his will in that of another. That is what James did in relationship to God and the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 12:26, the Lord lays down the requirements of such a servant: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." A servant of the Lord follows him because he faithfully

carried out the duties of a servant to his Father (Isa. 42:1), before being elevated to the status of Lord, declaring "Not my will but Thine be done."

Note that James gave Jesus his full title. It is a title that was made evident by the resurrection of Jesus. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly," declared Peter, "that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, *both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:36). In "Jesus" there is offered salvation, for this his name proclaims; as "Lord", he demands our obedience; as "Christ" he reveals the means to attain it, for believers must be motivated by the spirit word (John 6:63; 1 John 2:27).

"To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" — Contrary to the teaching of the British Israelites who claim that ten of the twelve tribes were then "lost" among the nations of the west, it is obvious from this salutation, that the twelve tribes existed as an integral group in dispersion. They were "lost" only in the sense of Matthew 10:6. In fact, many thousands of Jews had accepted Christ, and still attended the synagogues or Temple. It was primarily to these believers that James directed his Epistle. They constituted in part the true "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11-16).

Nevertheless, James possibly wrote with the knowledge that his Epistle would also find its way into the hands of some unbelieving Jews who may well profit by his observations. He wrote as a leader of the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem. Perhaps he thought to win more to Christ by so writing. Certainly, his Epistle revealed that the acceptance of Christianity did not involve rejection of the Old Testament Scriptures, nor of the basics of Jewish beliefs. Our introduction gives reasons for accepting an early date for the writing of the Epistle.

"Greeting" — The word *chairein* signifies joy or rejoicing. This form of greeting could be as empty as the words expressed in Ch. 2:16 if it stood on its own, but having pronounced the desire that they might experience joy or rejoicing, James now proceeds to direct attention to the source of such.

Rejoicing In Tribulation — vv. 2-4

Having wished his readers joy, James now directs attention to its source. Only by consciously seeking it in that way will it be found. The attainment of joy requires effort on behalf of believers: it will not be experienced otherwise.

VERSE 2

"My brethren" — The tender solicitude of James for his true brethren in the faith is shown by his constant use of this term in the spirit of appeal Cp. Ch. 1:2-16,19; 2:1,5; 3:1,16; 4:11; 5:7,12,19. James appeals rather than commands.

"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" — The word "count" is from *hegeomai*, "to lead the way", and therefore to bear in mind, or to keep always in view. The best way of countering trials (as the word *temptations* here signifies) is to ever keep before the mind that "joy that is set before one". That was the example that the Lord exhibited as declared in Heb. 12:2: "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". Christ's example illustrates the truth of Psa. 30:5: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning". How vital to keep that in mind in all circumstances of trial. By that means, Christ's followers are able to "fellowship his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:13-16). It is a necessary experience to equip believers for their labours in the age to

come. The fact that they are "compassed about with infirmity" in the days of their mortality will assist them to render sympathetic help to those who need it in the age to come (see Heb. 4:15-16). Suffering today, therefore, can become a prelude to glory tomorrow (see Rom. 8:17-18, 35-37). In Christ, strength is available to overcome trials (2 Cor. 12:9-10), for faith can provide the means of victory. James' words of encouragement are an echo of Christ's beatitude in relation to persecution (Matt. 5:11-12). It expresses the attitude of rejoicing adopted by the Apostles under trial (Acts 5:41), and to which Paul and Peter exhorted believers (Phil. 4:4; 1 Pet. 4:12-14).

"Divers temptations" is rendered *various trials* by *The Diaglott*. The word is used in Scripture for both temptation to sin and of trial demanding endurance. In this verse, the word obviously relates to the latter, for one would hardly rejoice at being subjected to temptation to sin. The trials and pressures of life which are incidental to a walk in Christ are many and varied (Heb. 11:36-38), but they are designed to develop character (1 Pet. 1:6-8). Both encouragement and incentive to endure are obtainable in Christ (Col. 1:11; 2 Thess. 3:5). Those who overcome trial through a faith-induced patience, will obtain the promise in due time (Heb. 10:36; James 5:11).

VERSE 3

"Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience" — Two important words are found in this statement. "Worketh" is from the Greek *katergazomai* which implies the accomplishment of something by intense, personal effort. In this statement it implies effort on the part of the believer to develop patience (Rom. 5:3-4). Patience comes as a result of faith working in one. That is what James is saying. He does not minimise the difficulties of conquering life's trials, but points to a living faith as the means of achieving the victory.

Some render "patience" as *endurance*. The Greek word *hupomone* literally signifies an *abiding under*. It implies to stand one's ground, to survive, remain steadfast, persevere, and also to wait. It thus expresses the ideas of patience and endurance. Lack of faith will manifest itself in impatience, causing those affected to unduly fret under trial (see Psa. 37:1). For exhortations to patience or

endurance, see Matt. 10:22; Luke 8:15; 21:19; Rom. 2:7; Heb. 10:36; 12:1. Paul was able to write that he "gloried in tribulations" knowing that "tribulation worketh patience" (Rom. 5:3). He did not rejoice in experiencing trouble and persecution, but in having the answer to such trials, in "knowing" the purpose of them. He realised that they were designed to mould characters fit for the Kingdom. James' comment is that faith can activate a man to intense effort in patiently enduring trials by recognising the divine purpose in such. A person is more inclined to endure trial patiently when he realises the divine objective in imposing such, and he seeks Yahweh's help to endure (see Isaiah 50:10).

VERSE 4

"But let patience have her perfect work" — The word perfect is *teleios* and signifies completeness. It is derived from a root signifying to set out for a definite point or goal. James is advising that endurance is best maintained when the purpose of trial is kept in view (cp. James 5:7-11; Psa. 37:7; 40:1; Hab. 2:3; Gal. 6:9). This is something that an individual must do for himself. By constantly recalling the purpose of trial in life, one is more inclined to manifest patience, or endurance, in the face of it. This will gradually change a person's character and so complete the work that Yahweh has in permitting His servants to be tried. Faith is an essential element to that end.

"That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" — The word "perfect" is from the Greek, *telios* and can signify completeness or maturity. Paul exhorted the Ephesian brethren: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. . . ." (Eph. 4:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 2:6).

The same word is rendered "men" in 1 Cor. 14:20: "in understanding be ye men", i.e. grow up! The perfect, or complete man is able to bridle the tongue (James 3:2), look to the perfect day (Prov. 4:18-19), and build into his life divine principles (Matt. 5:45), ultimately to be "made perfect in one" (John 17:23). This is a continuing process (Phil. 3:12-15), developed by co-operating with God (Col 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 5:10). It comes through faith and love (1 John 4:17-18). A person developing that kind of perfection wants for nothing

reasoned James. See 2 Pet. 1:9.

Seek Co-operation With God — vv. 5-8

Seeking God will only be efficacious if done in faith. Otherwise it is of little use in time of need. Faith enables one to turn to Yahweh in full confidence.

VERSE 5

"If any of you lack wisdom" — The R.V. prefaces this statement by the conjunction, *but*. It presumes that the believer, in pursuing the desired perfection, or spiritual maturity, may lack the wisdom that would enable him to rejoice under trial, causing him to be deficient in patient endurance. Wisdom is the skilled application of knowledge. A person may have knowledge but lack the ability to apply it. This Yahweh can provide. Cp. Exod. 31:3-6; 36:1-4; 1 Kings 3:7-12; Prov. 3:5-7; 9:4-6.

"Let him ask of God" — If we lack wisdom, let us place our case before God, seeking His help in our study of His word. This is something for which we can pray, and if we pray in faith, we will receive. God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift (v. 17), and will not withhold His blessing if a person seeks it aright. It is an attribute of Yahweh to give, and hence we can turn to Him with every confidence. See James 3:17; 5:16; Cp. 1 Chron. 22:12; 2 Chron. 1:10; Prov. 2:3-6; Isa. 55:6-7; Jer. 29:12-13; Dan. 2:18-22; Matt. 7:7-11; John 14:13; 1 John 3:22; 5:14.

"That giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not" — The word rendered "liberally" signifies a singleness of heart that instantly and generously answers to the need. In that regard, the "singleness" of God is contrasted with the "double-minded man" of v. 8. Not only will God give in that manner, so that the most humble believer may turn to Him in confidence, but He will do so without upbraiding. Often a person will aid another, whilst reproaching him for his folly in falling into such need: "You should have known better. . . ." "Why didn't you do so and so?" Such reproaches on the part of a giver are very distressing to the person in need. They will not be heard from God under such circumstances. Let us utilise the privilege of prayer for such purposes and seek Him in confidence (Heb. 4:15-16).

"And it shall be given him" — He will develop the ability to rightly apply his

knowledge. See also the promise of Christ — Matt. 7:7.

VERSE 6

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” — Faith creates confidence. It gives substance to hope. “Faith is the confident anticipation of things hoped for; the full persuasion of things not seen” as Brother Thomas renders Heb. 11:1. To ask in faith is to pray with the conviction that God can, and under certain conditions, will supply our needs (Matt. 21:21-22; see Mark 11:24; 1 Tim. 2:8). Faith is not blind credulity, but the fruit of knowledge.

“For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” — The word rendered “wave” is *kludon* and denotes a billow rather than a wave. The R.V. renders it *surge*. In Luke 8:24 it is translated *raging*. *Kludon* denotes the long ridges of water as they are driven in horizontal lines over the vast expanse of ocean to accomplish nothing, but to end in a tossing white foam of water on the beach, and then run back to the sea. There is nothing substantial in such a surging billow. The wavering man is likewise. He is unstable, irresolute; now rising in hope like an advancing, surging billow, and then sinking in despair and breaking down like the foaming waste of water on the shore (Cp. Gen. 49:4; Heb. 10:23).

VERSE 7

“For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord” — The wavering of the faithless is an insult to God. It implies a doubt as to whether God has the ability to help, or whether there is, in fact, a God! Yahweh’s mercy will be experienced “according as we hope in Him” (Psa. 33:22). There is need to exercise both faith and courage in the problems of life (cp. James 4:3).

VERSE 8

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” — The word “double-minded” is a translation of *dipsuchos* which signifies *two-souled*! One soul is for God, and one is for self! The double-minded man has feet in both camps. He wants God’s help but lacks confidence in His ability to assist. The appeal of Joshua is to the point. He urged the people to make up their minds whether they

would serve Yahweh or not. He clearly set before them the responsibility of rendering the single-minded devotion that it demands. He gave them an example of what was required: “As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh” (see Josh. 24:14-25). See also the appeal of Elijah: “Why halt ye between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21). A two-souled man does just that! He becomes dubious and indecisive in a crisis, lacking the faith that would give both direction and decisiveness to his actions. He becomes “unstable in all his ways”. The word is *akatastatos* “unsettled”. He does not know what to do. The same word is rendered “unruly” in James 3:8, and is used in the *LXX* in Isa. 54:11: “tossed with tempest”. He is driven about by the changing winds of fleshly opinion. Whereas the utmost confidence can be placed in a man of faith, this is not so in the case of a “two-souled” man (see Isa. 29:13; Matt. 6:24; and the exhortation in James 4:8).

How Faith Conquers Double-mindedness — vv. 9-11

Any lack of faith needs to be countered. One of the best ways of doing so is to carefully ponder the privilege of our standing in Christ, and the concrete benefits of it both for the present and for the future.

VERSE 9

“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted” — The R.V. commences this verse with a conjunction, “But let the brother . . .” The thought of the previous verse is thus carried on. In the sub-section before us (vv. 9-10), James pin-points the most common causes of double-mindedness: poverty and riches. See the very wise comment of Prov. 30:7-9, and the observation of Paul in 1 Tim. 6:10. To counter this tendency towards double-mindedness, James calls upon the “brother of low degree” to rejoice in his high status in Christ (James 2:53; Luke 1:52). The term “rejoice” is too weak for the Greek word used, for *kauchastho* signifies to boast, to vocally glory (see mg. and R.V.) in his personal exaltation in Christ. That brother of low degree has been invited to rule the world with Christ! His “low degree” is a misnomer. He is actually highly exalted. Let him rejoice, glory and

boast in his great privilege and forget his present low estate. Let him think and speak about it, and not ponder the problems that beset his path; and he will soon find that his mind is lifted above all the problems of modern life; he will see beyond the poverty of the present to the glory of the future.

See the exhortation in the following places: 1 Sam. 2:7-8; Psa. 113:7-8; Jer. 9:23-24; Rom. 5:2-3; 8:17-18; Phil. 3:3; 1 John 3:1-2.

VERSE 10

“But the rich in that he is made low” —

The rich brother needs to boast in the fact that the knowledge of the Truth has revealed to him the temporariness of material possessions, and the eternal benefits of the true riches in Christ. The Psalmist learned that lesson (Psa. 73:1-20), Jeremiah proclaimed it (Jer. 9:23-24), Christ illustrated it (Matt. 23:12; Luke 12:15; 2 Cor. 8:9), Paul taught it (Phil. 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Paul likened covetousness to idolatry (Col. 3:5), and in this age of materialism, many bow down to that god and worship at its altar. Saints should not do so. Wealth is a relative term, for riches assume many forms. Paul, who was desperately poor in material things, could boast of his wealth in spiritual privileges. He described himself “as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:10). When a wealthy man is able to view material possessions in that light, he will have no trouble in conforming to James’ exhortation. Cp. Isa. 57:15; 66:2; Matt. 5:3; 1 Tim. 6:17.

“Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away” — The rich man is mortal. His material possessions are limited value, to be given up in due time. On the other hand spiritual benefits are for eternity. The same figure used by James is found in Psa. 103:15-16; Isa. 40:6-7. See also Christ’s comment (Matt. 6:28-30). The believer who fails to recognize that spiritual wealth is of greater value than material possessions, and who acts accordingly is described as a fool (Luke 12:20). In that regard, Haggai had some telling observations to make to the Jews of his day. They were ignoring the work of Yahweh whilst assiduously labouring for their own material advantage. Yet, as it was an age of inflation, their heavy labour brought but a small actual return. How wise it is to bear in

mind that man, in spite of all his pomp and show, actually possesses a life “that appeareth but for a little time, and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). If a person is wise he will see the need of using that “little time” in seeking the spiritual riches that will provide a heritage forever. In view of the temporariness of life, Moses prayed: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psa. 90:12).

See the following related passages:— Psa. 37:2; 35:36; 90:5-6, 12; 102:11; 103:15; Isa. 40:6; Matt. 6:30; 1 Cor. 7:31; 1 Pet. 1:24; 1 John 2:17.

VERSE 11

“For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth” —

Nature illustrates the lesson emphasised by James. It is significant that the sun which is necessary to bring the flower to maturity, also limits its glory. So also with God. All life is subject to Him. Christ used a similar lesson to emphasise a similar truth (Luke 12:28-31; Contrast: Isa. 49:10; Matt 13:6).

“And the grace of the fashion of it perisheth” — The verdant growth of the field, and the beauty of flowers are only temporary. They last but a short time, and soon dry up in the heat of summer. So is man in life. In youth, the years before him seem to stretch like eternity; but with age his power declines, and he recognises how limited are life’s opportunities. The observation of James gives expression to Solomon’s wisdom in Ecclesiastes 12: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth . . .”

“So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways” — The same Greek word as is here translated “ways” is rendered *journey* in James 4:17. The word, therefore, signifies activity, and is rendered in the R.V. as *goings*. The energy and activity of the rich man has contributed to his store of wealth, but as age creeps on him his powers lessen. Slowly his strength wanes, and his interest fades. Not so, however, the man who seeks the higher wealth and glory. As age creeps on, he looks forward with increasing anticipation to the coming of the Lord. He realises that material riches are transient.

See James 5:1-7; Psa. 37:35-36; 48:6-14; 73:18-20; Ecc. 2:18-19; 5:15; Luke 12:16-21. Ct. 1 Pet. 1:4; 5:4.

How Faith Will Develop Endurance — v. 12.

When viewed aright, even trials have their benefit. See also James 5:11; Psa. 94:12; Prov. 3:11-16; Heb. 12:5-12.

VERSE 12

“Blessed is the man” — The Greek word *makarios* signifies *fortunate, well off, happy*. It is the word that the Lord used in his discourse from the mount (Matt. 5:1-11). It describes the unique privilege of a believer in Christ, in that he is able to extract happiness from situations that normally may be considered tragic. He does so by concentrating upon the purpose of such experiences, constantly bearing in mind what the future will reveal. Hence, taught Christ, they that mourn shall be comforted, they that hunger shall be filled, they that are persecuted shall receive a great reward.

They are not happy in mourning, in hungering, or in suffering, but in the ultimate destiny of those who face up to such in faith, for they shall obtain comfort, satisfaction, and a rich reward.

“That endureth temptation” — The word *peirasmos*, temptation, denotes *a putting to the proof*. That is the purpose of trials. They provide opportunity for a believer to demonstrate his fidelity to God. Trials can take many forms. They can involve affliction, persecution, or inducement to sin, and the context determines what is meant. For example, the “divers temptations” that excite joy (v. 2) obviously do not relate to incitement to sin, but to opposition and trial as indicated at that place. On the other hand, the temptation referred to in v. 14 does relate to sin. The person who faithfully endures, or bears up, in the face of all such trials will find a happiness in his conquest of them. In that regard, both the poor man and the rich man have this in common that both will be tried in some way or other if they are of Christ (see Heb. 12:5-8).

Barnabas declared that it is “through much tribulation” that saints will “enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). The word rendered “tribulation” signifies *pressure*, and this describes some of the “temptations” or “trials” to which saints are subjected. Though they might be unpleasant in the experiencing they do provide opportunity of displaying faith, and therefore are character-building in their effect. Trials are often God-design-

ed for our benefit, “for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Heb. 12:5-8). If any are free of such discipline it may imply that they cannot claim the privilege of sonship! One of the titles of Deity is that of *Maker* or *Yatsar* (Isa. 45:9,11). The word denotes one who presses another into shape like a potter does a piece of clay. The word appears as a verb in Isa. 43:1: “Now saith Yahweh that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed (*Yatsar*) thee, O Israel.” Yahweh *created* Jacob, but He pressed Israel into shape. Again: “Every one that is called by My name, I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him” (Isa. 43:7). Here the verb appears as *formed*. The three verbs in that verse are significant: *created, formed, made*. Those whom Yahweh selects to be Name-bearers (Acts 15:14), He first *creates* for His glory (cp. 2 Cor. 5:17), then *forms*, or *presses them into shape* through trials, and finally *appoints* (as the verb *made* denotes) their position in the age to come.

When the purpose of trial is kept in view we are more inclined to endure it cheerfully.

“For when he is tried” — Grammarians claim that the construction of this statement implies the completion of the process. The R.V. accordingly renders: “when he hath been approved”. Purpose of trials: Deut. 8:2; 13:3; Prov. 17:3; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-3; Heb. 11:17; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 5:10.

“He shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” — The word “crown” is *stephanos*, and denotes the coronal wreath that was presented to successful competitors in the Grecian games. They were granted corruptible crowns, but the crown promised saints is an incorruptible crown of life and glory (1 Cor. 9:25). See the promise of Christ in Rev. 2:10; 3:21; and the comments in *Apocalypse Epitomised*. Cp. John 5:28-29; Rom. 2:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4.

James refers to a promise of the Lord; but when did Christ refer to such a reward? In *The Apocalypse* certainly, but the Revelation was not given until long after *The Epistle of James* was written. Obviously James was quoting one of the unrecorded statements of the Lord (see John 21:25).

The promise is made to those who “love” the Lord (Matt. 22:36-40). The word *agape* implies a sacrificial love.

John in his epistles wrote at length upon this theme (see notes). Love for the Lord and his ministry will develop as believers come to understand it better, and study his life and character more intimately. Paul declared that there was laid up for him "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that *love his appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:8). The more a believer comprehends the glory of Christ's kingdom and the conditions that will be established on earth then, and compares it with the growing wickedness of today, the more ardently will he learn to "love his appearing".

The Source of Sin — vv. 13-16

Though incitements to sin constitute trials, we must not confuse them with those trials imposed on us by God. That form of temptation is not from Him but from within us. To give way to it is to court death. Even temptation can be conquered by faith.

VERSE 13

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God" — We must carefully discriminate between trials that come from God and are designed to purify our characters, and those incitements to sin that come from within and can destroy Godliness.

Supporting references: Gen. 3:14; Rom. 7:18; 1 John 2:16.

"For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man" — The word in the Greek is in the plural as rendered in the margin. The same word occurs in Mark 7:21, and denotes the form of evils suggested. Divine nature is not subjected to such evils, and God does not tempt man with such things.

VERSE 14

"But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" — The temptation referred to is limited to those "evils" suggested in v. 13. These, taught the Lord, are "from within" (Mark 7:21). That is the state of man today, but it was not always the case. Originally man was made "very good", and so long as his mind was filled with the thoughts of God as was the case with Adam and Eve before Eve was accosted by the serpent, there was no thought of partaking of the forbidden fruit. The

serpent, however, reasoning from his observation of things unilluminated by the word of God made the suggestion that caused Eve to view matters from a different, and fleshly viewpoint. As a result she sinned, and Adam sinned with her, thereby earning the penalty that God had forewarned would be the consequence of such action. They became sin-proned and death-doomed (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12). In that state they constituted the word of the serpent made flesh, so that from then onwards, the serpent is represented as being in the flesh (cp. Num. 21:9; John 3:14-16; 12:32). John wrote: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is *not of the Father*, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

The original temptation stimulated unlawful lusts of the flesh which previously had been quiescent and latent, being controlled by the instruction Adam and Eve received of God. But at the prompting of the serpent the three avenues of temptation mentioned by John were inflamed in Eve. She saw the tree was *good for food* (lust of the flesh), as pleasant to the *eyes* (lust of the eyes), and as desirable to make one *wise* (pride of life). Blinded by desire to the reality of her sin, she unlawfully partook of its fruit. Adam ate with her, and they were instantly conscious of physical change. Their eyes were opened to their nakedness and their need for a covering. Thenceforth as James taught, "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed". The sight of the eyes, the desires of the flesh, the pride of life still remain the three channels of temptation, so that an external tempter is no longer necessary, though often in evidence. The serpent within does the prompting. To illustrate this, James advances two metaphors: that of the fisherman, and that of the harlot. In regard to the first, he uses the expression *drawn away*. It is derived from the Greek *exelko*, "to draw out, or to lure as in fishing or hunting." The idea is that of drawing fish from out of the water by the lure of attractive bait that hides the hook. The eyes of the fish take in the bait, but it sees not the cruel hook that will inexorably drag it to death. So it is with sin. It looks very attractive to the flesh, but hidden beneath its alluring exterior is ultimate death. The second metaphor, suggested by the word "enticed", is that of an impure, seductive

woman named *Lust* leading a simpleton along the road to folly and unfaithfulness as dramatically described in Proverbs 7. In the analogy of Prov. 7, mere curiosity led the simpleton to experiment (vv. 7-10). Encouraged by "her much fair speech" and "flattering lips" she caused him to yield. In his infatuation, he did not recognise "that it was for his life" (vv. 21-23). All this is true of sin. It appears in many an attractive garb. It makes false promise of hidden happiness. Its real designation is very often camouflaged as "relaxation" and the like, but its true description is Sin, and it entices a person to deadly folly, as the next statement of James graphically describes.

Supporting references: Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Josh. 7:20-21; Prov. 4:23; Isa. 44:20; Hos. 13:9; Matt. 15:18-20; Rom. 7:11,13; Heb. 3:12-13.

VERSE 15

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" — Now James describes the effect of hearkening to the seductive appeal of the harlot called *Lust*. The very lodgment of an unlawful suggestion in the mind can have disastrous consequences. It is sin in conception, and unless destroyed it will give birth to a tyrant. The Greek word rendered "bringeth forth" is *iktēi*, to produce from seed as a mother".

"And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" — The word "finished" signifies to be *full grown*. That which has been conceived by the harlot *Lust* gives birth to a child, *Sin*, which proceeds to develop to maturity. In turn, it begets a further child, this time called *Death*. In the Greek, a different word is used for "bringeth forth" in this clause. It is the word *apokuei*, and signifies to *beget*. In v. 18 the same word is used for begetting by the Word. The unwise action of v. 14, therefore, produces the hideous family of children called *Sin* and *Death* of v. 15. The second child *Death* will make its appearance at the time when the righteous are approved, that is, the Judgment Seat (v. 12).

Supporting references: Psa. 7:14; Isa. 59:4; Mic. 2:1-3; Rom. 5:12-21.

VERSE 16

"Do not err my beloved brethren" — In addressing his readers as his "beloved brethren" James endeavours to gently appeal to them, doubtless bearing in

mind the susceptibility of the flesh to wander or err. The word is *planao*, and signifies "wandering" (see Jude 13). James exhorts his readers to be on their guard against the natural tendency of the flesh to drift like a wandering star. Such stars show light for a time, but finally wander out of orbit to be swallowed up of darkness (Jude 13). This can be the effect of giving in to the seductive temptress, *Lust*.

Supporting references: Matt. 22:29; Gal. 6:7; Col. 2:4-8; 2 Tim. 2:18.

The Source Of Righteousness — vv. 17-18

Having warned of the consequences of being led astray by Lust, James now urges his readers to seek the goodness of God through the means that He has provided: His word from whence comes faith.

VERSE 17

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" — James' words supplement the teaching of the Lord. "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Flesh unaided cannot reveal the qualities of God, and therefore, of itself cannot conquer sin. We are, by natural inheritance, mere creatures of the dust like the serpent (Gen. 3:14,19; 18:27). In order to qualify for divine nature and life eternal, we must superimpose divine qualities upon the flesh by building into our lives those moral qualities manifested by the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, James' words relate to every kind of blessing as coming from God. The "good gifts" derived from Him include earthly blessings of sunshine, rain, food and clothing such as the Lord enumerated in Matt. 5:45, and which provide for our material wellbeing. The "perfect gifts" are those heavenly blessings including His word and His son, that provide the means of obtaining life eternal. The former gifts are "good", but the latter gifts are "perfect" for they complete the process designed of Yahweh in creation. The word *perfect* signifies the attainment of the purpose in view. See James 3:15-17.

"And cometh down from the Father of lights" — This expression relates to Yahweh from Whom cometh spiritual illumination (Psa. 27:1), and Who, Himself, "dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). But the

figure adopted is that of the Sun which is the author of light to the planets within its universe. They all derived their light reflecting that of the sun, and so type in nature what is expected of those who are "called out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Normally, believers are like the planets, with no inherent light. Their illumination, therefore, is a derived light reflected by the Lord Jesus Christ who received it from the Father. Yahweh is described as "a Sun and a Shield" (Psa. 84:11); and as the former He is the Father of lights.

Supporting references: Isa. 45:7; 60:19; 1 John 1:5.

"With whom is no variableness" — As James is referring to Yahweh as a Sun, this is a remarkable statement, and suggests a knowledge of astronomy in advance of that which is normally credited to his age. To earth-bound creatures the Sun, does appear to have variableness: it shines with greater power in the summer than it does in the winter. But, in fact, as we know, for we realise that the earth is round and tilted so as to give change of seasons, there is no variation in the strength of the sun; the variation is in our position in relation to it. If we live in the antipodes it is cold in June and warm in December; if we live in northern areas it is warm in June and cold in December. Yet, the sun has not varied in the extent of warmth and light it throws off, but it is our position in relation to it that has changed! This is true also of Yahweh as the Father of lights. He does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. But we change in our warmth to the truth and to Him, and then it *seems* to us as though He does change. "Why standest Thou afar off?" was the lament of the Psalmist (Psa. 10:1), but in fact, Yahweh was no farther off than on previous occasions. It only appeared that way to the Psalmist. Hence the exhortation: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). Let us do that with proper enthusiasm and manner, and we will discover that Yahweh does not change.

"Neither shadow of turning" — To us on earth the sun does appear to be related to shade. At night it appears the sun has gone, and no longer exists, but in fact, the sun shines always and continues to do so incessantly. The impression of the sun abandoning us is merely the result of our position in relation to it. So it is in our

relationship with Yahweh. Trial and temptation can be falsely interpreted as suggesting that He has withdrawn, or hidden Himself from us. But such is no more the case than to assume that the sun has given up its shining merely because the shades of night encompass us. In nature shadows are caused by the turning of the earth on its axis, not by any "shadow of turning" on the part of the sun. So with our relationships with Yahweh. It sometimes appears as though His face is turned from us, and perhaps this may be through our own folly, for we have turned from him. But as the lesson of nature teaches that the shining of the sun is constant, and that shadows are formed by the turning of the earth, so with our relations to God. It is not Him who reveals "shadow of turning," but the "earthiness" of our nature that, for a moment, hides His influence from us. See Isaiah 59:1-2. The expressions of James imply that he recognised that the earth is round, and that it turns upon its axis.

Supporting references: Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29; Heb. 1:11-12.

VERSE 18

"Of his own will" — In this verse James contrasts the divine begettal of sonship through the Word with sin that is begotten of man's lust (see v. 15). The word *boulema* relates to the counsel, intention or will of God. It denotes God's irrefragable position — His purpose is indisputable as governed by His knowledge of what is best. Jesus was begotten of the will of God (John 1:13). There was no accident about his birth. It was the result of the "determinate counsel" (*boule* — a related word) of God (Acts 2:23). The word implies taking careful counsel of a situation and acting accordingly. The same word describes the spiritual begettal of believers. It shows that such is not left to chance, but is in accordance with the specific will of God relating to what His wisdom dictates is required.

Having determined upon the salvation of man, God next devised the means whereby it could be accomplished. Mortal man needs to develop a character to match the body of incorruptible glory that Yahweh is prepared to give him. How is such a character to be developed? Not by the flesh which "profits nothing," and in its unenlightened

state is a body of desires or lusts which brings forth sin, as James has already taught (v. 15). Something must be injected into the flesh to bring about the desired result; hence the completion of the clause.

“Begot He us with the word of truth”

— Peter used a similar figure. He wrote that we are begotten “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). He contrasts the incorruptible word with transient flesh which, like the grass, soon withers and is gone. The Lord told Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again (or *from above*, see mg.), he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). A citizen of the Kingdom must be the subject of three “births” in order to *enter* therein. He is first born a child of flesh; he must then be “born of water” through knowledge and baptism; finally he must be “born of the spirit” or changed into a spirit body (1 Cor. 15:44). Every birth follows a threefold development: conception, quickening, birth. Conception takes place when the Word of God is implanted in the mind; quickening follows when the student is alerted to its significance; and birth of water takes place when he submits to baptism. As far as the birth of Spirit is concerned, a similar process takes place. Baptism denotes conception for it has been brought about by the spirit-word (Rom. 6:17); the development of the Christ-like life is the quickening for it is the outward manifestation of an inward conviction (Col. 1:27); and this shall be followed by the full birth of the resurrection when the successful candidate will be changed into spirit nature (1 Cor. 15:44,46,51-53; Phil. 2:10-14). The word of God motivates the believer. He is taught to “put off the old man with his deeds”, and to “put on the new, which is *renewed in knowledge* after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:9-10). It is the means that the counsel of Yahweh has devised for the sanctification of the elect. Hence Christ prayed: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). In *Elpis Israel* Bro. Thomas comments:

“The New Birth, like the old one of the flesh, is not an abstract principle, but a process. It begins with the begetting and ends with the having been born. A son of God is a character, which is developed out of the ‘incorruptible seed’ (1 Pet. 1:23) of God, sown into the fleshy table

of the heart (Matt. 13:19). When this seed, or word of the Kingdom, is received, it begins to work in a man until he becomes a believer of the truth. When things have come to this pass, he is a changed man. He has acquired a new mode of thinking; for he thinks in harmony with the thoughts of God as revealed in His law and testimony. He sees himself, and the world around him, in a new light. He is convicted of sin; and experiences an aversion to the things in which he formerly delighted. His views, disposition, temper, and affections are transformed. He is humble, child-like, teachable, and obediently disposed; and his simple anxiety is to know what God would have him to do. Having ascertained this, he does it; and in doing it is ‘*born out of the water*’. Having been begotten of the Father by the word of truth (James 1:18), and born of water, the first stage of the process is completed. He is *constitutionally* ‘in Christ’.

“When a child is born, the next thing is to train him up in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it. This is also the arrangement of God in relation to those who are born out of water into His family on earth. He disciplines and tries them, that He may ‘exalt them in due time’. Having believed the gospel and been baptised, such a person is required to ‘walk worthy of the vocation’, or calling, ‘wherewith he has been called’ (Eph. 4:1), that by so doing he may be ‘accounted worthy’ of being ‘born of spirit’, that he may become ‘spirit’, or a spiritual body; and so enter the kingdom of God, crowned with ‘glory, honour, incorruptibility, and life’ (Rom. 2:7). When, therefore, such a believer comes *out* of the ground by a resurrection from among the dead, the spirit of God, worked by the Lord Jesus, first opens the grave, and forms him in the image, and after the likeness of Christ; and then gives him life. He is then an incorruptible and living man ‘equal to the angels’; and like them capable of reflecting the glory of Him that made him. This is the end of that process. He is like Jesus himself, the great exemplar of God’s family, born out of water by the moral power of the truth; and out of the grave by the physical power of spirit; but all things of God through Jesus Christ the Lord.” (pp. 135-136).

“That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” — Under the Mosaic

covenant, the firstfruits were given unto Yahweh as being especially His. On the first day of Pentecost, and thereafter in the celebrations of the day, "two wave loaves" of the first of the wheat harvest were offered "with leaven" as a wave offering unto Yahweh. They were designated "the firstfruits unto Yahweh" (Lev. 23:17). They pointed forward to believers in Christ. There were two loaves, for in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles have a place. They were "baken with leaven" for, unfortunately, those in Christ are fallible, but they were waved before Yahweh indicating activity in His sight. Reference to them is made in Rev. 14:4.

Supporting references: 1 Cor. 4:15; Heb. 12:23; 1 Jhn. 3:9.

How Faith Dictates The Believer's Responsibility In Christ — vv. 19-22

A person begotten of God, claiming to be a member of His family, must allow faith to motivate his way of life.

VERSE 19

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren" —

In view of the foregoing, Sonship is predicated on action, not merely words. See John 8:34-41; Eph. 5:1.

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" — There is a need to be "swift to hear" for the "new man" is begotten by the Word (v. 18), designed to "shew forth the virtues of Him who hath called believers out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Divine truth is not natural to the flesh, and this underlines the need to be "swift to hear". Christ taught, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words I speak they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). The more one listens to the instruction of the Word, the greater will be his silence. He will acknowledge the truth of Prov. 10:19: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his life is wise" (see also Prov. 17:27; Ecc. 5:2). Later, James has much to say about the unwise use of the tongue. One of the most difficult things is to restrain it; but that discipline is necessary if we would attain unto eternal life (see Christ's warning — Matt. 12:36-37). The third of this trio of virtues is "slow to wrath". Note that James does not condemn anger altogether, but rather quick-temperedness, because the soon-angry man can become blind to reason

and acts foolishly (see Prov. 14:17). Whilst unreasonable anger can quickly lead to sin, the person without a spark of feeling, who is angered by nothing, is spiritually anaemic. His placidity is due to his indifference to the requirements of the Truth. On the other hand, thoughtfulness, and faith in God will help to develop the virtue of patience in all circumstances. This is a virtue worth cultivating (Prov. 19:11). "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). Nevertheless, anger is a divine quality. Yahweh did not look upon the faithlessness of His people with indifference; His wrath was made very evident. The very title "Jealous" used for God (see Exod. 34:14) is derived from a word signifying to flush up red, indicating an excess of feeling. Hence we read that "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11). Christ, also manifested anger (see Mark 3:5; Rev. 2:6), and surely if we are motivated by similar considerations, hypocrisy and wickedness will spark up in us a feeling of anger. But then care needs to be exercised, so Paul taught: "Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26).

Supporting references: James 3:1-2; Prov. 10:19; 13:3; 15:2,18; 17:24,27; 21:23; 25:28; Ecc. 7:8-9; Matt. 5:22; Col. 3:8,15.

VERSE 20

"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" — The wrath of man is an anger stimulated by the flesh, and is contrary to divine anger motivated by the Word. Paul manifested the "wrath of man" when he tried zealously to destroy the Ecclesia of God (Acts 9:1), even though he imagined that he was doing God's service.

The term "the righteousness of God" is used by Paul in Rom. 10:2-10 to contrast the "righteousness of Judaism". The latter sought justification through the ceremonial of the law; the former recognised sacrifices and ceremonials as representative, to be manifested by action. It is sometimes thought that James contradicts Paul in that regard, but a careful consideration of the statements of both writers shows that is not so. Rather does James complement the teaching of Paul. Paul gives emphasis to faith, and James shows that faith must be active, revealing itself in works. Paul

plainly states: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (or pronounced righteous — Rom. 2:13). That is also the teaching of James. James shows that "the righteousness of God" must be manifested by action. This does not mean that one can earn the right to life eternal, for it is God's gracious gift (Rom. 6:23) bestowed upon those whose sins are forgiven, but it does mean that in the absence of actions of faith, a person shall not attain unto the righteousness of God; he will not be accounted righteous or justified in the sight of God.

Supporting references: Rom. 10:3-10; James 3:17-18.

VERSE 21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness — "Filthiness" (Gr. *rhubaria*) denotes moral impurity. In this verse, James outlines the kind of action that Yahweh will commend. He uses a metaphor of one stripping himself of soiled clothing. A similar expression is used by Paul in Heb. 12:1, by Peter in 1 Pet. 1:22-2:1, and by Jude in v. 23. Soiled garments as relating to character are used symbolically in *The Apocalypse* (Rev. 3:4 — See notes at that place). James' statement requires us to recognise "filthiness" when we see it, and to put it aside by a firm act of the mind. We put aside filthy clothing; let us do likewise with actions and habits (James 4:8; Eph. 5:4).

"And superfluity of naughtiness" — Superfluity suggests excessive fat. The idea is again found in Heb. 12:1 "Let us lay aside every weight". "Superfluity of naughtiness", therefore, describes extreme wickedness. The Greek *kakias*, "naughtiness" is often rendered as "malice". "Filthiness" can relate to inward impurity as affecting character without being the invasion of the rights of another; but "naughtiness" (*kakias*), denotes unChristlike action towards others.

"And receive with meekness" — Most actions in life are subject to negative and positive principles. When a believer "puts off" the old man of the flesh, there is a need also to "put on" the new man which is renewed in knowledge (Col. 3:9-10). To the Ephesians, Paul listed many of these negative and positive principles (see Eph. 4:22-32). To do otherwise is to be incomplete in Christ. In his parable of the cleansed house that remained untenanted (Matt. 12:43-45) the Lord

taught the need of replacing evil with good in any attempted reform. To do otherwise is to court the greatest danger. James taught similarly in this verse. There is a need first to "lay aside" wickedness, and then to fill the vacuum thus created with good; to "receive with meekness" that which shall lead to greater perfection of character. The attribute of meekness is a quality that can be cultivated. It should not be confused with weakness. Both Moses (Num. 12:3) and Christ (Matt. 11:29) were meek men, but they were not weak men! Indeed, they were strong. Meekness before Yahweh constitutes a recognition of one's need of and dependence upon Him, followed by human submission to His guidance. It denotes an attitude that is prepared to accept the disciplinary hand of God, enduring in patience the chastening that comes from Him (even through the agency of evil men) seeking to profit thereby.

The Bible refers extensively to meekness, and it is helpful to follow through its instruction. The meek are teachable and susceptible to guidance (Psa. 25:9). Yahweh calls the meek to the Gospel (Isa. 61:1), appeals to them (Zeph. 2:3), and they respond (Jas. 1:21; 3:13). They are called upon to expound its teaching in meekness (Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:25; Tit. 3:2; 1 Pet. 3:15). Paul provided an example of meekness in instructing others (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1).

The future will reveal the reward reserved for the meek (Psa. 76:9). Yahweh will "beautify them with salvation" (Psa. 149:4), elevate them (Psa. 147:6), grant them full satisfaction (Psa. 22:26; Isa. 29:19), cause them to inherit the earth (Psa. 37:11; Matt. 5:5), grant them the greatest triumphs (Psa. 45:4). Accordingly, there are constant exhortations to develop meekness. It is an ornament in the sight of God (1 Pet. 3:4); an attribute to be sought (Zeph. 2:3); a fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:23; Col. 3:2; 1 Tim. 6:11). The man of flesh who is bold, assertive, and self-sufficient is often praised by his fellowmen; but it will be the meek of the earth who will receive their praise of God, and that at the judgment seat (Isa. 11:4 — ct. Amos 2:7).

"The engrafted word" — The RV renders this as "the implanted word". The word of God is likened to a seed (1 Pet. 1:23) that can be planted in the soil of the mind, there to bring forth fruit according

to the care given to the planting and the quality of the soil into which it is sown (cp. Matt. 13:3-9). That word is necessary to bring forth fruit pleasing to Yahweh; it must become the dynamics of our life in Christ: the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Therefore, the daily reading of the Bible is essential to true spiritual growth; there will be no satisfactory development without it.

"Which is able to save your souls" — The Word is absolutely essential to salvation. So much so, that Paul described it as "the word of this salvation" (Acts 13:26; see 1 Cor. 15:1-2).

Supporting references: 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 2:3

VERSE 22

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" — Whilst the implanting of the word is absolutely essential to salvation, it must be manifested in action: that is imperative. The Lord, in his parable of the pounds (Luke 19:12-26) described the folly of the servant who neglected to trade with the money left him for that purpose by his Lord. He had carefully saved up his pound in a sweat-cloth, but had neglected to labour. He was condemned, and that which had been given into his care was taken from him. In a more direct parable, the Lord depicted those who claimed to have laboured, but had not done so in the way he desired. They had heard the word, had taught it, but had neglected to apply it personally. They were rejected whilst commendation was proclaimed upon those who had "heard these sayings, and performed" what was required (Matt. 7:24). The purpose of Yahweh in proclaiming the Gospel is to take out of the Gentiles "a people for His name" (Acts 15:14), that is, a people for His glory (see Isa. 43:7). They are called upon to be Light-bearers not merely in word, but in action: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see *your good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Peter taught that believers have been purchased "to *shew forth the virtues* of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Hearing the word is pleasurable in itself, and many stop short at that point. They are prepared to rejoice in the teaching of Yahweh, to talk about the wonder of His revelation, without personally responding to its teaching. See

the scathing criticism of the Spirit to Ezekiel in regard to those who were hearers of the word but not doers thereof (Ezek. 33:30-32).

"Deceiving your own selves" — The form of their self-deception is stated in the verses that follow.

Supporting references: James 4:17; Matt. 12:50; 28:20; Luke 6:46-48; 11:28; 12:47-48; John 13:17; Rom. 2:13; 1 John 2:3; 3:7; 3 John 11; Rev. 22:7.

On self-deception: James 1:26; Isa. 44:20; 1 Cor. 3:18; 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:3,7; 2 Tim. 3:13; Tit. 3:3; 2 Pet. 2:13.

Faith Must Be Exhibited In Action — vv. 23-25

Faith is not to remain as an abstract quality, but must become the motivating power of a changed life manifesting itself in acts of righteousness.

VERSE 23

"For if any be a hearer of the word" — Faith comes by hearing the word (Rom. 10:17), so that the study of the word is essential to progress.

"And not a doer" — The word must be translated into action.

"He is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass" — The word "beholding" is from the Greek *katanoeo*, "strengthened form of *noeo*, "to perceive", and therefore denotes "to behold attentively". James does not condemn his readers as being guilty of a mere careless hearing of the Word, for they had been properly instructed therein, but he makes references to the incongruity of one carefully listening to its instruction, and yet neglecting to carry into practice what was heard. Some Jewish believers were notorious for this. Their dissertations on Scripture were lengthy, and they would proclaim what should be done, but would not carry it out themselves. Christ condemned the Pharisees for this very thing (Matt. 23:3-4). Later, many of the priests and Pharisees believed and formed part of the Ecclesia (Acts 6:7; 15:5). Some, evidently, were mere academic Christians. James warned his readers against being found among such. He used the analogy of a person gazing at himself in a mirror. A careful scrutiny of one's face may reveal many blemishes, but if nothing is done about correcting them the examination is in vain. He might forget that they are there, but others observe them, and his

folly is manifested to all. The Word of God comprises the mirror (cp. 2 Cor. 3:18), and an earnest consideration of its teaching in the light of our conduct may reveal many blemishes in us. The responsibility then is ours to rectify them.

Supporting references: James 2:14-26; Ezek. 33:31-32.

VERSE 24

“For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” — Having failed to attend to the blemishes revealed by the mirror, he ignores them, and finally forgets them.

VERSE 25

“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty” — The verb is from the Greek *parakupto*, and it signifies to *stoop down and to look into a thing*; thus to carefully examine. The significance of the verb is revealed by its use in 1 Pet. 1:12. James, therefore, presents for our consideration two viewers, both of whom carefully scrutinize what is revealed by the mirror, but only one of whom does anything about it. Why? The difference is shown by the manner in which they look into the mirror. The verb in v. 24 is in the *aorist* tense, and as such denotes *only one action of looking*. He looks once, and even though it is a careful scrutiny, it is a limited one. The other viewer looks at himself in the mirror long and earnestly, stooping sideways (as the word implies) to get the best view, and so seeking for blemishes that he may correct.

James describes the mirror as the perfect law of liberty. It is “perfect” because it is complete, and adequate to correct any blemishes that may be detected. The expression is probably derived from Psa. 19:7: “The law of Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul”. James describes this Law as “the law of Liberty” because the truth as such liberates from the power of sin (John 8:32-36; Rom. 8:15; 1 Pet. 2:16). The reference is to the Law of God on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant of grace. That covenant does not destroy the Law; it enables one to fulfil it (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 3:31; 7:25). What it removes is the “curse of the law”, for it provides for the forgiveness of sins, in a way that the Mosaic Law did not. The Law of liberty, therefore permits one to strive to fulfil its requirements without coming under its curse. The Lord Jesus told the

Jews that if they followed him as his disciples then they would “know the truth, and the truth would make them free” (John 8:32). Free from what? From the curse of the Law, for in him there would be granted forgiveness of those things in a way the Law could not do. Accordingly, Paul exhorted the Galatians to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). Some were claiming justification through the Law, but such is impossible because of the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:3). Paul taught that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), and he pointed out the futility of striving for justification through any other means than that of grace. The Mosaic Law was designed to convict man as a sinner, to stop his boasting, and to reveal that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:19-20).

But that does not mean that we can ignore the moral teaching of the law with impunity. We must not make void the law, but establish it (Rom. 3:31). We can do that in Christ, in the manner described above. As believers build the moral precepts of the law into their lives, and seek the forgiveness in Christ for those things they do amiss, they, like him, “magnify the law and make it honorable” (Isa. 42:21). Christ fulfilled the law perfectly (Matt. 5:17). His followers fail to do this, but through the forgiveness of sins obtainable in him, reach forth to the law of liberty.

“And continueth therein” — The word *parameno* signifies to *remain by or near a thing*. The expression as used in this verse relates to one who having been brought nigh to the liberty in Christ makes conscious effort to remain close to it. He is the opposite to the man who consults the mirror once, and then moves on his way (v. 23).

“He being not a forgetful hearer” — Like the man described in v. 23.

“But a doer of the work” — The R.V. renders: “A doer that worketh”. He gives himself earnestly to the work in hand. Having noticed blemishes in himself he works at removing them.

“This man shall be blessed in his deed” — Christ pronounced a similar blessing: Matt. 7:24; Luke 11:28. Instead of “deed” the R.V. has “doing”. It is not

one deed but a continual "doing" that is required.

Supporting references: Prov. 14:15; 2 Cor. 13:5; Heb. 12:15.

**Without Faith Religion Is Vain —
vv. 26-27**

The appearance of being religious is not sufficient; a practical application to its requirements is necessary.

VERSE 26

"If any man among you seem to be religious" — A person can present a facade of being religious without manifesting its power. The R.V. renders: *thinketh himself to be religious*. Such a one deceives himself. The term "religious" is from the Greek *threskos*, and denotes the externals of religion in which Jews delighted. Paul uses the term in Acts 26:5 in describing the religious formalism which once absorbed his attention. For that formalism to be of power, it must be transmitted into action; in the absence of the latter it is empty, unreal and deceptive. It causes a man to feel that he is religious whereas in fact, he deceives himself. *Prov. 14:12; Luke 8:18; 1 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 6:3.*

"And bridleth not his tongue" — To bridle the tongue is to hold it in so as to guide it, in the way in which one controls a horse. It implies the restraints that one will impose upon himself when he hearkens to the Word and is conscious of Yahweh's eye upon him (see Psa. 32:8-9). When that happens the tongue will be used not to destroy another's reputation, but to honour Yahweh in the sense of 1 Pet. 4:11. James recognised the difficulty of restraining the tongue. He taught that to do so perfectly is normally beyond the power of man, and needed a higher motivation to that end (James 3:8). True religion is the source of that motivation.

"But deceiveth his own heart" — The word *apatao*, here rendered "deceiveth" signifies especially to deceive with empty words ignoring the true character of sin (Eph. 5:6). The unbridled tongue will philosophise to convince a person that sin is not sin but relaxation.

"This man's religion is vain" — All his formalism, his appearance of being religious, is but empty show. Notice that James does not condemn the external forms of religion which Yahweh has appointed, but the reliance that some

placed upon them without manifesting in action the practical requirements of true religion. Christ made the point in rebuking the Pharisees: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and *not to leave the other undone*" (Matt. 23:23). Both are necessary in the sight of God. A person can give the appearance of being religious, and even deceive himself into believing that he is so, and yet appear as an "abomination to God" (Luke 16:15). *Supporting references:* Psa. 34:13; 39:1-2; 141:3; Prov. 10:19,31; 13:2-3; 15:2; 16:10; 19:1; Eph. 4:29; 5:4; Col. 4:6; 1 Pet. 3:10.

VERSE 27

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this" — The two words, *pure* and *undefiled*, present the positive and negative aspects of acceptable worship.

"To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" — To do this is to make personal contact with the sorrows of others and to share those adverse experiences with them. This is a divine quality. The Law makes frequent reference to the manner in which the afflictions of the fatherless and widows were to be relieved (Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11,14; 24:19; Matt. 25:34-36; 1 John 3:17-19). To "visit" them is to go out of one's way to help. Yahweh has done that in "visiting His people" to set in motion the means of redemption (Luke 1:68; 7:16); and His children are called upon to imitate His ways in that as in other regards (Matt. 5:44-48). Many who embrace the truth are made *de facto* fatherless and widows by the attitude of their relations towards the truth they have espoused, and they, too, need the ministrations of those who can help them in their need, that the loss may be recompensed (Mark 10:30). The great consolation to all such, of course, is that in due time those who have suffered thus for the Truth's sake will learn that Yahweh, indeed, is "A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, in His holy habitation" (Psa. 68:5). We manifest His characteristics by doing likewise.

"And to keep himself unspotted from the world" — Sonship with God is predicated upon separation from the world (2

Cor. 6:17-18; Rom. 12:2). Though remaining in the world, Christ's followers need to keep apart from its evil (John 17:14-15). Having "put on Christ" as the garment of salvation (Isa. 61:10; Gal. 3:27) there is need to keep those garments unspotted from the world (see notes on Jude 23; Rev. 3:4). Again James sets before us both positive and negative

aspects in relation to religion: to go out of our way to assist others when evils come upon them; and to keep ourselves free from the polluting influence of the world's moral evils. This requires the practical application of faith, commencing with bridling the tongue.

Supporting references: James 4:4; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:4-5.

CHAPTER TWO

HOW FAITH WILL CONQUER CLASS DISTINCTIONS

In this chapter, James reveals that Faith will properly motivate the actions of one towards another. It will enable a person to discern beyond mere externals to true values within. James first describes a common failure of conduct among Jews: the manifestation of partiality. He shows how incongruous that is to men of faith. It is contrary to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not fulfil the royal law of love. Would those who indulge in this failing like partiality to be shown to them at the Judgment Seat? In demonstrating how faith can motivate action, James cites the cases of Abraham and Rahab: the former the father of the faithful, the latter a Gentile outside the covenant of promise. In each case faith was the vital principle, but it was demonstrated by works. Upon this he observes that a faith which does not express itself in conduct is as dead as a body from which the spirit has departed.

The Failure: Manifestation Of Partiality — vv. 1-4

In an age when opulence and abject want existed side by side, and many believers were impoverished because of their profession of faith, the snobbery and partiality of the Pharisees set a bad example within the Jewish Community, liable to affect Jewish believers. The

equality between members which the truth demanded provided a striking contrast to the general attitude. It united as one the pauper-prisoner Paul, the wealthy slave-owner Philemon, and the absconding-slave Onesimus. James shows that partiality based upon mere social status is wrong, and is not according to the faith in Christ.

VERSE 1

“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ” — In the R.V. the expression “have not” is clearer rendered as *hold not*. The Lord Jesus Christ was not one who manifested partiality, nor was he akin to the rich of the world. Nevertheless his present title, as here expressed by James, speaks of his elevation (Acts 2:36). It is a reminder that if we manifest his faith in action we can become as he is.

“The Lord of glory” — See Psa. 24:7-10; 1 Cor. 2:8; Tit. 2:13. Again, in this title, there is reference to the present elevated status of the Lord in contrast to his position when on earth. The title also expresses the purpose of Yahweh with all believers. He has proclaimed His intention of filling the earth with His glory (Num. 14:21). This requires a threefold development: First, in a man — the Lord Jesus Christ; Second, in a community, the multitudinous Christ; Finally in the earth, when God shall be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). The manifestation of divine glory in an individual is also a threefold development: first, mental; then, moral; finally, physical (see John 15:3; Col. 2:6; Phil. 3:21; Rom. 5:2).

“With respect of persons” — The Greek word *prospolempsia* signifies to respect the faces of others as in Lev. 19:15. See Luke 20:21; Rom. 2:11; Jude 16. Partiality in judgment was strictly prohibited by the Law. See Deut. 1:17; 10:17; Prov. 24:23; James 3:17.

Supporting references: Prov. 28:21; 1 Tim. 5:21.

VERSE 2

“For if there come unto your assembly” — The word in the Greek is *Synagogue*, as in the margin. James seems to use the term in contrast to *Ecclesia* in James 5:14. As stated in our introduction, the Jewish believers had not yet completely severed their connection with the Synagogue and Temple, and therefore constituted the Christian element among the Jews. The complete severance from the Jews came later. Therefore, the partiality to which James referred, was not necessarily manifested by the followers of Christ, but by the Jews with whom they associated. The spiritual environment of the former would have seen many common examples of the conduct condemned by James.

“A man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel” — The expression in the Greek is much stronger than that of the A.V. It denotes “a gold-ringed man”, that is one with his hand conspicuously and ostentatiously loaded with rings and jewels. In those days, the ring was considered by a Hebrew as a common, almost indispensable, article of dress, since it contained his signet, called *Tabbath* (see Matt. 11:8-9; Luke 15:22). The word “ring” in the Hebrew is from a root signifying to *impress a seal* (see Hag. 2:23). A gold-ringed man implies a person of wealth and influence.

“Goodly apparel” — *Lampros*, bright, brilliant, radiant, shining. Rend. goodly Rev. 18:14; bright Acts 10:30; Rev. 22:16; white Rev. 15:6; 19:8; clear Rev. 22:1; gay; gorgeous Luke 23:11. The wearing of rings was normal dress in those days. It was not the wearing of rings, nor the goodly apparel that was condemned, but the showing of partiality towards those wearing them.

“And there come in also a poor man in vile raiment” — The contrast would have been a very common one in those days, but does not apply generally to Ecclesias today.

VERSE 3

“And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing” — The word *epiblepo* — “respect” signifies to *fix the eyes upon*, and expresses the manner in which the natural eye would instantly be drawn towards the rich person with the ostentatious clothing.

“And say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool” — In this description, one is offered a place of honour, the other a position of humility — based only upon what the eye sees (cf. 1 John 2:16), and not upon a real basis of worthiness. This is different from the respect and honour that should be afforded to those deserving of it: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim. 5:17). To acknowledge those elders and to avoid partiality because of ostentatious display are both correct procedures.

VERSE 4

“Are ye not then partial in yourselves?” — Rotherham renders this: “Would you

not then have been led to make distinctions among yourselves?" In doing so on the basis of mere personal appearance would have been contrary to "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (see Matt. 9:10-13; 11:19; Luke 7:44-46; 2 Cor. 8:9).

"And are become judges of evil thoughts?" — Rotherham and others render this as "with evil thoughts". They were not standing in judgment on the evil thoughts of others, but were displaying partiality on the basis of mere fleshly display. Their discrimination in that way was the reflection of their own evil thoughts. As judges they decided that some were more worthy than others, but they came to that decision on mere external appearances. This was a complete negation of James 1:9 and contrary to the character of the Father Who calls both rich and poor to salvation, and Whose character they should try to emulate. See Deut. 1:17.

Supporting references: Mal. 2:9.

The Cause: Despising The Poor — vv. 5-7

There is a need to keep in mind that God has called those whom the world may despise that they, in Christ, might attain unto riches greater than material possessions.

VERSE 5

"Hearken, my beloved brethren" — See the similarity of this appeal with James' opening words in Acts 15:13. Though partiality for the rich may have been a sin of unbelieving Jews in the Synagogue there was a danger that the brethren might be similarly influenced by their environment, and therefore the exhortation that follows is appropriate.

"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith" — The Nestles' Greek text varies this statement to read: "the poor to this world", that is those who are decreed as poor by the world. In 1 Cor. 1:26-31 Paul extends this thought and explains it. God hath honoured those "despised" by the world "that no flesh should glory in His presence." The reference to richness of faith is given in the future tense: "to be rich in faith" (see Rotherham). God has not chosen people who are already rich in faith, but He has chosen the despised of this world that they may become rich in faith. They develop riches by their progress in the truth (see Isa. 66:2; Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20; Rev. 2:9; 3:18). The value of such riches

is that they can be shared with others with no loss of value to the possessor. Accordingly, Paul could write of himself as being poor "yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). He was "poor to the world" but had attained unto wealth in Christ. In that attitude he imitated Christ. See 2 Cor. 8:9.

"And heirs of the kingdom" — From a doctrinal standpoint this statement shows that the kingdom is not set up as yet despite the teaching of Christendom to the contrary. An heir of the kingdom is one who awaits its manifestation and its possession. See Matt. 25:34.

"Which he hath promised to them that love him" — Those who love God will receive in that day "a crown of life" (James 1:12), and an honoured place in the Kingdom (Matt. 19:28-29). How do we know that we love God? By mere emotion? By fulsome praise? John taught: "This is love, that we walk after his commandments" (2 John 6).

Supporting references: Isa. 29:19; Zech. 11:7,11; Matt. 11:5; Luke 6:20. *Rich in faith:* Prov. 8:17-21; Luke 12:21; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; 2 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:4,7; 3:8,16; 1 Tim. 6:18; Heb. 11:26. *Heirs:* Matt. 25:34; Luke 12:32; 22:29; Rom. 8:17; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:8,18; 2 Pet. 1:11.

VERSE 6

"But ye have despised the poor" — The word "despised" is from *atimazo*, to dishonour. Those who acted in the manner described (v. 3) dishonoured the poor. By so doing they stood in judgment on God's ability to choose those who are worthy of honour, and had taken their stand with the world. Such conduct had the effect of dishonouring those whom God had honoured by showing partiality for mere ostentatious display. In so doing they despised members of Yahweh's family.

"Do not rich men oppress you" — The rich for whom some manifested partiality represented that class in the world that oppressed and persecuted believers (Acts 4:1-6; 5:17; 9:1-2, 13-14). The poor, more than the rich, gladly listened to the Gospel and accepted its teaching (see Matt. 7:28-29; 11:5; Mk. 12:37).

"And draw you before the judgment seats" — See Acts 8:3; 13:50; 17:6. The verb "draw" is rendered *drag* in the R.V.

But were the rich in the Ecclesia, men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57) engaging in litigation, and dragging their poorer brethren before the judgment seats? No. James is referring to the rich as a class. He is pointing out that in extending honour to individuals, merely because of their wealth, believers approved that attribute in their associates which in the world is the cause of oppression. Moreover by their attitude they despised true wealth. A person should be honoured for his richness of faith, not because of his ostentatious display. If we honour men merely because of external appearance, rather than their spiritual qualities, we are falling into the same trap as did the Jews of James' day. Once again we point out that Jewish believers had not completely severed their connection with the temple, or the synagogue, and therefore engaged in worship in those centres though recognising the sacrifices as pointing forward to Christ (Acts 3:1; 21:20-25 etc.). The synagogue was notorious for the partiality shown to the rich Pharisees and others. In such an environment believers might be influenced to do likewise. James appealed to them not to be led astray by mere external display, but to recognise the real value of faith. There is a danger in the present age of affluence of believers being led astray by the ostentatiousness of the world, so that James' exhortation has application today.

VERSE 7

"Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" — At the Jerusalem conference James had pointed out that the Ecclesia constitutes those whom God calls unto Himself as "a people for His name". That name is Yahweh. It was originally named upon the nation of Israel as a whole (Num. 6:27) which constituted Israelites as children of Yahweh, and the entire nation as His bride (Isa. 54:5). The Lord Jesus did not come in his own independent name, but in the name of his Father. He manifested the Name by perfectly exhibiting the character of his Father (John 17:6), and he united his apostles with it by incorporating them as members of the family of God (John 17:11). Moreover, he promised that the principles of the Name would be proclaimed after his resurrection so opening the divine love to any who would embrace it (John 17:26). In fulfilment of that promise James declared

that God is taking out of the Gentiles, a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). That is the one Name named upon believers at their baptism (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; Phil. 2:9); for the baptismal formula, "in the name (not names) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19) denotes the scope of the Name in whose authority Christ came. The Name of the Father is manifested in the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew does not refer to three names, but one. And that Name named upon believers constitutes them both children (Heb. 2:13) and bride (2 Cor. 11:2). A person having the Name of God named upon him can honour or dishonour it. "Every one that is called by My name . . . I have created for My glory" declares Yahweh (Isa. 43:7. See also Deut. 28:10). We can cause that Name to be blasphemed if our actions are inconsistent with the moral principles expressed thereby (2 Sam. 12:14; 1 Tim. 6:1). In that regard, believers who are over-bearing in flaunting themselves before others, dishonour the Name they bear. The warning of this verse suggests that those who confidently exhibited themselves were those unbelieving Jews who rejected Christ. Apparently, in the synagogues, honour was paid to such Jews, and the danger was that Hebrew Christians might emulate such an attitude towards the wealthy, even though those they thus honoured might "blaspheme the worthy name by which they were called". The tendency of flesh is to defer to worldly success or display, in whatever direction it is manifested, whether in business, education, learning and so forth, even though those so admired may also "blaspheme the Name." What believers should honour is richness of faith whether manifested by rich or poor.

Supporting references: Psa. 73:1-9.

The Contrast: Right Versus Wrong — vv. 8-11

The partiality described is not motivated by love, and therefore will lead to practices that will be condemned at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

VERSE 8

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture" — The word "royal" is *basilikos* and signifies *belonging to a king*. The term describes an imperial mandate,

proclaimed both by the King of heaven (see Lev. 19:18) and by Christ the King of the future age (Matt. 22:37-40; John 13:34; 15:12). As a royal law it expressed a chief governing principle of a life in the Truth. In Leviticus, to which James referred, it, significantly, is placed in juxtaposition with a warning against paying respect to persons (Lev. 19:15). Therefore love and not partiality should become the governing factor in life. If the royal authority of the Father and Son is appreciated, this law should be obeyed by those who claim to be their subjects.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” — The reference is a citation from Lev. 19:18 and summarises the scope of the Law in regard to human relationships. See Matt. 22:37-40; Luke 10:29; Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2. It is the dominant text of this chapter, preparing the ground for John’s epistles on love. As set out in our introduction, *The Epistle To The Hebrews* shows the necessity of faith in addition to law; *The Epistle of James* shows the need of works as an exhibition of faith; whilst faith, in turn, is perfected through love. That is the theme of John’s epistles.

What is this love? The Greek verb is *agapao* and the noun *agape*. It is a word seldom found in Greek outside the Bible. It is expressive of divine love. John declares that “love is of God” (1 John 4:8), hence it comes from Him, and is not merely an emotion of the flesh. In his Gospel, John taught that this divine quality of love is exhibited in the sacrifice of Christ (John 3:16), hence it is sacrificial. It must not be confused with mere friendliness nor affection based upon mere flesh-likings; for it must be exhibited to enemies as well as to friends (Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:20). One writer has stated: “*Agape*, therefore, designates an unselfish love . . . in its fullest conceivable form; first exhibited by Christ (1 John 3:16), it is expressive of God’s relation to believers (1 John 4:9), and the relation existing between the Father and the Son (John 15:10; 17:26; Col. 1:13). It is the distinctive character of the believer’s life in relation to his brethren and to all the world. *Agape* is pre-eminently God’s love (John 3:16), and is reproduced in the hearts of believers by the power of the spirit word (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).”

Agape is an intellectual and not merely an emotional love. It aims at enriching the recipient even at the giver’s expense.

Hence Paul wrote: “The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved . . .” (2 Cor. 12:15). His love expressed itself in firm rebuke and threat of discipline. His strictures and correction were not pleasing to the believers in Corinth, but they were motivated by the Apostle’s love for them, and they expressed that quality more effectively than if he had ignored their failings. The subject is suitably summarised by Paul in the statement: “Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9). The love that Christ’s followers receive from God should be revealed by them in their attitude to others.

Supporting references: Eph. 3:19; 4:2; 5:33; 2 Thess. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:14; Heb. 10:24.

VERSE 9

“But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin” — There is no love, except love of self, in such partiality as James has described.

“And are convinced of the law as transgressors” — The word “convinced” is more correctly rendered *convicted*. Transgression under the law expressed the invasion of another’s rights. The humiliation to which the poor visitor was reduced as described by James typified such a transgression. Respect of persons was condemned by the Law, which prohibited preferential treatment being shown to either poor or rich. Perfect justice had to be exhibited at all times.

Supporting references: Exod. 23:2-3; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; Psa. 82:2; Prov. 24:23.

VERSE 10

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” — See also Rom. 2:17-24; Gal. 3:10. As the Law convicted all of having sinned (with the exception of Christ), it made evident the need of grace to establish justification, or righteousness as it is sometimes rendered. How could God proclaim a person to be righteous when, in fact, he was a sinner? Only by forgiving him the sin he had committed. This was accomplished in Christ alone, so that whereas the Law, rightly considered, had performed the important work of convicting a person of sin, it could not properly blot it out. This needed a Redeemer, and in that regard the Law performed the valuable service of leading to Christ the one whom it had convicted of

sin (Gal. 3:24). The Judaisers opposed this concept, and attempted to establish justification (rendered righteousness — Rom. 10:3-5) by strictly observing the ceremonials of the Law. But as Paul and James clearly show, to offend, or stumble, in one point of the Law defeated the objective, and brought the sinner under its curse. They taught that the principles of the Law should be observed as a guidance for moral conduct; but because it was beyond the ability of normal man to keep it in its entirety, the grace of God as exhibited in the forgiveness of sins, is necessary for justification. In stating that the person who offended in one point of the law is "guilty of all", James means that he is guilty of violating the Law as a whole, and, therefore, he has made it impossible to be justified, or saved, by it. This does not mean that the person who sinned in one particular is held as guilty as if he had violated every ordinance of it, or that all sinners are of equal grade because all have violated one or more of the laws of God, but rather that he has been convicted of sin, and needs forgiveness therefrom to be justified before God. It was grace not law that granted the sinner such a privilege.

It is said that the Jews taught that "he who transgresses all the precepts of the law has broken the yoke, dissolved the covenant, and exposed the law to contempt; and so has he done who has only broken one precept;" They also taught, "that he who observed any principal command was equal to him who kept the whole law," and gave for an example the forsaking of idolatry. James' comments corrected this false teaching.

VERSE 11

"For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" — James is citing Exod. 20:13. The word transgressor in the Greek is *parabates*, from *para* "beyond" and *baino*, "to walk". Like the word *diabolos* that signifies to be drawn beyond the line, *parabates* signifies to walk beyond the line, the line, of course, being the law of God.

Supporting references: Lev. 4:2,13,22; Psa. 130:3-4.

The Corrective: Conduct Yourself With The Judgment In Mind — vv. 12-13

The culminating point of a life in Christ is the impending Judgment Seat. This should dictate the present course of action (Heb. 9:27).

VERSE 12

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged" — It is possible to expound the word, and yet live inconsistently with its precepts. A believer needs to speak, teach and act in accordance with divine principles, and with the coming Judgment in mind.

"By the law of liberty" — See note Ch. 1:25. The law of liberty recognises that all sin, and thereby all come under the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10). However, a believer can obtain forgiveness of sins, and so be freed from that curse by newness of life in Christ (John 8:32-36; Rom. 7:1-6; Gal. 5:1; Col. 2:14). This imposes an obligation on him to walk in the light of that experience. Having received of the goodness of God, he is expected to show the same quality of mercy to others (Matt. 6:12; Rom. 14:10,13). Moreover, he will recognise that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), both the rich man and the poor, and that all, thereby, have been reduced to one common denominator (cp. 1 Cor. 7:21-23). He will not show partiality towards some because of material advantage, but will, in humility, treat all as "one" in Christ (Gal. 3:18). He will speak and act as one who will be judged by the law of liberty. The very term *law of liberty* shows that the liberty referred to is subject to restraints: it expresses liberty from condemnation, not license to please oneself.

VERSE 13

"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy" — The Greek gives the definite article before "judgment": he shall have "the judgment without mercy". Though there will be gradations of reward at the Judgment Seat, in accordance with the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:16-19) there will be only one judgment of life and one judgment of death, and that is the judgment to which James refers in this place. There is the judgment without mercy for those who have shewn no mercy. This fact is expressed in the request of the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). We can be proclaiming the death sentence on ourselves if making such request, we do

not forgive those who sin against us. The Lord added such an explanatory note: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." See also Matt. 18:21-25; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13.

"And mercy rejoiceth against judgment" — The word "rejoiceth" is from the Greek *katakauchaomai*, "to speak aloud against" so as to drown out by noise. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, mercy shall drown out judgment as the consideration we have shown towards others is advanced to our support. All who stand before the Lord in that day will need divine mercy and grace to attain unto eternal life. Mercy and grace will be more readily extended to those who have manifested those divine qualities toward others. The figure is that of a defendant in court before the judge. Evidence is advanced against him that cannot be refuted, but the proclamation of adverse judgment is countered, shouted down, or drowned out by insistent cries for mercy on the grounds that he showed mercy to others. See also James 5:20. We have an illustration of this in the case of David. In spite of the gravity of his sin against Uriah, a sin for which the judgment of the law demanded death by stoning, he was forgiven. On what grounds? That of his own acts of mercy. When David had Saul in his power, and could have justly destroyed him and so removed a most bitter enemy, he extended mercy to him because he was "Yahweh's anointed". He requested: "As thy (Saul's) life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by the eyes of Yahweh, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation" (1 Sam. 26:24). Yahweh heard him, and so there was stored up for David a reservoir of mercy upon which he was able to draw in his time of desperate need. The judgment of the Law would have destroyed him, but divine mercy saved him, and did so justly in payment for the mercy he showed Saul. So he was forgiven. When we extend mercy in the name of Christ, we do likewise (see Psa. 18:25; Matt. 5:7). Not that we can presume on that, and sin with impunity because we extend mercy to others, for then the motive would be wrong, and condemnation would be just.

Supporting references: Prov. 21:13; Jer. 9:24; Mic. 7:18; Matt. 7:1-2; 25:41-46.

Words Without Works Are Profitless — vv. 14-20

Faith that expresses itself only in word and not in action is dead. A living faith will motivate action. Otherwise belief is a mere academic exercise of no practical value. A real faith will change a life.

VERSE 14

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man may say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" — Mercy is one of the great works of faith when it is done for Christ's sake. But a faith without works is dead. The R.V. renders the final clause as: "Can that faith save him?" The answer is No. Faith must motivate action, and bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father.

Supporting references: Matt. 3:8; 5:20; 7:21-23; Luke 6:49; Rom. 2:13-15; Gal. 5:6,13; 1 Thess. 1:3; Tit. 3:8; Heb. 11:7, 8,13; 2 Pet. 1:5; 1 Jhn. 5:4-5.

VERSE 15

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food" — The word "destitute" is rendered "lacking" by the R.V. In Apostolic days, such a case as is posed by James, would not have been uncommon, though today, in this age of affluence in Western countries at least, the full force of James' postulate is not appreciated. There are none among us in these Laodicean times (cp. Rev. 3:17) who are naked or destitute of food, nevertheless the principle remains. Generally trials take different forms.

Supporting references: Isa. 58:7-10; Ezek. 18:7; Matt. 25:35-40; Luke 3:11.

VERSE 16

"And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled" — Peace, *Shalom* is the common Jewish greeting, but it is empty and useless as a mere word. It is derived from a root signifying to be at one, and hence implies a sharer! James teaches us to use even common words with full force of meaning, and not to indulge in mere empty, high-sounding platitudes that for all practical purposes are meaningless.

"Notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" — Words will not clothe or feed a person, no matter how pretty they may sound when uttered. It is works not words that are wanted.

Supporting references: Prov. 3:27-28; 1 John 3:16-18.

VERSE 17

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” — The margin renders this as faith *by itself*. Faith, to be of any value to God or man, must be living and active. When it is that, it will not be dead, but will be manifested in deeds. See John 13:14-17; 1 John 3:18.

Supporting references: 1 Cor. 13:3,13; 1 Thess. 1:3.

VERSE 18

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works” — Faith is defined as “the *substance* of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1). Where faith is real it will inevitably manifest itself in action; on the other hand, works that are not motivated by faith are of little value (Heb. 11:6). Therefore, a man may say, “Thou hast faith, and I have works”, and thereby attempt to separate one from the other, but in so doing he demonstrates his ignorance of the reality of the first, and the requirements of the second. In fact, a person cannot have a real faith without it manifesting itself in works.

“And I will shew thee my faith by my works” — See also Christ’s comment — Matt. 7:16-17.

Supporting references: Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 13:2; Gal. 5:6.

VERSE 19

“Thou believest that there is one God” — The word for “believest” (*pisteuo*) is related to the word for faith (*pistis*), for a Bible faith requires belief (Rom. 10:17). Belief in “one God” is the essential beginning for faith because it is the basis of His revelation to man as exhibited in the First Commandment (Exod. 20:1-4).

“Thou doest well” — Belief in the one God is an excellent beginning; but if God is one, there is need to treat His children likewise, not divide them into groups manifesting partiality for one at the expense of the other (v. 1).

“The devils also believe and tremble” — The word *daimonia* is rendered by some as “the possessed ones”. The Greek theory was that demons were the cause of madness, epileptic disorders, and obstructions of the senses etc. They “possessed” the afflicted in the sense that the term is used in Acts 16:16. Therefore, to speak of certain as being “possessed of devils” or demons, was to use the com-

mon vernacular to express that they were mad, dumb, epileptic, or the like (see Matt. 9:33; 17:15-18; Mark 5:15; John 7:20; 10:20). Hippocrates, the great Greek physician, wrote an essay on epilepsy, which was called the sacred disease because the people believed what the priests taught, that epileptics were possessed; and the priests, the magicians and impostors derived a considerable revenue from attempting to cure this disease by expiations and charms. The essay was written to expose this delusion, Hippocrates seeking to prove that this disease was neither more divine, nor sacred, than any other. In referring to “the devils” (demons) in this manner, therefore, James made reference to some who were mentally unsound and merely mouthed a truth without understanding or applying it. They believed and trembled, without being transformed in character by the belief. An example of this is given in Mark 5:7. The fact that such people believed without that belief producing any change in their state or their characters, demonstrated that something more than mere endorsement of a doctrine is necessary.

Supporting references: Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:6,21,22; 46:9; Mark 12:29; John 17:3; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:5-6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Jude 4.

VERSE 20

“But wilt thou know, O vain man” — The word “vain” suggests that which is empty, without value, rather than being lifted up in pride (Rom. 1:21; Gal. 6:3).

“That faith without works is dead” — Paul wrote similarly to believers in Rome. First he taught that “God will render to every man according to his *deeds*” (Rom. 2:6); and then, “not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (v. 13). But what then are we to make of Paul’s statement: “A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”? (Rom. 3:28). The Apostle is contrasting justification by faith with justification by the Law. The former leads to the Redeemer and to forgiveness of sins (Gal. 3:24), the latter rests on personal deeds requiring perfect obedience to all the requirements of the Law: an ideal that is beyond the ability of sinful flesh apart from such help as God gave Christ (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:19-21). But Paul does

not mean that faith sets aside the Law, disposing of it as of no consequence. On the contrary he wrote: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). He described how Gentile believers, who were not under the law, nevertheless, in Christ, learn to do "the things contained in the law" (Rom. 2:14), their consciences being sharpened by their belief and understanding of Scripture. It is sometimes taught that Paul and James are in conflict with each other on this subject, but such is not the case: they complement the teaching of each other.

Two Examples of Faith Manifesting Itself in Works — vv. 21-26

Two significant examples are advanced by James to illustrate his point: Abraham and Rahab. The first, a Hebrew; the second, a Gentile. The first, the father of the nation; the second, the mother whose children laid the foundation of the house of David. Surely no Jewish believer could resist the power of these two wonderful examples.

VERSE 21

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" — Paul advances the case of Abraham as one who was justified by faith apart from the works of the law (Rom. 3:28; 4:8). It is significant, however, that he points to Abraham at the commencement of his pilgrimage, whereas James cites the example at the end of Abraham's life. On this, Brother Thomas writes:

"Abraham was the subject of a twofold justification, as it were: first, of a *justification of faith*; and secondly, of a *justification by works*. Paul says, he was justified by faith; and James, that he was "justified by works". They are both right. As a sinner he was justified from his *past sins* when his faith was counted to him for righteousness; and as a saint, he was justified by works when he offered up Isaac. Of his justification as a saint James writes, "Abraham our father was justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar. Faith wrought with his works, and *by works was faith made perfect*. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *not by faith alone*" (James

2:21-24).

"I have termed it a twofold justification by way of illustration; but it is, in fact, only one. The two stand related as cause and effect; faith being the motive principle it is a justification which *begins* with the remission of sins that are past, and is *perfected* in obedience unto death. The idea may be simplified thus. No exaltation without probation. If a man believe and obey the gospel *his past sins* are forgiven him in Christ; but, if after this he walk in the course of the world his faith is proved to be dead, and he forfeits his title to eternal life. But if, on the other hand, a man become an adopted son of Abraham, and "by a patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and incorruptibility", (Rom. 2:7) he will find everlasting life in the Paradise of God." (*Elpis Israel* p. 260-261).

Abraham, therefore, was justified by faith (Rom. 3:28-4:8) and then by works. The promises were first made conditional (Gen. 12:1-3), and finally unconditional (Gen. 22:16-18).

VERSE 22

"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works" — The verb is from the Greek *energeo*, or *energised*. Faith energised Abraham to act and so produce the works that he did. They were not performed independent of faith, but were the *out-working* of it. There is a play upon the words of this statement: "faith worked with his works . . ."

"And by works was faith made perfect" — The word "perfect" denotes completion. Faith found its completion in the works it energised. Without those works faith was incomplete. In fact, it lacked energy, was dead!

Supporting references: Gal. 5:6; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 11:17-19; 1 Jhn. 5:4.

VERSE 23

"And the scripture was fulfilled" — The word is *pleroo*, to bring to completion. Faith must be followed by works to accomplish what the Scriptures require.

"Which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" — This is a citation from Gen. 15:6. It is a verse of Scripture that is often pressed into teaching a doctrine that it does not actually proclaim. It is often asserted, or read, as though the Scripture in question is teaching that Abraham's belief, by "imputation", was accounted

to him for righteousness in the absence of any acts of righteousness he performed. In fact, to manifest belief in God is in itself a "work of righteousness". The person who refuses to believe God, doubts His ability to perform what He has promised, or considers Him to be false. That is a sin. The person who "against hope believes in hope" is manifesting a remarkable faith that invariably finds expression in works, for such a faith as that must manifest itself in action. When Paul reasoned that Abraham was justified by faith apart from works, (Rom. 4:3-6, 10-11, 22-24) he had in mind the teaching of the Judaisers who sought justification by meticulously observing the Law's ceremonies, sacrifices, and other requirements of worship at the Tabernacle or Temple. He was not reasoning that Abraham could believe God and ignore the actions God required of him. His belief would have accounted for nothing if he had remained in Ur of the Chaldees! And that is James' point, as he now considers the citation of Scripture. The word "imputed" is rendered "reckoned" in the R.V. Abraham's belief (or faith — for they are cognate words) was reckoned to him "for righteousness". The preposition rendered "for" is *eis* in the Greek. And, according to Bullinger, it denotes action towards an object: "Into, to, unto, with a view to; hence, with regard to a certain event. . . ." The statement, therefore, teaches that Abraham's belief projected him along a course of action that ensured his justification. Would his belief have been sufficient if he had refused to leave Haran, or to offer up Isaac? These and other actions on his part were the works of faith by which he was so justified that the promises were made unconditional by oath (Gen. 22:16). By that means "the scripture (or statement that follows in this verse) was fulfilled" in that it was brought to completion. It was not fulfilled whilst the process was under way.

"And he was called the Friend of God"

— This is cited generally from 2 Chron. 20:7.

Supporting references: Gen. 15:6; Isa. 41:8; Jhn 8:56.

VERSE 24

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" — The verb "justified" in this statement is *dikaioo*, and forms the basis for the noun *dikaosune* (rendered righteousness). Jus-

tification is the proclaiming of a person to be righteous. This will not be done in the absence of any acts of righteousness. Though forgiveness of sins is available in Christ (Rom. 3:23), justification also requires the "righteous acts of saints" as Bro. Thomas observes in commenting upon Rev. 19:8. A person was not proclaimed righteous through mere observance of the ceremonials of the Law, but by his observance of all Yahweh's requirements. The Psalmist made the point in a Messianic Psalm: "Sacrifice and offering Thou did not desire" (Psa. 40:6). But Yahweh *did* desire these, for He appointed them. What, then, did the Psalmist mean? He meant that Yahweh did not desire them as a substitute for personal sacrifice, for the giving of oneself. Sacrifice whether offered under the Law, or in Christ is representative in its significance. It exhibits what the offerer is declaring he will try to manifest. Isaiah (Ch. 58) clearly outlined that truth, exhorting that sacrifice to be effective must be revealed in the worshipper's way of life. The Judaisers made the mistake of imagining that justification was possible by the mere mechanical performance of the ceremonials of the Law, performing "blamelessly" those things it required (Phil. 3:6), without recognising their limitations. Paul condemned that attitude of mind. They were the "works that were done of them to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5). Christ declared of the Pharisees, that they had "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought they to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23). The "works" that James commended were the works of faith; and with his conclusion, Paul is completely at one. Abraham was justified by works of faith, not works of the Law, for at that time, the covenant of Law had not been delivered unto men.

VERSE 25

"Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works" — The second example was a Gentile, at a time when the Mosaic Covenant was in force. There were many in Jericho who believed as she did, for knowledge of Israel's conquests had spread far and wide (see Josh. 2:8-10; 5:1), but she alone acted. Rahab's example shows that both Jew and Gentile can be justified. Yet it was not her belief merely that justified her, but her actions

based on her belief.

“When she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way” — Her belief and confidence (faith) that Jericho would fall before the Israelites despite the strength of the fortress, motivated her to assist the spies in exchange for her life and those of her household. Her belief and faith, therefore, found expression in action, and though a Gentile, from her came both David and Christ (Matt. 1:5).

Supporting references: Josh. 6:17,22-25; Heb. 11:31.

VERSE 26

“For as the body without the spirit is dead” — “Spirit” is *pneumatōs* from a root signifying to *breathe*. The Diaglott renders it as “the body without breath is dead”, and with this the margin of the A.V. agrees.

“So faith without works is dead also” — A person who believes, but in action fails to respond to that belief lives a lie. So, according to James, faith without works, is as good as a corpse. It is faith in action that provides life and vigour.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW FAITH SHOULD GOVERN THE TONGUE

This chapter is a warning against unwise use of the tongue. James commences with the teachers, of whom there were many among the Jews. He instructs that principles are best illustrated when manifested by the ones expressing them. To do otherwise is to reap a greater condemnation. He then shows the disastrous consequences of an unbridled tongue. The tongue is the most active muscle of the body. Yet while it boasts a lot it does very little of itself. James sets forth the incongruity of the tongue proclaiming truth and spitting out invective at the same time. Finally, he shows, that true wisdom and understanding will manifest themselves in speech. Faith will govern the tongue and reveal itself in silence rather than in boasting. He finally contrasts the effects of an unbridled tongue with the heavenly wisdom from above, and summarises by stating that the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace, which is in exact contrast to the troubles and distractions caused by an undisciplined tongue.

A Warning To Teachers — vv. 1-2

Teachers, in using the tongue to educate must discipline it to be effective.

VERSE 1

“My brethren, be not many masters” — The word “masters” should be ren-

dered *teachers* as in the R.V. Earlier, James urged restraint in speaking whilst setting forth the virtue of hearing (James 1:19). Now he warns against the urge to assume the responsible position of a teacher. In doing so, he doubtless had in mind the general attitude of Jews. They enjoyed argumentation. They developed many schools of thought presided over by teachers (cp. Matt. 7:29; Luke 2:46; John 3:10) many of whom spent their time in profitless disputations. Whilst sound teachers are commended (Acts 8:30-31; Rom. 10:14-15; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17), this foolish use of the tongue is Scripturally condemned (Matt. 15:3-9; 22:35-36; 1 Tim. 1:6-7; 3 John 9).

“Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” — James included himself among the teachers, and stressed the grave responsibility resting upon them. It is a Scriptural principle that “to whom much is given of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48). Those who know what should be done have a responsibility to provide an example of action (see 1 Cor. 9:27; 10:12). The Apostles did not use the common formula of many modern speakers: “Don’t do as I do, do as I say!” They declared: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). They recognised the need of putting their preaching into practice. In the absence of such an attempt, it is better to remain silent.

Supporting references: Lev. 10:3; Mal. 2:7,12; John 3:10; Rom. 2:16-24.

VERSE 2

“For in many things we offend all” — In using the personal pronoun, James is speaking of brethren as a class, not of himself as an individual. The statement is better rendered as in the Diaglott: “we all are faulty”. In that regard, see 1 Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Ecc. 7:20; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10. An effective teacher will bear in mind the limitations of flesh and will strive to overcome his own shortcomings whilst endeavouring to encourage others to do likewise. Recognising that he is encompassed with infirmity he is more able to show “compassion on the ignorant, and erring” (Heb. 5:2).

“If any man offend not in word” — To “offend” is to *stumble* as the Greek word signifies. The test of a good teacher is whether he can control his speech. Intemperate or boastful language should be avoided, and the tongue disciplined.

However, the reference here is not to speech as such but to teaching or doctrine (*logos*). The teacher must not stumble at the doctrine he sets before others. To do so is to incur the possibility of adverse judgment (Matt. 5:18). Accordingly, Paul warns against a novice being so elevated (1 Tim. 3:6). See James 1:19,26, and Paul’s excellent example (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

“The same is a perfect man” — The word *teleios* denotes a complete or mature man. The use of the word is seen in 1 Cor. 2:6: “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect”, that is, among those who are spiritually mature and able to accept it. The word occurs again in 1 Cor. 14:20: “Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men”. In this place, the word “men” is the plural of the same Greek word *teleioi*, and is rendered by the Diaglott as *fully mature* (see also Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 2:7-8 etc.). There is a need particularly for instructors, to grow up, to mature spiritually. Paul warned the Hebrew brethren of their lack in that regard. Though they should have developed to the status of teachers, they were still feeding on milk. “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:11-14). That denotes spiritual maturity, and a teacher, to be really effective must elevate himself to that standard and see that his expositions reflect his development. Unfortunately, backwardness in spiritual development, is not uncommon. Paul found it difficult to educate the Corinthian believers in more advanced spiritual matters because they remained “carnal”, dominated by the flesh, and were as “babes in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1). There is, of course, a need for the milk of the word, but the object of such a diet is to “grow thereby” as Peter exhorts (1 Pet. 2:1-2). Both milk and meat are important, and skilful teachers will know when to dispense the one, and when to serve up the other. A teacher should not please himself. He may have uncovered some beautiful, but profound, truth in the Word, and be anxious to share this with others, but he must learn to show restraint, until his audience is sufficiently developed to receive it (see 1 Cor. 3:1-3). The criterion of a skilful teacher is the ability to lead his audience to Christ (John 10:1-5,9), not the display of his

own erudition (cp. Heb. 5:11). It is possible for "the unlearned and unstable to wrest" the words of the best of teachers "unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). The greatest care, therefore, needs to be exercised in the use of the tongue, even in teaching.

"And able also to bridle the whole body" — If skill and maturity are shown in teaching so that the instructor knows when to administer milk, and when to increase the spiritual diet to the meat of the word, he will assist in bridling the "whole body" of the Ecclesia. He thus will exercise a profound effect upon it, guiding it by the sound doctrine he dispenses. The instruction he gives will help to mature its members causing them to "grow up unto perfection". Sound doctrine will help to govern an Ecclesia wisely and direct it along a course of action pleasing unto Yahweh. Many who have learned to control the tongue are far from perfect or mature in spiritual matters. However, James' statement seems to be an appeal to teachers to conduct their office wisely and maturely, manifesting in their expositions, as well as in their lives, the qualities of restraint that they would impress upon their pupils. James' words also can constitute a warning against novices aspiring to positions they cannot effectively fulfil (cp. 1 Tim. 3:6). In his day, as in ours, some who had the gift of a facile tongue, and who aspired to be teachers, had to learn to discipline their speech in accordance with sound doctrine.

Supporting references: Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 13:21.

The Tongue's Power For Evil — vv. 3-6

Having shown the need for the wise use of the tongue in teaching, James now outlines its great power for evil. Sin, in the beginning, was activated by the unwise use of the tongue on the part of the serpent, after which it was denied the power of speech. But the serpent's influence continues perhaps more effectively in regard to the tongue than any other part of the body. It is said that the tongue never grows old. Whereas other muscles of the body gradually wear out, not so the tongue! James shows how that little member of the body can do more harm than any other part.

VERSE 3

"Behold we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we

turn about their whole body" — The R. V. renders "bits" as bridles. The "bit" is the mouthpiece of the horse's bridle and in size is a minor piece of its harness, yet it is sufficient to control the movements of the horse. The horse is used in the Bible as the symbol of proud strength and fleshly power (Job 39:19-25). James' analogy shows how the horse can be controlled by its mouthpiece, or bit, which, in size, is out of proportion to the animal, and is hidden in its mouth. The tongue has a power for good if used wisely.

Supporting references: Psa. 32:9; 39:1.

VERSE 4

"Behold also the ships" — Large ocean-going vessels present another outstanding example. They are vast in size and defy the storms of wind and wave when controlled by the pilot at the helm.

"Which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth" — The helm is tiny in comparison with the vastness of the ship. So a large Ecclesia can be wisely guided by proper, sound spiritual education by its teachers. The R. V. renders "governor" as *steersman*.

VERSE 5

"Even so the tongue is a little member" — The tongue is inconspicuous in the body until it speaks! But as a muscle it works more than any other part of the body, though mostly with disastrous effect! The Hebrew word for "tongue" is *lashon*, from a root signifying to *lick*. The Greek name is *glossa* from whence comes the expression *glossolalia* denoting the *speaking in tongues*, a word not found in the N. T. In the poetic and prophetic books of the Old Testament, the tongue is in particular described as the organ of sinful man, and it is significant that it was the serpent's use of the tongue that led to sin originally. No member of the body works harder than the tongue, but it generally boasts of what it leaves other parts of the body to do! Though the tongue can be used effectively in God's service it is generally described as the tool of falsehood and evil, of arrogance and godlessness (Job 15:5; Psa. 52:4; Prov. 6:17; Isa. 3:8; Jer. 9:8). Sins of the tongue are described in their effect as a razor (Psa. 52:2), as a sword or arrows (Psa. 57:4), as a poisonous snake (Psa. 140:3), causing disaster and destruction, under-

mining a man's relationships with God and his neighbour. The tongue, however, can lead to the way of life, and therefore Scripture describes "death and life as being in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21; Matt. 12:36). The admonitions to keep one's tongue from evil (Psa. 15:3; 34:13), to intercede for justice and truth (Psa. 35:28; 37:30; Prov. 15:4), and with it to praise Yahweh (Psa. 51:15; 126:2) are constant and urgent. The tongue, as the organ of speech, can reveal man's inner self. In that regard, the outworking of sin in the flesh is often revealed through the tongue (James 1:26; 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:10; 1 John 3:18); but just as the Lord was able to control even the tongue through the influence of the Father (Psa. 139:4; John 7:46; 12:49) so the tongue, through His help, can be used effectively for good in the preaching of the Word and in ministering to the needs and comfort of others (Rom. 10:10).

"And boasteth great things" — The expression is from the Greek *megalaucheo* from *megala*, "great things" and *aucheo*, "to lift up the neck". Therefore it suggests haughty speech which stirs up strife. The tongue boasts constantly, but leaves it to other members to carry out its boast. It says, "I will read the Bible daily," but it is the work of the eyes to read and the mind to absorb. It promises, "I will come and see you tomorrow", but it is the labour of the feet that will convey you there. It says, "I will lift up that heavy object" but the arms are the part of the body that has to fulfil the boast! In performing work of which the tongue boasts, eyes, mind, limbs become tired and in need of rest, but not so the tongue! It continues to boast!

"Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" — The margin renders "matter" as *wood*, or *forest*. Many years are occupied in bringing a forest to maturity; but when developed to that state, it is beautiful in its majesty. Yet that glorious creation of God can be reduced to a hideous skeleton of burnt trunks and branches by a little spark igniting the undergrowth, and reducing the labours of years to a smoking ruin. The same tragedy can result from the unwise use of the tongue. A noble work, such as the establishment of an Ecclesia, that has taken years to bring to a state of maturity, can be ruined in a brief moment of time, by the stupid, boastful, spiteful, thoughtless use of the tongue.

Supporting references: Psa. 34:13; Prov. 13:3; Matt. 12:37; 1 Pet. 3:10.

VERSE 6

"And the tongue is a fire" — See Prov. 26:20-21. James is referring to the destructive influence of the tongue when permitted to engage in undisciplined speech. Its explosive effect is illustrated in the history of Israel. The unwise use of the tongue, more than anything else, delayed progress to the Promised Land (Exod. 14:11; 15:24; 16:2,3,7,8; 17:2-3; Num. 11:1-6; 14:1-4; 16:13,14,41; 17:12; 21:5; Psa. 78:19). But the tongue can also be a useful member of the body expounding the life-giving words of truth. See Rom. 10:15.

"A world of iniquity" — The word "iniquity" is *adikia* made up of a negative *a*, and *dike*, "right;" hence denoting that which is not right. The tongue in its boastfulness often gives expression to that which is not right, and therefore its words should not be taken on trust, particularly when used as described in this chapter. A person's words express his own beliefs, or his own jaundiced viewpoint of a matter, so that his tongue gabbles on unrestrainedly in its allegations and insinuations. There is need to discount much of what a boastful tongue says.

"So is the tongue among our members" — James' comment can be applied to Ecclesial members and to the members of our physical bodies.

"That it defileth the whole body" — The word "defileth" is from the Greek *spiloo*, "to stain or spot". How often an ungoverned tongue will blemish an otherwise excellent character! Note the effect of the unwise use of the tongue in Num. 12:1; Psa. 106:32-33. An undisciplined tongue in Ecclesial circles can become a source of disruption and stain an ecclesia, by creating rumours that can tear down characters, destroy useful labours, and cause doubts and dismay throughout the whole body. The stupid thoughtless use of the tongue can undermine the effective work of an Ecclesia, disastrously dividing and weakening it.

"And setteth on fire the course of nature" — The margin gives the word "course" as *wheel*, and thereby relates the expression to the circle of life. "Nature" is from the Greek *genesis*, rendered generation in Matt. 1:1. The reference, therefore, is to the circle of a man's existence.

The unwise use of the tongue can cause an angry situation to arise that affects the whole circle of a person's life, undermining his influence for good. Unless the tongue is kept in check it can, and frequently is, used to express evil surmising, misrepresentations, falsehoods, calumnies, jealousies, envyings, wrath, and malice: which, in the analogy used by James are as the flames of devouring tongues of fire reaching forth from the unrestrained tongue of the ungodly.

"And it is set on fire of hell" — The word "hell" is *gehenna*, which literally related to the valley outside of Jerusalem where the refuse of the city was burnt. It was the rubbish destructor of the city, and is used figuratively in the N.T. for condemnation at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Matt. 5:22; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5). The fires lit by the unrestrained use of the tongue, in the manner described by James, can create such ungodliness as will result in condemnation at the Judgment Seat. Christ warned: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37). What care should be exercised to discipline the use of the tongue! How that busy little member of the body should be restrained!

Supporting references: Gen. 3:3-5; Lev. 24:11; Num. 31:16; Psa. 64:3; 140:3; Prov. 6:14; 15:1; 16:27; Rom. 3:13-14; 16:17-18; Tit. 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:1-2; 3 John 10; Jude 8.

Its Untameable Nature — vv. 7-8

Man's ability to tame all species of lower creation is evident in any circus, whilst his inability to control the tongue is apparent on all sides. It is not tamed by any cunning, persuasion, or influence of man.

VERSE 7

"For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind" — The statement "every kind of beasts" is rendered as every *nature* of beasts by the R.V., whilst the last phrase, "hath been tamed of mankind" is, as the margin, "by the nature of man". In man's ability to tame specimens of the lower creation he demonstrates his superiority over them (cp. Gen. 9:2). Even the most ferocious, dangerous and evil of beasts can be brought into subjection. Man's superiority is that of the mind (cp. Gen. 1:26),

though if he does not bring that into conformity with God's will he becomes merely brutish.

VERSE 8

"But the tongue can no man tame" — Man has been given dominion over the lower creation (Gen. 1:26), but frequently demonstrates his lack of ability to be able to control this small part of his own body. The word "man" is rendered as *nature of man* in the margin. Man's nature is evil, and normally this unruly member of his body gives expression to it. To control the tongue, to turn it into an instrument of good instead of evil (see Rom. 6:13), needs the influence of the Word. Faith alone is able to accomplish it. In Christ man becomes a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

"It is an unruly evil" — The word *akataschetos* signifies that which cannot be restrained, and therefore is not subject to law. But other readings have *akatas-tatos* which signifies "unsettled, unstable, disorderly, restless", and the R.V. renders it in that way, as *restless*. The tongue is a very restless member of the body. It is unruly and speaks out of its turn. Because it is so often governed by emotion instead of intellect, it tends to babble on without restraint. Before the higher intellect has properly thought out the consequences of an utterance, it slips out from the un-governed tongue. It is restless, always wanting to be vocal.

"Full of deadly poison" — In the beginning, the nature of man was serpentised through the first human pair heeding the speech of the serpent, and partaking of the forbidden tree. Adam and Eve as sinners made subject to death constituted the word of the serpent made flesh. Man became sin-prone and doomed to death. The ability to converse was taken from the serpent, but, in a figurative sense, found expression in man. See Psa. 140:2-3; Ecc. 10:11. As the serpent spoke according to the flesh and not in conformity with the revelation of God, or the restrictions of divine law so also does a "brutish" man, *i.e.* a man of the flesh (Psa. 92:6; Jer. 10:14).

The point James is stressing is that man, of himself, is incapable of governing the tongue; he needs the help of God to do that. When that influence is effectively brought to bear upon an individual, the tongue can become a channel of good. Faith can discipline that little member so

that it can become a source of help to others. Here is some of the teaching of the Bible concerning the tongue.

It is likened to a sword because of its cutting criticism (Psa. 57:4; 64:3).

The tongue of the ungodly is unrestrained in its activity (Psa. 73:9).

It is described as a bow shooting its arrows to destroy the reputation of others (Jer. 9:3).

Tongues have various descriptions: the lying tongue (Psa. 109:2; Prov. 6:17); the false tongue (Psa. 120:3); the sharp tongue (Psa. 140:3); the froward tongue (Prov. 10:31); the ungodly tongue (Prov. 17:4); the perverse tongue (Prov. 17:20); the back-biting tongue (Prov. 25:23).

It is also described as the soft tongue (Prov. 25:15); the wholesome tongue (Prov. 15:4); the instrument of the ready writer making good impressions on the heart (Psa. 45:1); speaking precious words of redemption (Prov. 10:20); becoming as a tree of life because of its healing qualities (Prov. 15:4). It can be a fire destroying good (James 3:6), or a fire destroying evil (Isa. 30:27).

Expressing man's nature, the tongue is an ungoverned evil; subject to the restrictions of God's law, it becomes a means of help, comfort, encouragement and good to others.

Supporting references: Psa. 55:21; 58:4; 59:7; Rom. 3:13.

The Tongue's Inconsistency — vv. 9-12

Because of its ungovernable nature the tongue is noted for its inconsistency. Even those who seek God's help find it extremely difficult to control the tongue. Unless they are constantly on their guard against its restlessness, they are found using that little, active, vocal member in the most contradictory manner: words that help and words that hinder.

VERSE 9

"Therewith bless we God, even the Father" — There is usually little difficulty in raising our voices in praises to God.

"And therewith curse we men" — The word "curse" is *kataraoimai*, and signifies "to pray against, to wish evil". The tongue is such a monster of inconsistency, that it is possible to use it to bless God and curse His sons. Paul warns against doing so in Rom. 12:14. Consistent with his exhortation, Christ urges that before

we give ourselves to religious exercises seeking reconciliation with God, we should attempt to do so with our brethren (Matt. 5:23-24).

"Which are made after the similitude of God" — The Greek word *homoiosis* signifies "likeness" or "image". The word is found in the Septuagint in Gen. 1:26 from whence James has drawn his observation. The statement there, however, has regard to the Elohim, and from this it has been argued that whilst man is in the image of the Elohim, he is not in the image of God the Father. But in his citation, James takes the matter further, beyond the Elohim, to the Father. And it would appear, that his very use of the title *God the Father* is to stress the point he now makes. It is a law of nature, established by the Creator Himself, that every species is "after its kind". In that regard, "like begets like". Of Christ it is written that he is "the express image of God's person" (Heb. 1:3), and therefore, the statement of the Declaration, that "the Deity dwells corporeally in the heavens", is true. The very title of *Son of God* implies the corporeality of God on the basis of His own established laws of nature. The statement everything "after its kind" (Gen. 1:24) requires that a father begets a son in "his own image and likeness" (Gen. 5:3).

Supporting references: Ecc. 7:22; Matt. 5:44; Rom. 3:14.

VERSE 10

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing" — Such a fact is incongruous; yet it is common.

"My brethren, these things ought not so to be" — This rebuke is made more powerful by its restraint in expression (see Prov. 18:21; Matt. 12:36-37). James appeals rather than condemns.

Supporting references: Psa. 50:16-20; Jer. 7:4-10; Mic. 3:11; Rom. 12:14; 1 Pet. 3:9.

VERSE 11

"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" — The analogy is apt, because believers are called upon to be as fountains. See John 4:14; 7:38-39. Therefore restraint should be exercised in speech. See also similar words by Christ — Luke 6:43-45.

VERSE 12

"Can the fig tree, my brethren bear

olive berries? either a vine, figs?" — The fig, olive and vine are symbols of Israel, and therefore also of the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). The fruit of each is appropriate to the particular tree; but as it is reasonable to expect figs from a fig tree, olives from an olive tree and so forth, so it is right to expect a believer in Christ to act as his Lord would have him act.

"So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" — The reference seems to be to the sea, and some texts so give it. It has been rendered: "Neither can the sea produce fresh water." This being incontestably true, and accepting the proposition that human nature cannot tame the tongue (v. 7), other means must be sought to do so.

Faith Can Help Tame The Tongue — vv. 13-18

Faith can assist in taming the tongue. It can do so in both negative and positive ways. The first by the virtue of silence (vv. 13-16); the second by the voice of wisdom (vv. 17-18).

The Virtue of Silence — vv. 13-16

VERSE 13

"Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you?" — A wise man in the context of this chapter is one who has learned to bridle the tongue, and who, by virtue of that fact, is properly qualified to teach (v. 1). "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of his wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is his understanding" (cp. Prov. 9:10). He will manifest a fear of offending Yahweh, and an understanding of what is required to please Him. This is acquired wisdom (Prov. 3:13; 4:5,7). The verb "endued" is from the Greek *epistemon*, and signifies to be skilled in knowledge by setting the mind upon it. The R.V. renders it as *understanding*.

"Let him show out of a good conversation" — The word "conversation" is *anastrophe* in the Greek, and signifies conduct or behaviour as it is rendered in 1 Tim. 3:15. "Good behaviour" is manifested by the works of faith concerning which James has already commented. The expression is constantly used by Peter. See 1 Pet. 1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1,2,16; 2 Pet. 2:7; 3:11. See also Phil. 1:27; 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb. 13:5. A consideration of those passages will show the forms of behaviour to which believers should con-

form. Christ's discourse on the mount (Matthew 5-7) proclaimed that the call to Godliness is a call to the practical manifestation of a way of life. It is summed up in the statement: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works (your change of character), and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

"His works with meekness of wisdom" — The reference is to works of faith (James 2:18). "Meekness of wisdom" suggests a wise and prudent gentleness in life, in contrast to noisy, boastful arrogance. The truly wise person is always characterised by a calm spirit, mild and placid manner, and a gentle, though firm, enunciation of truth. The noisy, dramatic disclaimer may captivate by his eloquence, but: "The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that rules among fools" (Ecc. 9:17; See also Isa. 30:15; 32:17). James has already extolled the virtues of meekness (James 1:21), whilst to teach in wisdom is commended throughout Scripture (see Prov. 4:11; 8:8,13; 11:2; Matt. 5:5; 11:29). Meekness demands submissiveness to the dictates of wisdom; it makes demands that run counter to the deepest instincts of self-love and self-assertiveness (see Ps. 25:9; 149:4; Luke 22:26-27). Wisdom blended with meekness leads to actions that make for peace, and are among the greatest virtues in one aspiring or appointed to be a teacher (James 3:1).

Supporting references: Ps. 107:43; Jer. 9:12,23-24; Matt. 7:24.

VERSE 14

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts" — This is possible even in the case of teachers of the Word. It is not unknown for them to exhibit the spirit of ambition and contention. Indeed Jewish leaders of thought were prominent in that regard. There were "bitter envying and strife" among them, and such things could adversely influence Jewish believers dwelling in such an environment. No doubt, some Jews who had embraced Christ exhibited the same characteristics (see Acts 15:1-2). The word "strife" is from the Greek *erithia*, and denotes striving for ambition, self-seeking, and rivalry. Would-be teachers who manifest such a characteristic are capable of leading factions, and using the tongue to poison the reputations of their rivals in-

stead of speaking to the edification of the Truth. James evidently knew of a conflict of personalities which was leading some to glory in contention.

"Glorify not" — Do not glory in such things as factions and personality cults, nor in berating an opposing school of thought by mere invective.

"And lie not against the truth" — To glory in such contentions or in such factions is to lie against the principles of the Truth; for the Truth calls believers to peace and unity (John 14:27; Phil. 4:6-8). The word "lie" is *pseudo*, to deceive by lies. Opposing schools of thought that indulged in such tactics, actually destroyed the very foundation of truth they were claiming to strengthen and uphold (cp. 1 Cor. 14:33).

Supporting references: Prov. 14:30; 27:4; Acts 7:9; 13:45; Rom. 1:29; 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; 13:4; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:15,21,26; Phil. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:4; Tit. 3:3.

VERSE 15

"This wisdom descendeth not from above" — The wisdom here referred to is the wisdom of the flesh (see 1 Cor. 3:3). A fleshly wisdom will do anything to gain the ascendancy over another. It will use divine principles and expositions in such a way as to contribute to self-conceit, asserting their opinions with over-heated zeal. There is a form of learning, or skill in debate, an appearance of logic, and a use of Scripture that can fall into the category of this so-called wisdom.

"But is earthly" — It is from beneath (cp. 1 Cor. 15:43), and not of God (see James 1:17).

"Sensual" — The emanation of the flesh, governed by its emotions (Rom. 7:5), and not properly disciplined by the divine wisdom.

"Devilish" — The word signifies *demon-like*. See the notes on demons in James 2:19. The effects of a deranged mind were attributed to the influence of demons, much the same as the word *lunatic* implies the influence of the moon, or the Greek word *seleniazomai* means to be moon struck (from *selene*, the moon). A demon-like wisdom is irrational, the product of a sick mind, and not the result of sober words of truth. This form of wisdom has its outworking in confusion and unnecessary contention. In James' day it was in evidence among the Jewish people, constituting a need to warn Jew-

ish believers against being influenced thereby (see Acts 15:1-2). Wrangling on abstract religious themes can sound like the insane raving of lunatics (Gal. 5:20-21; 1 Cor. 14:23). Ecclesial disputes can take that form when they move out of the control of the Word. There are such things as "great swelling words of vanity" that "allure through the lusts of the flesh" (2 Pet. 2:18). They relate to the "wisdom that is from beneath". There is a wisdom attractive to the flesh that is not of God.

Supporting references: Jer. 4:22; Rom. 1:22; 1 Cor. 1:19,20,27; 2:6-7; 3:19; 2 Cor. 1:12; Phil. 3:19.

VERSE 16

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" — Notice the margin alternative to "confusion": *tumult or unquietness*. The evil work that results from such is contrasted with the works of faith, exhibited with the meekness of wisdom, expressed in v. 13. Where such an atmosphere exists everything is unsettled and agitated. There is no mutual confidence; no unity of plan or purpose; no co-operation in promoting a common project; but mutual suspicion and antagonism to the hindering of every good work.

Supporting references: 1 Cor. 3:3; 14:33; Gal. 5:19-20.

How Faith Helps To Tame The Tongue — vv. 17-18

Whereas the effect of unbridled speech is compared to that of fire, tempest, strife and malice, the wisdom from above will manifest itself in calmness, serenity and love. These fruits of faith will influence speech itself.

VERSE 17

"But the wisdom that is from above" — This wisdom comprises "sober words of truth". It is from above, because it is from God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift" (James 1:15). The new life in Christ is begotten by the Word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23) which came from above (Heb. 1:1-2). Christ told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born from above (see margin), he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). One truly begotten from above, will develop divine qualities in accordance with the Truth he has espoused. He shall begin to "shew forth the virtues of Him who hath called him

out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Thus God will be manifest in the flesh. This wisdom is higher than mere human sagacity, for it will seek Yahweh's viewpoint in all things. It does not depend upon natural shrewdness but upon faith in God (See 1 Cor. 2:5-8). The wisdom of the flesh caused the Jews to reject Christ (John 11:49-50); the wisdom of God used that sin to lay the foundation of salvation for all who will develop the fruits of faith (Acts 2:23-27).

"Is first pure" — James sets forth steps of development arising from the wisdom of God. The word *hagnos*, "pure" signifies unadulterated. The Truth is completely pure in itself, and purifying in its influence. This is the first effect of embracing the true, heavenly wisdom. See Psal. 19:7-14; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 5:8; John 15:3; 17:17.

The heavenly wisdom will open out a new perspective on life, a new mode of thinking and feeling. On this, Bro. Thomas writes in *Elpis Israel* p. 141:

"This new mode of thinking and feeling created in a true believer by the divine law and testimony, is variously designated in scripture. It is styled 'a clean heart and a right spirit' (Psalm 51:10) 'a new spirit' and 'a heart of flesh' (Ezek. 11:19); the 'inward man' (2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 7:22); 'new creature' (2 Cor. 5:17); 'the new man created in righteousness and true holiness'; and 'renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him' (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); the 'hidden man of the heart' (1 Pet. 3:4) and so forth. This new and hidden man is manifested in the life, which is virtuous as becomes the gospel. He delights in the law of the Lord, and speaks often of His testimonies. He denies himself of all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and walks soberly, righteously and godly in the world. His hope is the glorious manifestation of Jesus Christ, with the crown of righteousness, even glory, honour, and immortality, promised to all who look for him, and 'love his appearing', and desire his kingdom (Titus 2:11-14; 2 Tim. 4:1,8; Heb. 9:28). Nevertheless, the law of sin, through the weakness of the flesh, fails not to remind him of imperfection. Being delivered from the fear of death, he looks forward to it as to the period of his change, knowing that, when he falls asleep in the dust, he will afterwards be delivered from the principle of evil by a resurrection to incorruptibility and un-

alloyed existence in the Paradise of God".

"Then peaceable" — The word *eirenikos*, like its Hebrew equivalent *shalom*, is from a root signifying to be at one, and therefore describes a state of harmonious relationship between two parties. It implies a condition of fellowship, upon a common sharing of the Truth. Such a state is an impossibility where the Truth is not held in its purity, so that it is shown as the outgrowth of such. Cp. Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14.

"Gentle" — The word suggests a state of forbearance even under trial. As a noun it appears in Phil. 4:5 rendered as "moderation", and is there described as the normal characteristic of a Christ-like life: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand". Recognising that the Lord is at hand to help at all times, his people can afford to be gentle. Gentleness is the opposite to self-seeking, contentiousness. In 1 Tim. 3:3 it is translated "patient" and is shown in contrast to ungodly aggressiveness; in Tit. 3:2 it is linked with meekness; as the fruits of true understanding and peace. Cp. 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9; 1 Thess. 2:7; 2 Tim. 2:24.

"Easy to be intreated" — The Greek word is *eupetithes* and denotes a readiness to obey. A person who has developed the quality of gentleness is usually ready to obey. Indeed the Greek word rendered gentle includes the idea of giving reasoned consideration to the facts of a case (see Vine). In the listing of these virtues James leads us ever upwards, building one on the other.

"Full of mercy" — The word *eleos* denotes the manifestation of pity, or compassion rather than the general idea of mercy in the sense of forgiving. Pity is a feeling for others in their need, and the extension of help in order to assist. Pity, or compassion is a divine characteristic, for God is "rich in mercy" (*eleos* — Eph. 2:4). Recognising the helplessness of humanity to obtain salvation by human efforts, in His compassion He extended Himself to provide the means to that end (Tit. 3:5). As believers enjoy the divine mercy extended to them, they should become channels of the same compassion to others (Matt. 9:13; 12:7; 23:23; Luke 10:37; James 2:13).

"And good fruits" — Paul to the Galatians (Ch. 5:22) lists the fruits of the

spirit, here described as "good fruits". He contrasts them with the "works of the flesh". Fruit implies cultivation; works of the flesh manifest themselves naturally like weeds. There needs to be a conscious effort to cultivate the "good fruits of the spirit". Cp. Rom. 15:14; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:10.

"Without partiality" — See notes Ch. 2:4. Cp. 1 Tim. 5:21.

"And without hypocrisy" — Hypocrisy is play-acting: assuming a role that does not conform to reality. Many of the Pharisees feigned an appearance of piety that misrepresented their true state. It was an outward show that camouflaged their real character. The Greek word rendered "hypocrisy" primarily denotes a reply, from a root signifying to answer. From thence it came to signify play-acting, as the actors spoke to one another. A hypocrite is a talker, whose words belie his actions. "The words of his mouth are smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Psa. 55:21). "They say and do not," declared the Lord of the hypocrites of his day (Matt. 23:3). "Outwardly they appear righteous unto men, but within they are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (v. 28). "Their mouth speaketh great swelling words," declared Jude (v. 16), "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." Such hypocrites held the truth in pretence, and like actors on a stage, assumed a position that did not conform to fact, blinding their dupes by so doing. "But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Cp. Isa. 32:6; Luke 12:1-2; Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:1; 1 John 3:18.

VERSE 18

"And the fruit of righteousness" — The fruit of righteousness is faith in action revealed in Godly character (James 2:21). As noted above, fruit must be cultivated to be of the best. It is produced by the inherent energy of a living organism developed by the rain from heaven, and the genial warmth of the Sun (cp. James 1:17; 5:7,18). The word is the seed (1 Peter 1:23), but it must be fructified by the water of life (John 4:13-14), and ripened by the action of the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:1-2). Then, and then only, will the fruits of the spirit develop.

"Is sown in peace of them that make peace" — The seed from whence the fruit of righteousness is developed, is found in the things that make for peace. The word implies fellowship and communion with one another, and with Yahweh. See Matt. 5:9; Mark 9:50; Acts 10:36; Rom. 12:18; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:13. The fruits of righteousness are sown in peace: in that oneness of mind that is established by "the Gospel of peace" (Acts 10:36). Christ came "preaching peace". He told his disciples that he would give them peace (John 14:27). As noted above, the word is from a root signifying to be at one, and therefore is expressive of the unity of fellowship and communion that the Truth creates between those who mutually embrace it, and with the Father and the Son. From that communion will come the fruit of righteousness. A person who seeks peace and pursues it (Psa. 34:14) sows righteousness. In due time he shall reap his harvest (Gal. 6:8).

Supporting references: Prov. 11:18,30; Isa. 32:16-17; Hos. 10:12; Matt. 5:9; John 4:36; Phil. 1:11; Heb. 12:11.

CHAPTER FOUR

FAITH AS A PURIFIER OF CHARACTER

James refers to failures of a most serious nature, and warns of the consequence of such. He describes wars and fightings as forged by lust and fired by envy. These evils were governing even their prayers, rendering them power-

less. The friendship brethren were displaying towards the world, brought them into a state of enmity with God (vv. 1-4). He exhorts his readers to rise above such things, and urges them to repentance (vv. 5-10). He reminds them of the Lawgiver and Judge who can save or destroy, and directs them to a more faithful outlook by calling to their minds the divine providence in life. In the light of such he counsels them to act according to the wisdom of God, limiting all activity to the will of the Lord.

The Failure: Wars and Fightings — vv. 1-5

Evil passions are condemned as the source of contention and violence, the cause of unanswered prayer, and the development of a friendship that invariably places believers in a state of enmity with God.

VERSE 1

“From whence come wars and fightings among you?” — James commences this chapter abruptly thus emphasising the gross evil of the condition he describes. It comprises a vast contrast to the previous verse, and this, together with the starkness of his words, emphasises that his readers had not developed the “fruit of righteousness” which is “sown in peace of them that make peace” to which he had just referred. Instead of being united in peace, a state of hostility was being generated, demonstrating that the power of faith had not as yet transformed them. This, possibly, was due, in part, to their environment. The Jews were in a state of growing restlessness at the time. Many insurrections were made against the Romans under the pretence of defending their religion and preserving their way of life. Among the Jews themselves were many factions who viewed each other with the greatest hostility, and were not above resorting to violence. And evidently some of this rubbed off on to believers, so that a similar spirit was manifested by them. James’ words, therefore, can provide a salutary reminder today of what is expected of believers in an age of hostility and violence. The tendency is for that attitude to be limited in measure in all walks of life, so that the submissiveness demanded of Christ’s followers is sometimes overlooked.

“Wars” and “fightings” represent the noun and verb of the same word *polemeo*

which we meet in English as *polemics*. In English it denotes a state of hostility manifested by words as well as by actions. When we speak of *polemics*, however, it is generally in the sense of bitter argumentation aimed to destroy an opponent. Such an attitude is not unknown among Ecclesias today. So the noun represents the state of hostility, and the verb the participation of individuals therein. Doubtless James uses the term hyperbolically as expressing verbal fighting and private quarrels, but his expressions reveal how Yahweh views such mutual hostility among the members of His family. The greatest care needs to be exercised that contention is not permitted to develop an environment of bitter hostility and unreasoning hatred. There is need to “contend earnestly for the faith” as Jude declares, but the greatest effort must be made to keep such things in proper perspective. In defending the faith, one is fighting for God and not for self, and the conduct of such warfare must be in the manner He would approve.

That was not the case with those to whom James wrote, for, as he proceeds to show, their motivation was not that of faith, but its very antithesis: fleshly lusts. This divided them, so that their “fightings” were not against error, but against one another. Factions had developed by rival teachers seeking a following. In the previous chapter (Ch. 3:1) James had rebuked them. Their mutual and bitter hostility set a bad example for their followers who imitated their ways. Paul, later, sounded a warning against such teachers and leaders (Tit. 1:9-11), and John describes the attitude adopted against him by one named Diotrophes (3 John 9-10).

“Come they not hence, even of your lusts” — As Jude exhorts, there sometimes arises the need “to contend

earnestly for the faith", and this can create a state of hostility. But faith, not personal prestige, must be the motivation of such contention, and the weapons to be used are spiritual and not carnal (2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:10-18). But the "fightings" referred to by James came of "their own lusts". They resulted from fleshly desires and ambitions. The Greek word translated "lust" in this place is not the normal one used for this word. It is *hedonon*, "pleasures". It expresses the gratification of natural or sinful desires, and finds a place in the English language as *hedonism*. This is the theory, or doctrine, that teaches the attainment of fleshly pleasure as the greatest good. Hedonism manifests itself in the complete abandonment of any restraint in order to experience fleshly gratification or pleasure. Among those to whom James wrote were some who wanted to please themselves in that way, and were impatient of any restraint. Others followed their evil example so that a spirit of competition had developed in the pursuit of pleasure and possessions.

"That war in your members?" — The state of evil that had developed gave no satisfaction. Those who indulged themselves knew inwardly that their attitude was wrong. Yet they had become so dominated by desire that they found it difficult to turn from their pleasures. They were afflicted within as conscience warred with desire. They knew the will of God, but had become so addicted to self-gratification and self-righteousness as to create habits of fleshly pleasure they found difficult to break. Paul wrote: "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23). He struggled against this law of the flesh, and did so successfully through faith in Christ (Rom. 7:23-25). But those to whom James wrote were permitting sin to gain the ascendancy, and, in consequence, a general state of antagonism and wickedness under the cloak of a pseudo-Christianity had developed. Brother competed with brother as each sought to outdo the other in hedonism, whilst setting aside the requirements of Christ.

In such an environment, it was impossible for the fruits of righteousness to develop (James 3:18; Luke 8:14). Righteousness requires self-sacrifice in order that it might be manifested (James

1:23), and hedonism is the very opposite to that. It brought them "into captivity to the law of sin in their members" (Rom. 7:23). It so fed the carnal mind, which is not subject to God as to bring them into enmity with each other and with God (Rom. 8:5-7). How much more satisfying and spiritually elevating was the attitude of Paul who declared: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11; See also Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5). Let Paul's example be followed and there will be greater opportunity for faith to succeed.

Supporting references: 1 Tim. 6:3-6; 1 Pet. 2:11; 4:2-3; 2 Pet. 2:18-19; Jude 16-18.

VERSE 2

"Ye lust and have not" — Here the word lust is *epithumeite*. It denotes a strong desire for something not possessed. This form of lust is developed through the doctrine of hedonism which advocates complete self-indulgence whilst proclaiming the evil of self-denial. Such an attitude is a latter-day characteristic, for Paul predicted that men would be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2-4). The danger is that believers, living in such an environment, might be influenced by it. The doctrine is very seductive and insidious. Press advertisements are charged with it. They attempt to create in the minds of readers, desire for something not possessed. In a materialistic, hedonistic age, "success" is measured in terms of personal possessions or of fleshly indulgence, rather than in the attainment of truth or the manifestation of spiritual standards. The philosophy of hedonism is diametrically opposed to the teaching of Christ: "Life consisteth not in the abundance of things possessed" (Luke 12:15). Again: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithall shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33). The "doomed fool" of Luke 12:16-21 acted contrary to this. He set about establishing his own security, of pulling down his barns and building greater, and succeeded, but only at the very moment of death! And the Lord added the comment: "Then whose

shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Faith is necessary to recognise the real purpose of life, to realise how temporary and limited are present things, and how permanent and glorious are those of the Truth's future. It makes a reality of hope. It has "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

Those to whom James wrote not only lusted for things that they did not possess, but, foolishly, for things that were beyond their reach. They forgot the great joy, benefit, and incredible riches, to be discovered in Christ. They ignored the example of Christ who "though he was rich, yet for their sakes became poor, that they through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). They failed to recognise the spiritual riches that faith can reveal, enabling a poor man to attain unto extraordinary wealth (2 Cor. 6:10). Instead of contentment, there was a feeling of dissatisfaction felt by those to whom James wrote. They envied others because they wanted the things that they had but did not have the means to obtain. The answer to that restless spirit (so common today) is the calming spirit of faith manifested in contentment. Notice that many of the men and women of faith, commended in Hebrews 11, had little of this world's goods (vv. 36-37), but of them it is declared: "the world was not worthy" (v. 38).

"Ye kill" — The Greek word *phouneute* denotes to murder. The expression, common to many throughout this chapter, is a figure of speech; an hyperbole. An hyperbole is an obviously exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally. The killing was not done by plunging a knife into the heart of another, but by manifesting the spirit of hatred towards him. John warns that "he that hateth his brother is a murderer" and has no hope of eternal life (1 John 3:5). See also 1 John 3:9,11; 4:20). Such a one will kill the reputation of his brother, even though he might, hypocritically, greet him with a handshake and a smile! Envy and hatred go hand in hand. The envious person intensely desires what others possess, but realising it is beyond his grasp develops a jealous dislike for those who have what he cannot obtain! It is a common, though unreasonable, failing. There is a tendency to despise and derate wealthier brethren as the Satan

did Job (Job 1:9-11). In that case envy soon turns to a murderous hatred.

"And desire to have and cannot obtain" — The verb "desire" is not strong enough for the original word which is *zelouete*, "are zealous". They strongly coveted what others had but they could not obtain, and this fired their zeal to acquire their wants. They soon mistook their "wants" for their "needs".

"Ye fight and war" — The RSV renders this: "So ye fight and war". Their zeal to "have" was such that they were driven by an insane desire to obtain their "wants". They failed to realise that with use, these temporary things soon wear out whilst the resultant restless attitude blinds one to the value of things eternal. Ruthlessly they set about gratifying their lusts, even at the expense of others. They envied and hated those wealthier in material possessions, and were prepared to fight and war (i.e. keep on fighting) to obtain what others had but which they did not possess. They became a ruthless, quarrelling community striving and fighting for unimportant things.

"Yet ye have not, because ye ask not" — They became frustrated by their failures. Their hopes were for present success, and in the absence of it they were "of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). The Truth ruined them for this age, and their deep-seated lusts ruined them for that which is to come. They were like the Jews of Haggai's time who strove for personal advantage, but failed to realise that blessings, both now and in the future are dependent upon performing the will of God (Cp. Hag. 1:5-11).

Those to whom James wrote did not obtain the very blessings they could have received: peace with God (John 14:27), contentment of mind (Heb. 13:5), the joy of anticipating future glory (2 Cor. 4:13-18), because they failed to ask for or seek those things. They did engage in prayer, but not in the correct manner, nor with the proper motive. See James 1:7; 5:16; Isa. 59:1-2.

Supporting references: Prov. 1:19; Ecc. 4:8; 1 Tim. 6:9-10.

VERSE 3

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" — This describes a further failure on the part of Jewish converts: that of selfish prayer; prayer that

demands of God things that He is not prepared to grant. They asked "amiss". The word is *kakos*, and signifies "evil". They asked with evil intent. They did not despise the power of God to grant requests, but they misjudged His character. Prayer to them became an act of self-indulgence, seeking personal wants only. They viewed prayer as a convenient short-cut to satisfying their fleshly desires and pleasures. Prayer must be according to the will of Christ (1 John 5:14). How can we determine his will in any matter? Through the teaching of the Word. This will help to make prayer powerful. Paul wrote: "Through him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit (the Word) unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). That means that the petitioner, the spirit-word, and the Mediator in heaven all unite to present the prayer. The believer desires to express himself in prayer, the Word instructs how it can best be done, and Christ, as mediator, endorses and presents it. Such a prayer will be both powerful and acceptable, for it will be according to his will. The spirit-word can filter prayer, can teach pray-ers for what they should make request. Paul recognised the limitations of the flesh in the matter of prayer. He wrote: "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26). In the Greek the definite article is given: "We know not *the* what we should ask for", that is, the particular thing for which we should be praying. But he continued, "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us . . ." The Spirit-word will teach us for what we should pray. It will reveal to us our deficiencies, teach us the will of the Father, bring to mind that which is desirable in life, and so help to make prayer powerful. See *Making Prayer Powerful*.

Those to whom James wrote were not seeking the will of the Father, but their own pleasures. They wanted to recruit God in their service of self-seeking enjoyment. In their prayers they asked "amiss". They should have studied the Lord's prayer, for that pattern prayer sets out the essential things for which we should pray. It is not self-centred; but God-centred. It elevates Him in the heavens, not drags Him down to the level of earthly desires as did the prayer of those to whom James wrote. And though the picture that James draws is so frightful that one shudders to contemplate a community worshipping in that way, it is easy

to delude oneself and use prayer merely for selfish interests.

VERSE 4

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses" — And now a further mark of declension: unfaithful practices. The best texts, we are told, exclude the reference to *adulterers* and leaves only the feminine form of the word. Why? Because, irrespective as to sex, believers constitute part of a community, likened to a virgin espoused to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). The same figure is frequently found in the O.T. (see Isa. 54:5). The responsibility that this imposes is indicated by the responsibilities of marriage. When a man takes to himself a bride, he expects her to be faithful and loving. Through Jeremiah, Yahweh said of His bride, Israel: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown, Israel was holiness unto Yahweh . . ." (Jer. 2:2-3). The nation was separated unto Him. But she did not remain faithful, and hence she is indicted as an adulteress (see Jer. 3:1-4,8,20; Ezek. 16:23; Hos. 2:2). The bitterness and antagonism that adultery causes in a marriage is indicative of the feelings of Yahweh towards His people when they prove unfaithful. An adulteress was put to death, and that, too, is to be the fate of those of Christ's bride who are unfaithful to him, though they may be very moral in normal relationships. Those to whom James wrote would doubtless be appalled at the expression he used as descriptive of their conduct. They probably considered themselves as hard-working, conscientious people, striving to be a success in life whilst worshipping God.

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" — What is meant by the "world" is summed up by John as "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof . . ." (1 John 2:16-17). The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life comprise the three most persuasive and potent arguments for a person to please himself. They are compelling in their sophistry and insistent in their demands. The flesh claims that giving expression to them is both relaxing and healthful. The Bible teaches that a person becomes a friend of

the world when he is prepared to sacrifice the requirements of the Truth in order to serve or satisfy the lusts of the flesh. Those "lusts" declared John, "are not of the Father". They comprise the serpent in the flesh; they are part of the sin-proned condition of nature that resulted from Adam and Eve coming under the spell of the serpent doctrine and partaking of the forbidden fruit. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman," God said on that occasion, and James taught that such enmity still exists. Those to whom James wrote were governed by the mind of the flesh, or "the carnal mind", which, Paul declared, "is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). Believers need to rise above such by developing the mind of the Spirit through the influence of the Spirit-word.

"Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" — In contrast to a "friend of the world" Abraham is described as "the Friend of God" (Ch. 2:23) because he denied himself to obey God. We can be classified as either a Friend of God, or a friend of the world. The tragedy is that some swap friendships. Hence Demas, who previously laboured effectively with Paul (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24), finally deserted him, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). He provides a classic example of the truth of Paul's statement: "Therefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall . . ." (1 Cor. 10:12).

Supporting references: Psa. 73:27; Jer. 2:3; 3:2; 9:2; Matt. 12:39; 16:4; John 7:7; 15:19,23; 17:14-17; 1 John 2:15-16.

VERSE 5

"Do you think that the Scripture saith in vain" — The A. V. gives this statement as preliminary to what follows, and most interpret it in that way. But there is no specific Scripture answering to the words that follow. It seems better to conclude this statement as a question as does *The Diaglott*. It then summarises what has already been stated: "Do you think that the Scripture speaketh in vain? What Scripture? That which emphasises the need of separation, and therefore the principle advanced in v. 4 that friendship of the world invites the enmity of God. All Scripture witnesses to that doctrine. It was proclaimed at the beginning, in the statement: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Gen. 3:15). It was because the Sons of God cultivated the

world, and made affinity with it through marriage, that Yahweh's wrath arose to such a pitch that He destroyed that generation by flood. Separation was required of Abraham. The promises to him were conditional upon obedience to God's command: "Get thee out . . ." (Gen. 12:1). The Mosaic covenant demanded the separation of Israel: "That ye may know that Yahweh doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (Exod. 11:7). It required of the people a state of holiness, or separation, unto Yahweh (Lev. 11:44). This was dramatised by dividing the lower creation into two categories of animals described as *clean* and *unclean*: the former typifying Israel, the latter typifying the Gentiles. Thus separation is shown to be absolutely essential for the establishment of a proper relationship between Yahweh and His people (2 Cor. 6:16-18; 1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Now this separation is described in terms that also relate to marriage (see Isa. 54:4; Jer. 2:2-3), giving point to the criticism of v. 4. In marriage a man takes unto himself a bride separating her from all others, and bestowing upon her his name. That is exactly what God is doing through the call of the Gospel (see Acts 15:14). If a bride, instead of remaining true to her husband, becomes promiscuous in her favours, will she not be described as an adulteress? And will not her action excite the bitter enmity of any husband worthy of the name? Undoubtedly! And that is how Yahweh looks upon those whom He has drawn to Himself in a covenant as binding as marriage. What motivates the action of the unfaithful wife? Is it not lust? And that, too, constitutes the draw of the world. For the world, in its philosophy, its religion, its politics is governed by what the flesh wants and thinks, and not what God desires or commands. Hence John's comment quoted above.

On the other hand, Abraham was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23) because faith motivated him to act in accordance with the will of the Father. It properly follows that those who seek the friendship of a system of things from which Abraham had to separate himself will not be called friends of God, but His enemies, and friends of the world. That being the general teaching of Scripture, we would place a question mark after the statement above, reading it as follows: "Do you think that the scripture speaketh

in vain (i.e. concerning the enmity referred to in v. 4)? If you do think that way, analyse your motives in case the spirit that dwelleth in you lusteth to envy."

"The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy" — The AV gives this as part of a question, and thereby relates the spirit to the spirit of god. The RSV follows this by reading: "Do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us?'" This, however, is a very "free" and unreliable rendition of the Greek. Moreover, where does the Scripture say such a thing? There is no citation to that effect. In view of this, others who have supposed that the word *spirit* here relates to the Holy Spirit, or the spirit generated by the Word, read the statement as "the spirit that dwells in us lusteth *against* envy." Others, again, bend the words to mean as the RSV renders, to "yearn jealously". But the word *phthonos* rendered "envy" is invariably used in Scripture in a bad sense, and it seems wrong to change the meaning here to apply it to the Holy Spirit, or the spirit generated by the word. Again, the word "lusteth" *epipothei* signifies a great longing for something; a longing that excites envy. It is not the Spirit of God that does that, but the spirit of the flesh. And the consistent teaching of Scripture is that this spirit in man does stimulate envy: "a man is envied of his neighbour" (Ecc. 4:4); "envy slayeth" (Job 5:2); "envy is rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 27:4). Examples of the envious nature of man's disposition or spirit are found in Gen. 26:14; 30:1; 37:11; Psa. 73:3; 106:16, and so forth. They reveal that there is a strong propensity in human nature to envy, and in drawing attention to this, James described the cause of failure on the part of the Jewish believers. Scripture clearly witnesses to this propensity, and experience teaches that it does not do so in vain. The term "spirit" is frequently used in the sense of disposition: "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . ." (Matt. 5:3); "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41); and see the notes on 1 Pet. 3:19. Accepting this explanation, James' statement constitutes a repetition of the Scriptural warning against being led astray by the natural disposition of the flesh, to lust and envy. The sins he has already described are

those that, arising out of lust, manifest themselves in envy.

The *Diaglott*, in rendering this statement as a question, gives it a slightly different slant which conforms in measure to our suggestion above. In aligning the "spirit" with the spirit of God, it enquires: "Does the spirit that dwells in us strongly incline to envy?" Then answers: "Indeed, it bestows superior favour . . ." This treatment of this difficult verse warns the Jewish believers not to mistake their attitude as resulting from God's spirit, for His spirit provides greater favours than that of the world. We feel, however, that our suggestion above is more consistent with the facts of Scripture.

Supporting references: Gen. 4:5-6; 6:5; 8:21; 30:1.

The Corrective: Seek The Gift of Grace — vv. 6-10

The failings of those to whom James wrote were of such a nature as to jeopardise their eternal salvation. Hence a remedy was imperative, and could be obtained by the grace of God manifested through the Gospel.

VERSE 6

"But he giveth more grace" — The conjunction, *but*, introduces a note of contrast to the spirit that dwells in us exciting envy, and this supports our suggestion above. It is further endorsed by the Greek which renders "more grace" as a *greater grace*. James refers to a grace, or favour, greater than the world can give. That grace is divine favour which is manifested in many ways. It is the complete answer to the spirit of the flesh that excites envy, for the grace of God supplies all our needs and more. Paul declares God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . ." (Eph. 3:20). The religious world speaks of grace as "unmerited favour," and in doing so introduces a wrong idea. If grace is unmerited favour it should be given to all indiscriminately, otherwise God is revealed as being unjust. Scripture clearly teaches that in order to become the recipients of such favour a person must do something on his own account. True it is that nobody can buy eternal life for it is the gift of God (Rom. 6:23). But it is also true that the gift will not be granted to those who do not seek it by "patient continuance

in well doing" (Rom. 2:6-7). Divine grace (*charis*) is the favour, or goodwill, that Yahweh extends towards those whom He calls to the Truth and grants justification by the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 3:24). As this is through the Lord, John declares that the fulness of "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17) through whose grace men will be saved (Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:8). Believers are called upon to "grow in grace" (2 Pet. 3:18), which they can do by developing characteristics pleasing to Yahweh. By that means they can receive a "greater grace" or favour.

The word *charis* (grace) is used in the Greek O.T. about 60 times as an equivalent for the Hebrew *chen*, also translated *grace*. The *Dictionary Of New Testament Theology* states:

"The use of the word *chen* clarifies the meaning of 'grace' in history and actions. It denotes the stronger coming to the help of the weaker who stands in need of help by reason of his circumstances or natural weakness. He acts by a voluntary decision, though he is moved by the dependence or the request of the weaker party. A typical expression used to describe such an event from the standpoint of the weak is the formula to find favour in someone's eyes, i.e. to acquire the favour, liking, benevolence, condescension and understanding. The action itself is what makes the weaker party acceptable: e.g. Jacob to Esau (Gen. 32:5); Joseph and Potiphar and Pharaoh's men (Gen. 39:4; 50:4); the Egyptians to Joseph (Gen. 47:25); Ruth to Boaz (Ruth 2:2,10,13); a young wife to her husband (here in the negative, Deut. 24:1); Hannah to Eli (1 Sam. 1:18); David to Saul and Jonathan (1 Sam. 16:22; 20:3); Joab to David (2 Sam. 14:22); Esther to the king (Est. 8:5 etc.). This acceptance is desired (Zech. 4:7) or experienced (Ecc. 9:11) as fortune or salvation. Often it can only be understood as the result of the special intervention of God who supplies grace to the weak (Gen. 39:21; Exod. 3:21; 11:3; 12:36)."

Noah found grace in being isolated from a world which was sentenced to destruction (Gen. 6:8); Moses pleaded for help on the basis of his grace (Exod. 33:13); David surrendered himself in a moment of crisis to the providence of Yahweh, expressed as His grace (2 Sam. 15:25). Grace, therefore, denotes the favour of Yahweh in extending Himself to

assist those who have put themselves in such relationship to Him as to receive it. In the passage before us, it is set in contrast to that spirit of covetousness and envy that hungers to acquire, and regardless of possessions is never satisfied. Faith seeks grace in the goodness of Yahweh; whereas the fleshly spirit that envies knows none of these qualities.

The grace of Yahweh as manifested through the Gospel is of greater power than the spirit within us that lusts to envy, for it is capable of controlling and conquering that spirit.

"**Wherefore he saith**" — The Diaglott gives this in the neuter gender, "it saith", so aligning it with the Scripture.

"**God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble**" — This is a citation of Prov. 3:34 to which Peter also directs his readers (1 Pet. 5:5 — see notes). The citation is according to the LXX. The proud are those who have an inordinate self-esteem, a high and unreasonable conceit of their own excellence or importance. It can result from such influences as personal ability, affluence, status, even religion as exhibited by the Pharisees. On the other hand, a person may have any or all of these attributes and yet remain humble. Humility neither expects nor seeks acclaim, whilst conceding to others what is their due. True humility recognises the unapproachable holiness of God, whilst being unapproachable to man. Pride goes beyond this, and gives to one a degree of self-esteem entirely unwarranted. Yahweh resisteth the proud (Lev. 26:19; Psa. 59:12; Prov. 8:13; 16:18; 29:13; Isa. 23:9; 28:1; Dan. 4:37; Zech. 10:11). He uses many means to that end: business reverses, sickness, disappointments, death.

On the other hand He gives grace unto the humble. He shows them favour, but a necessary adjunct to the receiving of such benefits is humility towards God and man. Those to whom James wrote were seeking the favour of Yahweh, but not finding it (vv. 1-3) because they sought only to satisfy their selfish lusts thereby. Divine favour will be received by those who render humble service in submission unto Yahweh (Isa. 57:15; Phil. 1:6; 2:21-23). It will not come from prayer in the absence of effort on our part. It will be those who are sufficiently humble to seek God in prayer who will receive and enjoy the grace of Yahweh.

Supporting references: Exod. 10:3-4;

15:9-10; 1 Sam. 2:3-9; 2 Chron. 32:26; 33:12,19,23; 34:27; Psa. 9:12; 138:6; Prov. 3:34; 6:16-17; 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; 29:23; 30:8-9,13; Isa. 2:11-12; 57:15; Dan. 4:37; 5:20-23; Matt. 23:12; Luke 1:52; 14:11.

VERSE 7

“Submit yourselves therefore to God”

— This is essential to the enjoyment of divine grace or favour. The Greek word *hupotasso* is a military term signifying to *rank under another*; thus to endorse the higher status of the one above, and to submit to the discipline and orders he commands. See how Paul describes the requirements of faith as a spiritual warfare (Rom. 6:13 mg. 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Tim. 1:18).

“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”

— Again James uses a military term in ordering believers to *resist*. As a soldier resists the enemy, so Christ’s followers are required to submit to the requirements of God, by resisting the attacks of the devil. Similar words are used in 1 Peter 5:8-9 where the devil is defined as an opponent at law. There the term relates to the Roman authorities who were arresting Christians on charges of sedition, and subjecting them to all kinds of persecution. But the devil is not limited to legal opponents, or false accusers. It also relates to sin in the flesh (Heb. 2:14; Mark 7:21; Rom. 7:24). In what sense will this form of the devil flee from those resisting it? As noted above the expression is military in its concept. James has described how lust was warring in the members of the Jewish-Christian community. The only way to conquer such inordinate desires, he suggests, is to view them as a bitter enemy, and so resist them as a soldier would his opponent on the field of battle. Let that be done in faith, and victory is assured. The devil (be it the lusts of the flesh, or any other form of opposition) will retreat, or flee, leaving the faithful in possession of the field. The Greek word signifies, to range in battle against. It is in the Middle Voice signifying to set oneself against; that is to prepare oneself to resist. The word “flee” is used figuratively of fleeing fornication (1 Cor. 6:18), idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14), other evils (1 Tim. 6:11), youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22). In this fight of faith we are instructed to “arm ourselves” with the mind of Christ

(1 Pet. 4:1). In fighting the lusts of the devil, we are instructed to “mortify” or put to death fleshly inclinations. The first move towards that end is to resist the devil (sin in the flesh — Rom. 7:5, 15-23; Heb. 2:14) with the ultimate objective of putting the lust of the flesh to death entirely (Col. 3:5).

VERSE 8

“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you”

— This is in contrast to being “drawn away” of one’s own lusts (James 1:14). To draw nigh to God, is to draw upon His aid in the battle described in the previous verse. Hence, whilst personal determination is necessary to effectively resist the devil, the battle will not be won in one’s own strength. Weak, human nature needs the help of God to succeed. The development of faith, which comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17), brings us nigh unto God and will enable us to be victorious in the struggle against the flesh (1 John 5:4). It is the constant promise of Yahweh that He will move to our help if we draw near to Him in the proper manner. To disobedient Judah, He declared through Jeremiah: “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Yahweh, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to make your latter end an object of hope. Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:11-13 alternate rendition). See also 1 Chron. 28:9; 2 Chron. 15:1-4; Zech. 1:3; Jhn. 6:44; Heb. 7:19; 13:5-6. It is His love that draws us (1 John 4:10,19) and which He commends to our attention (Rom. 5:8). He desires our spontaneous affection, not our forced obedience.

“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners”

— This is a necessary prelude to drawing nigh to God. There was little use James’ readers doing so whilst they were engaged in internecine strife (v. 1). Indeed, they had attempted to draw nigh to God in prayer, but only in order that they might obtain that which would enhance their fleshly pleasures. There was a need to cleanse themselves from such an attitude. “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” is the admonition of Scripture (Isa. 52:11), and again, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). The priests were required to undergo ceremonial washing of hands and feet at

the laver before approaching Yahweh (cp. Exod. 30:17-21), typifying the cleansing power of the Word (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26). Clean hands figuratively denote actions that conform to the requirements of Yahweh as outlined in the Word. To wash or cleanse the hands was emblematic of putting away transgression (Matt. 27:24. See Deut. 21:6; Psa. 26:6). David declared: "Yahweh is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. Yahweh is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth" (Psa. 145:17-18). To call upon Him in truth is to match words with actions. Yahweh will refuse those who call on Him otherwise. Isaiah warned: "Wherefore Yahweh said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men . . ." (Isa. 29:13), He would cast them off.

"Purify your hearts ye double minded"

— Whereas sinners were exhorted to reform, the double-minded were urged to purify their hearts, or their mode of thinking. They needed cleansed hearts such as David sought (Psa. 51:6), or such a heart as is described in Prov. 3:5-6. James described those Jewish Christians as "double-minded" because they were seeking the friendship of the world whilst claiming to serve God. They could not do both, and hence they had to cleanse their hearts, and become single-minded in their devotion to Him. The heart was considered as the seat of motives and intentions. If the heart was wrong everything was wrong. Motives and intentions must conform to Yahweh's will.

Supporting references: "Draw nigh" — Gen. 18:23; 1 Chron. 28:9; 2 Chron. 15:2; Psa. 73:28; 145:18; Isa. 55:6-7; Hos. 6:1-2; Zech. 1:3; "Cleanse" — Psa. 18:20; 24:4; 73:13; Isa. 1:15-16. "Purify" — Psa. 51:6-7,10; Jer. 4:14; Ezek. 18:31; 36:25-27; Acts 15:9; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:3.

VERSE 9

"Be afflicted" — The word rendered "be afflicted" means to endure toil or hardship in labouring at a matter, and so endure affliction or distress in accomplishing it. James called upon his readers to afflict themselves by considering their shortcomings. This would cause them distress, and thereby humble them. Such an attitude was demanded of the children of

Israel on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27-29), or at times of national reform (see Ezra 8:21). They were expected to review their state, and to sorrow over their shortcomings. The verb here used appears as an adjective in Rom. 7:24: "Oh wretched man that I am!" What caused Paul to make such an exclamation? The grief of mind induced by a contemplation of his failings as he laboured over his problems. But that very grief of mind, and the wretchedness to which he referred, so humbled him as to fit him for the forgiveness and help he could obtain in the Lord Jesus. So he continued: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24). On the other hand, the Laodiceans did not recognise the wretchedness of their self-righteous attitude, and so were rebuked (Rev. 3:17). By ruthlessly analysing our own failings, rather than those of our fellows, we will be afflicted, and caused to utter words similar to those of Paul.

"Mourn and weep" — This is the natural reaction of one who is made wretched by mental affliction in the manner described above. But Christ promises comfort for such (Matt. 5:4). The woman "who was a sinner", and who was humbled by the realisation of this, bowed before the Lord Jesus, and in the extreme emotional state to which she was reduced, bathed his feet with her tears. Her action illustrated the words of James. The consciousness of her state caused her to mourn and weep. For this she received the gracious words: "Thy sins are forgiven . . . Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace" (Luke 7:38-50). With those kindly words the Lord quietened her agitation, and established a precedent for others. If failings are recognised for what they are, the acknowledgment will cause those who sin to go through the process outlined by James in this verse.

"Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness" — The laughter and joy of those to whom James wrote came from them courting the world (v. 4), and therefore were completely out of place. They had need to cease their activities in that direction (cp. vv. 1-4), and to recognise the true wretchedness of their state in the sight of God. Such a need rests on all such worldly pleasure seekers. Mourning and weeping induced by a consciousness of sin will be turned into comfort and joy as forgiveness and reformation are found in Christ.

Supporting references: Psa. 119:67, 71, 136, Ecc. 7:2-5; Isa. 22:12-13; Lam. 3:27; 5:15; Zech. 12:10; Matt. 5:4; Luke 6:21, 25; 2 Cor. 7:10.

VERSE 10

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” — Humility will develop by the recognition of personal failures, by acknowledging that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. This should govern one’s attitude towards others. A recognition that all are in need of the mercy of the Judge, should rule out mutual condemnation of each other. The Scriptures teach that “before honour is humility” (Prov. 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; 29:23). Christ endorsed this: “He that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12). The Lord illustrated this doctrine. In life he was meek and lowly (Matt. 11:29), humbling himself “even unto the death of the cross”, “wherefore,” adds Paul, “God also hath highly exalted him” (Phil. 2:8-9). He demonstrated the truth that the cross must come before the crown. In this he set an example for believers to follow (1 Pet. 2:21-24; 5:6).

Supporting references: 1 Sam. 2:9; Psa. 30:1; 113:7; 147:6; Zech. 4:6,10; Luke 14:11; 18:14; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Pet. 5:6.

The Principle As Manifested Towards Man — vv. 11-14

The recognition of personal failure develops a humility which should govern one’s attitude towards others. There will follow a reluctance to condemn in the knowledge that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. At the Judgment Seat all will be in need of mercy.

VERSE 11

“Speak not evil one of another brethren” — It is convenient to justify one’s failings by noting those of others, and even broadcasting them. The fleshly mind is comforted when one’s shortcomings are shared with others. A comparison seems to deceptively veil the gravity of one’s own sins. In fact, it adds sin to sin. See Eph. 4:31; 1 Pet. 2:1.

“He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law” — In so writing, James endorses the teaching of the Lord. See Matt. 7:1-4. Paul makes the point that brethren are Christ’s servants, not the servants of

fellow-believers, and therefore, Christ alone has the prerogative to condemn (Rom. 14:4). He told his detractors in the Ecclesia in Corinth, that it was a matter of small concern to him that they unjustly judged him, for even though he “knew nothing of himself” to justify their condemnation, “it is Christ who judges” (1 Cor. 4:2-5). In these places, the term is used in regard to a decision of absolute condemnation. It is important that we discriminate between good and evil, or right and wrong, and in that regard to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). James did not hesitate to condemn the practices of those to whom he wrote (James 5:1-4), but the final decision as to whether they would be granted an inheritance in the Kingdom must await the decision of the Judge.

Those who acted in the manner condemned by James, in effect, spake “evil of the Law”, for by their evil speech they set aside the requirements of the Law, establishing their own conduct as the rule of acceptable action. This revealed a contempt for the teaching of the Law, and constituted a usurpation of the prerogative of the Judge. To what Law does James refer? To the Law of God, that was expressed through Moses, and manifested in its fulness by Christ. He “magnified the law and made it honourable” (Isa. 42:21) by himself revealing perfect obedience to its requirements, and enabling his followers to likewise fulfil its requirements (see Matt. 5:17; Rom. 3:31). This he did by providing for the forgiveness of sins unto eternal life (Rom. 4:25). “For the law was given by Moses, but grace (including mercy) and truth (the fulfilment of all that had been promised, the reality of sacrifice as foreshadowed by the Law) came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Therefore, in Christ, the Law of God becomes the Law of Liberty, because the divine grace and truth manifested in him “frees” from the bondage of sin (John 8:31-36; Rom. 6:16-18). Seeing that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), all are in need of redemption in Christ Jesus. What right, therefore, has any to adversely judge another as being unworthy of an inheritance in the Kingdom. It ill becomes those who hope to be judged by the Law of Liberty, knowing how dependent they are upon its grace and mercy to forgive their sins. We have no right to condemn others because of their failings. Such con-

duct is a negation of the basic principles of divine law.

“And judgeth the law” — Those manifesting such conduct as James described set aside the Law, and therefore, in effect, condemned it as being wrong. They became its judges, making themselves arbiters of what it required of worshippers.

“But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge” — A judge of the Law is one who sets up his own standards instead of those required by it. This will condemn him in the Day of Judgment. Both Paul and James emphasise that it is only “doers of the law” who will be justified (Rom. 2:1,13). Meanwhile, whilst James taught that we must not unduly judge others, he is outspoken in condemning censorious gossip, and similar unwise use of the tongue. Therefore he was not prepared to wink at error, or close his eyes to evil. There is a need to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24); in other words to clearly distinguish between right and wrong.

Supporting references: Psa. 140:11; Matt. 7:1-2; Luke 6:37; 14:3-4,10-12; 1 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 4:31; 1 Pet. 2:1.

VERSE 12

“There is one lawgiver” — Some Mss include the words *and Judge*. The R.V. renders: *Only one is the lawgiver*. Therefore, in acting as they did, those erring brethren were usurping the position of Judge (see Isa. 33:22).

“Who is able to save and to destroy” — The context of this statement implies that God is able to save those whom their censorious brethren would verbally destroy; and destroy those whose harsh judgment put their own lives in jeopardy. Christ, as the great legislator, called upon his disciples to pray: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). How can any consistently pray for forgiveness, whilst refusing to extend a like consideration to others! (see Matt. 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 11:4). The description James gives of the Judge as being both Saviour and Destroyer, is also that of Paul in 2 Cor. 2:15-16. Christ is a “savour of life unto life, or of death unto death”. Paul warns that God is not mocked, and as we sow we shall reap (Gal. 6:7). In mercy has not been shown, justice will be meted out accordingly (see James 2:12-13).

“Who art thou that judgest another?”

— Those guilty of the conduct described in vv. 1-2 should have been the last to be so. In view of Yahweh’s position as Judge, fallible man has no right to usurp His authority, no matter how righteous he may be.

Supporting references: Matt. 10:26-33; Luke 12:3-10.

The Principle: Towards God — vv. 13-17

In view of man’s fallibility and the uncertainty of life James exhorts against boasting regarding future intentions: the future may not be ours so to use. Those who condemn others are often forgetful of their dependence on God.

VERSE 13

“Go to now” — This is a phrase designed to attract attention by commanding attention. The modern equivalent is: *Come now!*

“Ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain” — The statement suggests a definiteness about the planning: city, time, and purpose are expressed in terms that make no provision for the over-riding purpose of Yahweh.

Supporting references: Prov. 27:1; Luke 12:16-31.

VERSE 14

“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow” — The continuance of life on the morrow is uncertain; how much more uncertain is a year hence!

“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” — This statement is similar to James’ description of the rich man in Ch. 1:10. The previous statement has directed attention to life as being something frail so that we cannot depend upon its continuance for a day. Now James describes it as a *vapour*. The word used signifies a *mist* that arises in the morning, floats for a time in the air, and then is dissipated by the rising sun. The analogy represents life as being very insubstantial, swept this way or that by the breeze, and very limited in duration. It is the theme of the *Book of Ecclesiastes* which sums up all of life’s activities, apart from those relating to Yahweh, as “vanity of vanities” (Ecc. 1:2). The Hebrew word *hebel* denotes “breath”. Meta-

phorically, it represents anything frail, particularly that which passes away comparatively quickly, and thereby fails to satisfy the craving of man for something more permanent. Note Jacob's lament (Gen. 47:19). "Our days on earth are as a shadow", declared David (1 Chron. 29:15). "My life is wind", declared Job (Ch. 7:7; 8:9; Psa. 102:11; 144:4). "We spend our years as a tale that is told" declared Moses (Psa. 90:6-9). The Hebrew word used by Solomon to describe the fleetness of life was named upon the second son born to Adam and Eve: Abel. His name signifies that which is fleeting and insubstantial, and its significance was illustrated by the manner in which his life was cut short through the murderous action of Cain. The continuance of all in life is similarly uncertain, as James notes. That being the case, we need to recognise in time our most valuable possession and use it wisely. That is the exhortation of Scripture (See Psa. 90:12; Eph. 5:15-17; Col. 4:5).

Supporting references: Psa. 39:5; 89:47; 90:5-7; 102:3; Isa. 38:12; 1 Pet. 1:24; 1 John 2:17.

VERSE 15

"For that ye ought to say" — In view of life's uncertainty, a less dogmatic assertion of intentions should be adopted, recognising the imminence of the Lord's return, our absolute dependence on God, and that the success or failure of any venture is subject to His will.

"If the Lord will we shall live, and do this or that" — James does not mean that his phrase should be repeated in so many words, for such repetitive use of a mere formula can rob it of its meaning. He meant that careful thought should be given to the planning of future intentions, so that Yahweh is never left out of account. "My times are in Thine hands" declared David (Psa. 31:15). "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" declared

Solomon (Prov. 27:1). And Apostolic precept is similar: Acts 18:21; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:5-7; Phil. 2:24.

Supporting references: 2 Sam. 15:25-26; Prov. 19:21; Lam. 3:37; Rom. 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Heb. 6:3.

VERSE 16

"But now ye rejoice in your boastings" — The word "boastings" is from the Greek *alazoneia*, and, according to Vine, denotes *quackery*, or vain pretensions and arrogant claims based upon nothing substantial. Such boasters proclaim they are about to do this or that, but their intentions are governed by time and success, both of which are out of their control. James has reminded them that they have taken out a mortgage upon something (the future) which has no substantial reality. "You boast in your arrogance," renders the RSV.

"All such rejoicing is evil" — The *Diaglott* renders rejoicing as *boasting*. James referred to their boasting rather than to their rejoicing. Such idle boasting is evil.

Supporting references: Psa. 52:1,7; Prov. 25:14; 27:1; 1 Cor. 4:7-8; 5:6.

VERSE 17

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" — This statement is a general summary of the subject matter of this chapter. Indifference to the rights of God or man is sin or a *missing of the mark*, which is the meaning of the word rendered "sin". (Gr. *harmartia*). Those to whom James wrote needed to recognise this, and reform their conduct in relation to all matters expressed in this chapter. If a believer knows the will of God, and deliberately ignores it, even in regard to future intentions he sins.

Supporting references: Matt. 7:24,26; Luke 12:47-48; John 9:41; 13:17; 15:22.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW FAITH DEVELOPS PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY

In view of the prevailing crisis which would culminate in the destruction of the Jewish State, James counsels his readers in regard to both patience and prayer. He warns that riches will not save in the day of trouble but will add to the pain of those who place great store on them and will have to give them up. He urges his readers to observe how the possession of riches by some within the Jewish community so blinded their eyes to the requirements of Yahweh that divine judgment upon them was inevitable. He advises believers that such judgment was impending, but it would be to their advantage. He then directs them to aids which would assist them to face the future with confidence, particularly stressing the benefits of prayer. He sets before them seven forms of prayer to be used in various circumstances, and concludes on a note of hope. Though primarily this chapter relates to the crisis of A.D. 70, it also has application today. It warns that retribution and judgment is impending, and advises what should be done in such circumstances.

Retribution Is Coming: Warning To Oppressors — vv. 1-6

James warns of an impending crisis that would utterly destroy the wealth of the oppressing rich. Therefore, inordinate striving for such on the part of believers, whilst ignoring the rights of God and man is both stupid and vain. Particularly so in view of the limited time remaining in which to enjoy such wealth. Meanwhile, the ruthless indifference of the wealthy to the needs of others, their wanton indulgence in pleasure, and their harsh treatment of those less fortunate than themselves was storing up retribution that would overwhelm them in a judgment that would be severe but just. The modern world presents a repetition of these conditions, and Scripture warns believers not to be led

astray by the "love of money" which is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:6-11).

VERSE 1

"Go to now" — As noted in our comment on Ch. 4:13, this is an obsolete form of the invitation: Come now!

"Ye rich men" — Not *all* rich men, but that class of them which is specified as unjust and oppressive. There is no sin in merely being rich; but to oppress others in gaining riches is a sin. James' warning was not written for the benefit of wealthy Jews who were oppressing their brethren, and who, probably, would never see the Epistle, but is a declamatory form of speech, common to Scripture, in which the writer addresses others for the sake

of his readers. James adopts this style for the purpose of emphasis. He directs his words to the oppressing, unbelieving rich, to demonstrate to believers the limited value of the wealth for which men of the flesh strive. His words were designed to encourage his brethren in the faith, by revealing that God is not unmindful of their sufferings and will bring judgment on their oppressors, in order to bring about an alleviation of their condition.

“Weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you” — James continued to address the unbelieving rich for the benefit of the believing oppressed. Normally the wealthy do not “weep and howl”, nor experience misery, but they were soon to do so through the crisis of A.D. 70. Meanwhile, James warned his brethren not to be led astray by the example of rich Jews, so as to develop a “love of money” which is “the root of all evil” (see 1 Tim. 6:5-10). It is often the case, that believers look covetously at the material possessions of their neighbours, and are led astray. An example of this was Asaph. He recorded in Psalm 73 that he became deluded with the apparent prosperity and happiness of his worldly contemporaries. It seemed to him that they were not “plagued like other men”. He became so envious of their state, that he was almost drawn out of the way of truth by the desire to be like them: “Those are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches” (v. 12). But when he entered the Sanctuary, and allowed his mind to meditate upon the riches of his calling and the ultimate end of the wicked, he recognised how great was the mistake he had made (v. 17). He then realised that the worldly rich were standing in slippery places that would bring them to destruction (vv. 17-20).

In James’ day, a crisis was developing that would particularly affect the rich, and which foreshadowed the crisis of today. Moreover, as today, its effects were already being felt. The RV renders the statement of this verse in the present tense: “your miseries that *are coming on you*”. Moffat renders the present participle as “your impending miseries”. The word “miseries” is from the Greek *talai-poria* and denotes hardship, suffering, distress. Already the wealthy were feeling the pinch, and this was bringing upon them severe hardships; for the more a man has, the greater is his suffering when

he is compelled to give it up.

Supporting references: Deut. 8:12-14; 32:15; Psa. 17:14; 49:6-20; Prov. 11:4,28; Ecc. 5:13-14; Jer. 9:23; Mic. 6:12; Luke 6:24-25; 1 Tim. 6:9-10.

VERSE 2

“Your riches are corrupted” — The reference is to perishable goods that one might store up for future use (see Luke 12:16-20). They corrupt in time if not used or sold, whereas metal or money cankers or corrodes (cp. v. 3). When perishable goods are stored up for sale, but people lack the means to purchase, they will corrupt or rot. That was the case then, and also applies today. Brother Thomas, in commenting upon the problems of the “time of the end”, declared that “trade and commerce will be ruinously perturbed”. In Eureka Vol. 3, under the title *The Time Of The End* he made mention of “increase of taxation” and “financial embarrassment” as being particularly a feature of the age, as, indeed, it is. James’ warning has application today.

“And your garments are moth eaten” — The same idea substantially is expressed here (see also Matt. 6:19). Material and garments will ruin if held too long through lack of use or of buyers to purchase. In James 2:2, readers are warned against showing partiality towards those dressed in “goodly raiment”; here they are reminded how temporary is such glory.

Supporting references: Isa. 51:7-8; Jer. 17:11.

VERSE 3

“Your gold and silver is cankered” — The word “cankered” is from the Greek *katioo*, “to poison”. A cognate word occurs in Rom. 3:13 as “the poison of asps”, and in James 3:8 as “deadly poison”, where it refers to the evil of the serpent tongue. The word *katioo* is an intensive form of *ioo*, “poison”, by the addition of *kata*. As poison destroys living tissues in a human body, so rust eats into and destroys metal. Accordingly, “cankered” has been rendered *rusted* in the R.V. But gold and silver do not properly rust or oxidise like iron and steel, so what James claims in regard to them appears impossible. Similarly, a wealthy man is generally so confident in the abundance of his riches, that he imagines that they will last forever (Psa.

49:11). Seldom does he give thought to the possibility of them corroding. However, if these precious metals are stored in a damp place like a vault, they will contract a dark colour resembling rust, and perhaps that is to what James alludes. It is obvious that he is writing figuratively of the wealth of some of the Jewish community, whose miserly, oppressive attitude destroyed the power of the possessions for good. When a living tissue is poisoned, or metal is subjected to rust, its value is impaired. In a human body, the effect of poison can lead to death; in metal, the influence of rust leads to destruction. James' words signify that the stored up wealth of the rich Jews would lose its value, its power to give them enjoyment, and would endanger their lives. His warning was vindicated, as Jews throughout the Roman world found to their cost, when the crisis of A.D. 70 developed. Persecution was directed particularly against the wealthy of their number. Their possessions incited the avarice of their persecutors. In order to acquire their wealth, they took the opportunity of attacking them. Meanwhile, inflation also effected its corroding influence, as in the days of Haggai. Jews then sought to enrich themselves at the expense of rendering service to Yahweh, but they found that the accumulation of money did not help them. "He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag. 1:6). Those days, just prior to the building of the Temple by Zerubabel and Joshua, were noted for acute unemployment, unsettled economic conditions, domestic strife and general dissatisfaction (Zech. 8:10). Significantly, they are set down in Zechariah's prophecy as typical of these latter days prior to the building of the House of Prayer for all nations at the Lord's return (cp. Zech. 8:13). In fulfilment thereof, the world is experiencing those conditions today, suggesting that even worse will follow. Current economic problems match the state of things in the days of Haggai, and during the last days of Judah's Commonwealth (A.D. 70). The rapid, spiralling inflation of modern times is corroding, or poisoning, the economic stability of nations, as happened in the times referred to by James.

"And the rust of them shall be a witness against you" — Another Greek word is used for "rust" in this place, *ios*. It denotes something sent out or emitted,

and is applied to a missile such as an arrow, or to poisonous venom as emitted from the tooth of a serpent (Rom. 3:13; James 3:18). Here it denotes rust, as it seems to be emitted from metals. However, as noted above, gold and silver do not rust, though they can become discoloured, or tarnished, when they remain long stored without use. The term, therefore, seems to denote wealth that was stored up without being used by those who ignored the needs of others who were in abject want. Money is valueless unless used. It becomes tarnished as rust that destroys metal, or as poison that kills the soul. James warned that those who had wealth, and stored it up as misers to the disadvantage of others, would find that it would witness against them. Their miserly attitude and their refusal to help others in need, would be held up as an evil for which they would be considered accountable.

"And shall eat your flesh as it were fire" — Avarice and indifference to the needs of others will be condemned at the Judgment Seat. In James' day, the period of judgment for the Jewish nation was approaching when the most painful punishment would be felt by those wealthy Jews; a punishment that would eat into their very flesh. As their wealth was corroded by inflation they would be consumed by a fever of anxiety. This would become accentuated when persecution was directed against them. Their possessions, for which they had sacrificed everything, would be forcibly taken from them, leaving them destitute: their life's ambition an abject failure.

"Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" — Like misers these unbelieving Jews had heaped up wealth, whilst ignoring the treasure that is of eternal value, riches that are not subject to inflationary spirals (Matt. 6:19-20). Whilst James' words seem to apply primarily to wealthy unbelieving Jews, they have application also to those who had embraced Christ, and who were disposed to imitate their rich contemporaries in their pursuit of material possessions at the expense of the Truth. Paul warned of the possibility of wealth being an impediment to the disadvantage of those possessing it (cp. 1 Tim. 6:4-9), and of such "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5). See also Christ's parable of the wealthy fool (Luke

12:15-21). He stored up wealth for his last days, only to find that before he could use it his very life was taken from him. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

The "last days" to which James referred, were the last days of Judah's commonwealth (Heb. 1:2; 9:26; 2 Pet. 3:3). They brought the Mosaic era to an end, and introduced the Christian era, during which the Gospel has been preached to Gentiles. The crisis was a terrible one. It affected Jews all over the world, and not merely those in the land. In the crisis of A.D. 70, and the destruction of Jerusalem, the wealthy became particularly the object of attack by soldiers seeking gain. Their riches ignited a fire that consumed their flesh.

Supporting references: Deut. 28:32-57; Jer. 19:9; Mic. 3:1-4.

VERSE 4

"Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud" — In the previous verse James decried the folly of hoarding wealth to the disadvantage of both possessors and those in need; now he condemns the practice of defrauding others, a sin that the Law condemned (Lev. 19:13; Jer. 22:13). In modern times, this was a feature of the Victorian age until socialism and communism swung the pendulum to the opposite extreme causing the rich to "weep and howl for the miseries that have come upon them" (v. 1). The word "behold" invites those who suffered the penalty of their folly to consider the cause of the judgment they were beginning to experience.

"Crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped" — The description describes the cry of those who are without help on earth, and so appeal to heaven for aid (see Deut. 24:15; Mal. 3:5).

"Are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" — This is a very ominous statement, for the title *Lord of Sabaoth* is the militant title of Deity. It is again used in Rom. 9:29 where it relates to Yahweh's protective care of His people. The word *Sabaoth* is the transliteration of the Hebrew term denoting armies, and is found frequently in the O.T. as Yahweh of Hosts, i.e. of armies. The armies, or hosts, are the angelic armies of heaven (see Josh. 5:15 mg. called "God's host" in Gen. 32:1-2). The first reference to the name Yahweh of hosts is found in 1 Sam.

1:3. This is significant, for the period was one of a sad apostasy in Israel which left the country spiritually and militarily defenceless. But faithful men and women, like Elkanah and Hannah, could worship Yahweh of hosts in confidence of protection. The name Yahweh Tzvaoth signifies *He who shall be armies*, and therefore is a prophetic name proclaiming that He will reveal Himself in Armies developed from among men (see 2 Tim. 2:3-4; Rev. 19:14-15). Isaiah, significantly declares that it will be "the zeal of Yahweh Tzvaoth" that will establish the throne of Yahweh in triumph throughout the earth (Isa. 9:7). Meanwhile, Yahweh Tzvaoth (Yahweh manifested through His angelic hosts) has both the will and the ability to avenge any of His servants who may be oppressed. James' comment implies that the cry of the oppressed labourers ascended to heaven appealing for vengeance. It would not do so in vain (see Gen. 4:10).

Supporting references: Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15; Jer. 22:13; Hab. 2:6; Exod. 22:22-24,27; Mal. 3:5; Luke 18:7.

VERSE 5

"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton" — To "live in pleasure" signifies to live delicately, luxuriously, and at ease. Those of whom James wrote had done so and denied themselves nothing, whilst their labourers had cried in vain to them for help. Instead of extending assistance, they had lived riotously and to excess as the word implies, indifferent to the needs of others.

"Ye have nourished your hearts" — They had indulged themselves in everything that the heart could desire. They were like sheep, fattening themselves by feeding, whilst ignoring the impending doom. True of the rich Jews of James' day; true of the affluent West of today.

"As in a day of slaughter" — They had fattened themselves like stall-fed cattle for the day of slaughter. The day of slaughter referred to by James was the impending day of judgment in A.D. 70, which brought the Jewish State to an end, and led to worldwide persecution of the Jewish people. There was justice in this judgment, for until then the wealthy Jews had dragged the poor before the judgment seats of the land (James 2:6). Now they, in turn, were being selected for judgment. Jeremiah used a similar figure. He declared that those who were parti-

cularly rebellious against Yahweh would be "pulled out as sheep for the slaughter" (Jer. 12:3. See also Jer. 25:34). Specially fattened sheep were selected for that purpose on such occasions. So it would be at the impending day of judgment in A.D. 70. Those who had been particularly rebellious against Yahweh, and particularly oppressive to those believing Jews, would especially suffer. A similar figure is used in regard to Armageddon (see Ezek. 39:17-21). Those nations which have callously oppressed Yahweh's people will particularly suffer (Dan. 7:11-12). What happened in A.D. 70 types what will happen to the Gentiles at the coming of the Lord (Jer. 25:29-37).

Supporting references: Psa. 9:18-20; 17:13-14; 73:7,17; Isa. 5:11-13; 22:12-13; 47:8; Amos 6:1,4-6; Rom. 13:13.

VERSE 6

"Ye have condemned and killed the just" — This was Jewry's most frightful crime, for it relates to the crucifixion of the Lord. The word "condemned" is from *katadikazo* which denotes exercising the right of law. It implies dragging one before a court of law to obtain a conviction. In the case referred to by James, the conviction was followed by execution. The word "just" in the Greek is in the singular number: the *just one* (see *Diaglott*). The primary reference, therefore, is to Christ, for in demanding his execution, the Jews, in effect, killed "the Prince of life" (Acts 3:14-15). In addition, they manifested the same hostility to the multitudinous body of Christ with the result, warned Paul, that "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:14-16). They suffered then from the Gentiles, and would continue to do so until their State was destroyed. The word "kill" actually signifies to murder. It is the very term used by Stephen to describe their violent opposition to the Lord: "Ye have been the betrayers and murderers" of "the Just One" (Acts 7:52).

"And he doth not resist you" — What they did to Christ personally, they continued to do so to Christ communally as he had predicted they would (Matt. 23:34-36). Meanwhile, the enormity of their wrong-doing was proclaimed by the Apostles in the preaching of the Gospel, and those who were prepared to listen and consider were exhorted to "save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). Whilst this appeal con-

tinued, the judgment of Yahweh of hosts was held in abeyance. Hence, for the time being, there was no resistance to their opposition. However the use of the present tense by James, implied that the Just One, whom they had murdered, now lived, and possessed the power to resist them, though, for the moment, he did not exercise it.

The First Century Coming of Christ — vv. 7-8

Jewish believers are urged to exercise patient endurance in the face of persecution, on the grounds that relief from their sufferings is near at hand. This would be through the overthrow of the Jewish State by the Romans, which would limit the opposition of Jews to the Christians, and the harassment of the poorer believing members of the community by its rich and powerful leaders. As the Roman attack is represented in Scripture as being Christ directed, it is treated as a manifestation of his "coming" or parousia. James exhorts his readers how they should conduct themselves in view of Christ's "coming"; and though his words primarily relate to his age they have similar application today.

VERSE 7

"Be patient therefore, brethren" — The exhortation urges readers to bear patiently the trials to which they were subjected for relief was imminent. The Greek word is *makrothumeo*. See note below.

"Unto the coming of the Lord" — The word "coming" is from the Greek *parousia*. It is made up of *para* "with" and *ousia* "being", and therefore denotes personal presence in contrast to *apousia*, "absence". However, the word also denotes the presence of one in an official capacity. Moulton & Milligan in *Vocabulary of the New Testament* states: "What, however, more especially concerns us in connection with the usage of *parousia* is the quasi-technical force of the word from the Ptolemaic times onwards to denote the visit of a king, emperor, or other person in authority, the official character of the 'visit' being further emphasised by the taxes or payments that were exacted to make preparations for it." They cite papyri to show that Christians were conversant with this usage of the word.

In that light, the "coming" or *parousia* of the Lord, can denote his presence in

his official capacity or authority as King. When the Apostles asked the Lord concerning the "sign of his coming" or *parousia* (Matt. 24:3) they did not refer to his return from heaven, because they thought the kingdom of God would immediately appear (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6). They enquired what sign they might expect to denote his elevation to, and manifestation of his official capacity as king, exercising the power and authority to establish his rule throughout the land. In reply, he made reference to two occasions when he would be thus revealed: one in the first century when the Romans would march against the Jewish State; and the other at his second coming. In predicting the Roman invasion of A.D. 70 he related it to his coming (Matt. 24:27). That was because the Romans moved at his instigation though they were unconscious of the fact. In recounting the parable of the King punishing his rebellious subjects, the Lord declared: "He was wrath; and he sent forth *his* armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matt. 22:7). The reference is to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and the significant fact is that they are described as the armies of the King, because they performed his will. Accordingly, the Roman attack upon guilty Judea, and the judgment poured out upon Jerusalem thereby are represented as being under the direction of Christ, and therefore as tokens of his elevation to authority. In the secondary meaning of the word, as described by the citation above, this was his *parousia*, or the manifestation of his power. Before his ascension to heaven he told his disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18), and Peter recalls these words in 1 Pet. 3:22. But the token of this power, and therefore of his authority as ruler, or his *parousia*, (rendered "coming") was the outpouring of judgment on Jerusalem.

In line with this, the word *parousia* is used to describe the transfiguration of Christ on the mount (2 Pet. 1:16) because it set forth his majesty. See this subject discussed further in our notes on 2 Pet. 3:4.

With this significance of the "coming of the Lord" in mind, James exhorted believers in his day to exercise patience, and encouraged them with the declaration that the *parousia* of the Lord drew near.

"Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth" — The farmer waits patiently for rain and sunshine to cause the seed to germinate and grow into a plant and for its grain to ripen. He is dependent upon these God-given benefits which he cannot control. Nor can God's servants hasten the development of the divine plan. Having absolute confidence in Yahweh to fulfil His purpose, they must exercise patience in awaiting Him to act. The word "waiteth" is from *ekdechetai*, and signifies to wait with confident anticipation that the expectation will be realised.

"And hath long patience for it" — The Greek *makrothumeo* signifies *long-tempered*. It implies patient waiting with self-restraint that does not retaliate against wrong. This form of patience or long-suffering is an attribute of Yahweh (Luke 18:7; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:9,15), and therefore should be developed by those who are called to be like Him.

"Until he receive the early and latter rain" — The husbandman saw in the rain an evidence of divine goodness (Deut. 11:14; Ruth 1:6). The saints were to see in the judgment of A.D. 70, a similar manifestation: an outpouring of punishment on the Jews that would bring them relief from their widespread persecution. (See 1 Thess. 2:14-16). Early and latter rains begin and end the winter in Israel, and winter time is the period when the face of the sun is hidden (cp. Mal. 4:1-2).

VERSE 8

"Be ye also patient" — Greek *Makrothumeo*, "long tempered". Exercise the patience of the husbandman by setting an objective always before you.

"Stablish your hearts" — Let your purposes and your faith be firm and unflinching. Do not become weary with waiting; bear up under your troubles realising that your deliverance will ultimately come.

"For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" — The *Diaglott* renders this: "his coming has approached." As today, watchers among the brethren could detect the signs that spake of the end of the Mosaic age. See note 1 Pet. 4:7.

Supporting References: Genesis 49:18; Psalms 27:14; 37:7; 40:1-3; 130:5; Lamentations 3:25-26; Micah 7:7; Habakkuk 2:3; Romans 8:25; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 10:35-37.

Advice In View Of Christ's Coming — vv. 9-11

Whilst awaiting the promised judgment on their oppressors at the coming of the Lord, James advises his brethren in the faith concerning their conduct. His words have application today as we, too, await Christ's coming.

VERSE 9

"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned" — The Greek word *stenazo* rendered "grudge" denotes to groan or grieve, as in the margin. The R. V. renders it *murmur not*. There is nothing so depressing, nor so calculated to weaken faith, than murmuring and complaining. So James warns that if, instead of bearing trouble patiently, the brethren indulge in groaning and complaining one to the other, they will grieve and weaken the confidence of each other, thereby contributing to a lessening of faith on the part of all. Such an attitude can well bring saints into condemnation. It needs to be remembered that it was the complaining of the people shortly after they left Horeb that became the root cause of the failure of the first generation of Israelites to enter the Land of Promise (Num. 11:1-5). We may look upon grumbling as a little sin, but if we permit it to become habitual it will spring on us at all times to spoil every endeavour (See Phil. 2:14). Israelites brought condemnation on themselves through their grumbling and murmuring, yet in view of the difficulties of their journey, they had greater cause to do so than have we. Let us take heed, lest we be condemned.

"Behold, the judge standeth before the door" — James' comment signifies the Lord Jesus Christ, as Judge of that age, was about to enter the arena in the sense outlined previously. As all power in heaven and in earth had been given him (Matt. 28:18), the judgment poured out on guilty Judea in A. D. 70 at the hands of the Romans was evidence of his authority and power, and therefore of his *parousia*, or authoritative presence. In like manner, at this time, he stands at the door, ready for future judgment. See comment on Rev. 3:20.

Supporting references: 1 Cor. 10:9-11; 1 Pet. 4:9.

VERSE 10

"Take, my brethren" — James' constant use of this intimate term suggests his

tender solicitude and concern for the wellbeing of those believers to whom he wrote. He would appeal to them, not command (see James 1:2,16,19; 2:1,5; 3:1,10; 4:11; 5:7,10,12,19). The word *adelphos* implies a union from the womb, and therefore, in a community, people united by a common origin of birth. In the case of the Ecclesia that uniting birth is of heavenly origin through knowledge and baptism (John 3:3,5; 1 Pet. 1:23), and because it is mentally stimulated, it creates a bond closer than fleshly family ties.

"The prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord" — Despite the fact that the prophets spoke in the name of Yahweh, and therefore, with His authority, they experienced the animosity of their fellows (cp. Matt. 5:12; 23:29) especially the Lord Jesus, the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7:28). In view of their experience, believers should not consider any opposition they may receive as strange (see 1 Pet. 4:12-16).

"For an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" — The word *affliction* should be eliminated as in the R. V. Then there is a play on words: "an example of suffering and of long-suffering". The prophets provide wonderful examples by the manner in which they endured suffering.

Supporting references: 2 Chron. 36:16; Jer. 2:30; 20:2; 33:1; 38:6; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess. 2:14-15; Heb. 11:32-38; 12:3-7.

VERSE 11

"Behold, we count them happy which endure" — The Greek word *makarizo* here rendered "we count happy" is translated *call blessed* in Luke 1:48. It is the verbal form of the adjective *makarios* rendered blessed in the beatitudes of Matt. 5:3-10. The cause of happiness in such circumstances is recorded in Matt. 10:22; Heb. 12:2. The faithful keep "the joy set before them" always in their spiritual sight.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job" — Job provides an outstanding example of patience in suffering. See Job 1:21. His experiences also reveal the purpose of suffering. Job's three friends were dominated by a false theory that a person's sins or otherwise, were invariably measured by the extent of his sufferings. Job suffered greatly, hence Job must have been a most evil sinner. The fact that his friends could not pin-point his sins availed nought. In fact it served to

show that he was hypocritical in his assumed righteousness! Job, on his part, refuted the theory, for he knew that it was wrong. He recognised that his sufferings were from God, but he could not understand their purpose, for he endeavoured, in every way possible, to live in accordance with the divine will. His sufferings were not necessary for the purification of his character, in spite of the allegations of his associates, for Yahweh gave testimony to his righteousness (Job 1:1,8). In view of their claims to the contrary, he felt completely frustrated until the revelation of Yahweh placed all matters in proper perspective. Then it was revealed that his example of steadfast endurance in the face of bitter trial and prolonged provocation was not in vain. He suffered, not merely for himself, but like Christ, for the benefit of his friends. They became convinced of their mistake, and Job who was vindicated by Yahweh, presided as a priest in their sacrifices of atonement (Job. 42:7-9).

“And have seen the end of the Lord” — Job’s example not only shows the extent of trial that a man of faith is capable of enduring but also reveals the goodness of Yahweh. Job was blessed with greater prosperity in his latter end than he enjoyed before his sufferings came upon him, and had the added joy of being completely united in fellowship with his friends. Therefore, both he and his friends benefited from his sufferings, as both Christ and his friends benefit from his. That is the basic lesson of the *Book of Job*. It shows that sufferings in the Lord are not in vain. They can help perfect the characters of those who suffer, and, in addition, provide an example of fortitude and faith that can stimulate others to do likewise. The statement “the end of the Lord” denotes the latter end to which Yahweh brought Job. It implies that the patriarch’s ultimate elevation was designed by Yahweh from the beginning. The word “end” is from the Greek *telos* and denotes the *completion* of a process. This is seen in the perfection of Job’s character, and the greater blessings he received in his final prosperity. If we are called upon to suffer for the truth’s sake, we can be assured that there are great things in store for us if we endure faithfully to the end. Paul wrote: “I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom.

8:18). Yahweh has predetermined a great destiny for those who are obedient to His will (Eph. 1:5-6).

“That the Lord is very pitiful” — The Greek word *polusplagchnos* signifies *full of pity*. It is derived from a word *splagchnon* “the bowels”, which were regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of the most tender affections. The expression, therefore, denotes the feelings of a parent for his child because of the close relationship between them. Whilst a wise parent will discipline his child, he is always ready to extend the hand of help, sympathy and love. The parable of the prodigal son illustrates the lovingkindness of Yahweh. Though the son confessed that he was not deserving of any consideration, he received a warm welcome and complete forgiveness when he returned to his compassionate father. His father was waiting for him, and eagerly extended the hand of love to his repentant son (Luke 15:20-21). The word “compassion”, which in the parable describes the attitude of the father, is derived from *splagchnon*. Yahweh is very compassionate towards His people (see Exod. 34:6-7). Isaiah declared: “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of Yahweh . . . in all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them” (See Isa. 63:7-9). Isaiah’s words show that Yahweh *felt* for His people, even though He saw the need to discipline them. He was ever ready to receive them in love when they turned to Him.

“And of tender mercy” — The word “mercy” here is a rendition of *oiktirmon* which denotes tender compassion for others in their trials. The word occurs twice in Luke 6:36: “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful”. The previous verse illustrates what this requires, for it describes the Father as being kind even unto “the unthankful and the evil”. Hence our two expressions reveal that Yahweh has a *desire* to help (He is full of pity), and His character is of such a nature (of tender mercy) that He *will* help, beyond our ability to repay. Paul describes Yahweh as the Father of mercies (2 Cor. 1:3), for His compassion is such that He will extend Himself to help.

Supporting references: 1 Chron. 21:13; 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17,31; Psa. 25:6,7; 37:37; 51:1; 78:38; 86:5,15; 94:12; 103:13; 145:8; Isa. 55:6-7; Jon. 4:2; Mic. 7:18; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:9.

Final Advice For The Present Distress — vv. 12-20

In view of the approaching crisis, and the close association of Jewish believers with it, special care is to be observed. Restraint must be shown against binding themselves in oaths; and the aid of prayer must be sought in all circumstances. Finally, the greatest consideration and co-operation must be shown towards each other.

VERSE 12

“But above all things” — In view of current troubles, the uncertainties of the morrow and the imminence of the time of the end, James exhorted that special restraint should be shown.

“Swear not” — James previously encouraged his readers to patiently endure affliction in the certainty of ultimate deliverance; now he warns them to avoid the evils that spring from impatience. Solomon likewise warned against being rash with the mouth and of being hasty in uttering anything before God. He declared that when vows are made they must be carried out, and advised that it is better not to vow, than to do so and not pay (Ecc. 5:2,4-5. See also Psa. 15:4; Acts 5:4).

“Neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath” — These are similar words to those of Christ, though Christ also explains why such oaths should not be made. See Matt. 5:34-37.

“But let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” — The warning of both Solomon (Ecc. 5:1-6), and of Christ (Matt. 5:37) endorse these words of James. Great care needs to be exercised before we vow to do anything before Yahweh; and when we do so, every endeavour must be made to carry out what we have vowed to do.

VERSE 13

“Is any among you afflicted” — Joy and sorrow have their outlet, not in making hasty oaths through an excess of the former, nor in ranting against life because of the latter; but in expressions of praise and appeal to the Father (see Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16). The word “affliction” is from the Greek *kakopatheo* and signifies suffering hardship as described in v. 10.

“Let him pray” — Prayer is efficacious

in time of trouble. The afflicted can share his sufferings, or his sorrow, with God, and find relief from his troubles. Moreover, Yahweh can help (see 2 Chron. 33:12-13; Psa. 34:14; 107:6,13,28; Isa. 50:10). Irrespective as to the forms that trials take, or whether we are personally responsible for the evil that has come upon us, help can be derived from prayer. It is a wonderful privilege that we can commune with Yahweh, and one that should be exercised at all times. Affliction is a valuable experience, for it helps to destroy confidence in self and humbles one to seek the assistance of Yahweh. It also makes the coming of Christ appear more desirable, so helping to develop a state of mind inducing a love of “the Lord’s appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Supporting references: Psa. 18:6; 50:15; 91:15; 116:3-5; 118:5; 142:1-3; Lam. 3:55-56; Luke 22:44; 23:42; Acts 16:24-25; Phil. 4:4; Heb. 5:7.

“Is any merry?” — Under such an influence the tendency of flesh is to give way to folly in manifestation of happiness. The word rendered “merry”, *euthumeo*, signifies to be happy, cheerful and carefree in mind so as to experience a state of wellbeing. See Prov. 15:13,15; 17:22; Isa. 24:7; Luke 15:23,24, 29,32.

“Let him sing psalms” — The R.V. renders this: *Let him sing praise*. The same word *psallo* is rendered *making melody* in Eph. 5:19. The idea is to sing songs that are in harmony with the feeling of gladness, to the praise of the “Giver of every good and perfect gift”. In moments of happiness it is natural for one to give expression to their joy by music, either in tune or words. Let that music, those words, be such as praise Yahweh. This means that one should exercise restraint in his expressions of joy and gladness. The praising will minimise the effect of affliction, the singing restrain the excess of merriment. Both forms of discipline are valuable. See 1 Chron. 16:9.

VERSE 14

“Is any sick among you” — The word “sick” is *astheneo*, from a negative and *sthenos*, “strength”. It therefore describes one who lacks strength, is weak or feeble through sickness or any other cause. Though the word is used to describe those who are physically weak through some malady (see Matt. 10:8;

Luke 4:40; John 4:46), it is also used to describe those who are morally or spiritually weak through lack of faith (see Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:7,10; 9:22). From the context it would appear that James' question has relation to any who felt too weak to face the severe persecution that would shortly be directed against them by the Romans (see 1 Pet. 4:12-13), and to which he refers (James 5:10).

"Let him call for the elders of the Ecclesia" — There are two important provisions to this instruction. First, it is those who feel their weakness, their lack of strength, who are to seek the help of the elders, and not the elders who are commanded to seek them out. This implies that their weakness is felt inwardly, and is not necessarily manifested openly. As noted above, James' advice appears to be given in view of the "fiery trial that was to try believers" in the near future (1 Pet. 4:12). There was a need to prepare for this, particularly on the part of those whose fear weakened their resolve, and the recommendation of James was for them to seek out experienced brethren who would be capable of fortifying their faith. Second, it is significant that those who recognised their weakness were not instructed to send for the Apostles, or for those in the Ecclesia who possessed the gift of healing (1 Cor. 12:9), but for the elders. From this it is evident that James was not referring to the miraculous cure of physical ills. Obviously, the lack of strength was due to lack of faith, and there was a need to develop moral fortitude through faith in order that their prayers might become efficacious and power-inspiring (see v. 15).

The word "elders" is from the Greek *presbuterion* (1 Tim. 4:14), derived from a root implying age or spiritual maturity. It is used in the sense of age in Luke 15:25; John 8:9, but it also denotes spiritual maturity. The term is used to denote an assembly of aged or mature men, such as the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5), or the appointed overseers of an Ecclesia. The *Presbuterion* of James' day would be comparable to the Arranging Brethren of an Ecclesia today; the important difference being that elders were appointed by the spirit in Apostolic times, and their appointment endorsed by the laying on of hands.

Those members who felt their weakness, their lack of strength (whether it

was through physical or moral reasons), and inability to cope with the increasing difficulties facing them in maintaining their integrity in the Truth were urged to approach the appointed leaders of the Ecclesia and seek their help towards strengthening their faith by fellowship in communal prayer and the word.

"And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord"

— The term, "pray over him" is explained by some as praying with hands extended over him, as in Mk. 6:5; 16:17-18; Luke 13:13; Acts 28:8. To pray with hands uplifted was often the stance adopted in prayer (Exod. 17:11; 1 Tim. 2:8), the extended hands beseeching heaven's help. However, James says nothing about hands being placed upon those for whom prayer was to be made, though that is often read into his words. He refers to communal prayer on the part of the elders in conjunction with those who felt their lack of strength. This communal prayer (the second form of prayer mentioned by James) together with the presence, solicitude, and advice of the elders would build up any who lacked the spiritual strength to face the difficult future. James does not claim that this action of the elders would cure the weak, for it is the weak believer's prayer of faith alone that will do that (v. 15). The object in mind was to strengthen the faith of the weak, so as to make his prayer efficacious. In fact, if the passage is read without bias, there is no suggestion of a miraculous cure as is often suggested. Nor was the miraculous gift of healing merely to cure physical sickness; it was inevitably used as a witness of the Gospel to save. For example, Paul wrote concerning Epaphroditus that he had been extremely ill, "nigh unto death" (Phil. 2:25-27). However, though Paul had exercised the privilege of prayer (see Phil. 2:27), as James now advises the brethren to do, he could not use the gift of healing in such a case, though he undoubtedly possessed it. Such miraculous powers were not for general use, but for special use, in order to authenticate the Gospel proclaimed. Epaphroditus' life had been jeopardised through overwork (v. 30). The communal prayer of Paul and his associates, supplemented by the prayer of faith of Epaphroditus himself, eventually effected a cure.

What was the purpose in anointing a sick person with oil? It is true that oil was

used as a medicament in those times (Lk. 10:34), but that hardly seems the intent here. Anointing with oil would not assist any who were either spiritually or physically weak. But there was another, symbolic purpose in anointing, illustrated by the law. Under its ordinances, priests were anointed when consecrated to their high office, but that was not with oil, but with a special ointment made for such occasions (Exod. 30:30-38). On the other hand, those who were cleansed from the scourge of leprosy were anointed with oil (Lev. 14:10-18). And, by the Law, leprosy was treated as sin. The leper was excluded from worship, and had to seek the aid of a priest rather than a physician (Lev. 13:2). Every case of leprosy recorded in Scripture is God-designed for some purpose or other. It was a punishment imposed by Yahweh for sin. On the other hand people were promised immunity from it if they were obedient. God promised Moses that if the people "gave ear to His commandments, and kept all His statutes", he would "put none of these diseases upon them, that He had brought upon the Egyptians" (Exod. 15:26). This teaches that the Egyptian disease of leprosy was to be treated as a punishment for sin. As an example of this, the punishment of leprosy was imposed upon Miriam (Num. 12:10-15) as a warning to others who might be disposed to act rebelliously as she did. Now, part of the final cleansing and restoring of the afflicted to worship was anointing with oil (Lev. 14:10-18). What was the object in so doing? It demonstrated that the cure was from God. Oil was the symbol of the Spirit-word, that healing balm that strengthens believers in their weakness.

That, evidently, was the significance of James' reference to anointing. As we have noted on several occasions, Jewish Christians, for whom James particularly wrote, were still closely associated with the synagogue and temple. They continued with some of the ceremonies connected therewith, though now recognising greater spiritual significance in them. The example of Paul is a case in point. He went through the processes of a vow as set down in the Law (Acts 18:18), and saw nothing inconsistent with entering the Temple in order to be "at charges" with some who desired to complete their vows but lacked the resources to do so (Acts 21:22-24). In his defence before Felix he declared: "Certain Jews from

Asia found me purified in the temple" (Acts 24:18), which demonstrates his attitudes to these matters.

Likewise, Peter and John went to the Temple at the appropriate times in order to pray (Acts 3:1). Of course, those Jews who accepted Christ discovered greater meaning in the ordinances of the Law than was the case previously. They realised that Christ fulfilled the Law (Matt. 5:17), and enabled those "in him" to "establish the law" (Rom. 3:31), or give it stability and real purpose in their lives as the word *histemi* signifies.

In the light of the above, it is significant that when the Lord cured the leper, he declared to him: "See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (Matt. 8:4; Luke 5:14-15). In accordance with those instructions, the cleansed leper would have submitted to the anointing with oil required according to Lev. 14:10-18, 21, 24, 28. (See also Mark 6:13). From Luke 7:46, it is obvious that anointing the head was considered an act of courtesy and welcome.

James, however, instructed that the anointing should be done "in the name of the Lord." This was in accordance with the new formula required of converts following the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 2:21; 4:17-18; 5:40; 9:21; 15:26; 26:9), and which constituted a powerful witness to the truth in him. The recommendation of James, therefore, involved both prayer and anointing. The former was a direct approach to heaven to help the one who lacked strength, whether his case was spiritual or physical; and the latter was a symbolic action denoting the source from whence the help can come. John adds his testimony by aligning the anointing with the Truth (1 John 2:27), and this is enforced by Paul who declared that faith cometh by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The communal prayer, therefore, voiced the request for strength unto God; and the anointing of oil symbolically set forth what was needful on the part of the applicant: the application to himself of the Word of God.

Why is anointing not practised by Christ's followers today? Because it is not required. As we have seen, James wrote for Jewish believers who followed the practice of the Apostles in using the Law and the Temple services where they could

assist the Truth. Instructions were sent forth by James himself to Gentile believers that there was no need for them to follow in the same course (see Acts 15:19-21). Therefore, when Paul visited Jerusalem, the suggestion was made to him that in order to demonstrate that he was not opposed to Jewish believers observing aspects of the Law, that he ceremonially "purify himself" with others. To this suggestion there was added the important statement: "As touching the Gentiles which believer, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing (i.e. observing the ordinances of the Law), save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts 21:20-26).

The symbolic action of anointing with oil which James recommended to Jewish believers, therefore, has no application to Gentiles who accept Christ. For that reason it is not practised by those who take into account all related passages of the Word.

VERSE 15

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick" — The conjunction *and* links this statement with the verse that goes before it. The ministrations of the elders, together with the influence of the spirit word, having strengthened the faith of the brother, his prayers have been made more powerful. His faith will equip him to overcome the problems that previously weakened him. This is the third form of prayer mentioned by James: (1) Personal — "Let him pray"; (2) United — "Let them pray . . ." (3) Believing — "the prayer of faith . . ."

In this verse the two words "Save" and "Sick" need further consideration. The first word has been rendered "whole" in such places as Matthew 9:21-22. The word does not signify merely to be cured physically, but also spiritually, so as to offer acceptable worship. The word "sick" is a different word from that of v. 14. It is from the Greek *kamno*, and signifies *weariness of mind*. This word illustrates the form of sickness or weakness described in v. 14.

"And the Lord shall raise him up" — If proper measures are taken to strengthen the sick in faith, the assurance is given that they will be successful.

"And if he have committed sins, they

shall be forgiven him" — The reference to sins is very relevant to the sickness referred to in vv. 14-15. Sins induce feelings of weakness. They can cause mental sickness, lack of confidence, and extreme depression of mind.

These verses, therefore, are not treating with the miraculous gifts of healing such as were in evidence then, but rather the strengthening of those who feel their weakness in the face of affliction, or who are sick and depressed in mind through the knowledge of sins committed. There is a natural development observable throughout, revealing that James is exhorting what should be done by brethren in the face of the impending crisis. First, the fortitude of the prophets should be adopted (v. 10); second Job's patience under extreme trial should be emulated; third, Yahweh's overshadowing of his life leading to his ultimate vindication should be considered and drawn upon. All this provides both example and encouragement. To follow it is to solve the problems of the moment. At the same time, they are exhorted to derive strength through the Word and Prayer. Additional help can be gained from seeking the communion of the elders of the Ecclesia, and by recognising and confessing to failings and faults.

Supporting references: Isa. 33:24; Matt. 9:2-6; Mark 2:5-11; John 5:14; 1 Cor. 11:30-32; 1 John 5:14-16.

VERSE 16

"Confess your faults one to another" — The word *exomologeō*, an intensive form of *homologōō* signifies to openly and publicly acknowledge one's faults. The word occurs in Phil. 2:11 where, again, it signifies to publicly acknowledge. For each one to openly recognise and confess to his failings will guard against a censorious attitude being manifested towards others. Each one will be humbled by the realisation of personal weakness, and the common need of divine strength and forgiveness. The instruction of James does not endorse the Catholic concept of confession of sins, nor does it imply the morbid retailing of failings in detail, but merely the acknowledgment in recognition of personal failings, that "all have sinned". This requirement seems primarily to refer to those who were *sick*, since it is added, "that ye may be healed". The implication, therefore is that sickness was more

spiritual and mental rather than physical. Consequently, the recognition of their sins would be an important contribution to the restoration of their spiritual health. (Cp. Matt. 18:15-17; Acts 19:18).

"And pray one for another" — This is a further use of prayer: mutual prayer in which one voices concern to Yahweh for his associates in the faith. Prayer is not a selfish, exclusive retailing of one's personal needs or wants, without consideration of others' needs, but can become an expression of fellowship, as each shares the needs of his or her associates in the truth. Paul constantly prayed for others (Col. 1:9-10; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:3 etc). To "pray one for another" is to review the circumstances and needs of one's brethren and sisters in the Ecclesia, and to bear them up before God. This requires careful and sympathetic concern for the spiritual welfare of others. The spiritually sick, having recognised and acknowledged their failings, might well seek the help of such prayers.

"That ye may be healed" — This refers to the form of healing that is the subject of James' words: healing from the weakness and weariness of sin, not healing of physical maladies. In that regard, the recognition and acknowledgement of one's failings, the bearing them up to God for forgiveness, and the seeking of His strength in prayer provide the means of spiritual health. The Greek word rendered "healed" in this place is *iaomai*, and is used for both physical and spiritual healing. For the latter, see Matt. 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Heb. 12:13; 1 Pet. 2:24.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" — The word "effectual" is redundant in this sentence. It is omitted by the R.V. which translates the sentence: "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much *in its working*". This latter phrase translates the verb *energeo* which signifies to *put forth power, be operative, to work results*. As "the man" is described as "righteous", it is obvious that he has first made himself "right" with God before engaging in this prayer; so that now, with singleness of mind, he addresses Yahweh with fervency in prayer. The effect of such a prayer will be stimulating to the pray-er, as well as being energetic in its outworking as Yahweh grants the petitions that are requested. The verb used is *energeo-*

mai, and signifies *to work in*, and therefore *inworking*. The prayer is not a dead request, but is active in its operation. The supplications of a righteous man will be consistent with the will of God, because they will be guided by the spirit word (Phil. 2:5). See 1 Kings 17:20; Psa. 109:4; Prov. 15:29; 1 John 5:14-15.

Supporting references: Gen. 19:29; 20:7,17; 32:28; Exod. 9:23,29,33; 17:11; 32:10-14; Num. 11:2; 14:13-20; 21:7-9; Deut. 9:18-20; Josh. 10:12; 1 Sam. 12:18; 1 Kings 13:6; 17:18-20; 2 Kings 4:33-35; 19:15-20; 20:2-5; 2 Chron. 14:11-12; 32:20-22; Job. 42:8; Psa. 10:17-18; 32:5-6; 34:15; 145:18-19; Prov. 15:8,29; 28:9; Jer. 29:10-14; Dan. 2:18-23; 9:20-22; Hos. 12:3-4; Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:11-13; 18:1-8; Jhn. 9:31; Acts 4:24-31; 12:5-11.

VERSE 17

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are" — Elijah was a distinguished prophet, but, nevertheless, of our nature, with its associated failings.

"And he prayed earnestly that it might not rain" — In the Greek, the word prayer occurs twice as rendered in the margin: *He prayed in his prayer*. Two very closely related words occur in conjunction: *proseuche* and *proseuchomai*. *Pros* signifies *towards one*, in this case, towards God, whilst *euche* denotes a supplication, a request. Young renders it as a *pouring forth before* (God), and renders this verse as "with pouring forth, he poured forth before (God)". This literal rendition expresses the urgency and intensity of Elijah's prayer that resulted in such dramatic results, demonstrating the power of prayer. The occasion is recorded in 1 Kings 17:1. However, the reference does not state that Elijah prayed, though that fact is endorsed by the words of James. Elijah's request, of course, was not made out of petty spite or personal retaliation against Israel because his message had not been accepted, but in order to humble the kingdom of Ahab.

"And it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" — In 1 Kings 18:1 the statement is made that rain fell on the third year, that is, at the end of the third year after it had ceased to fall at the usual time. There are two seasons of rain in the Land, called the early and latter rains, and they are preceded by six months of dry weather. For three years the normal rains had been withheld, and with the previous six

months' dry the time indicated by James (and also by Christ — see Luke 4:25) was fulfilled. Rain ultimately fell at the request of Elijah in the third year of drought after the normal time for rainfall (1 Kings 18:1,45).

The Lord's ministry likewise occupied three and a half years, and they were years of drought as far as the nation was concerned. At the conclusion of that ministry there was the appearance of rain in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and believers, the "former rain" predicted by the prophet Joel (see Acts 2:17-18; Joel 2:23). Three and a half years, in Jewish reckoning based upon the lunar month, represents a period of 1260 days, a very significant epoch on prophetic chronology. The period of "time, times and dividing of time" (three and a half years) provides a total of 1260 days, during which, according to Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 7:25) the Papacy has exercised power over the saints in a period of spiritual drought as far as the world is concerned. See also Dan. 12:11; Rev. 11:3 etc. On that basis, the period of Christ's ministry forms the basis of the "two witnesses" sackcloth ministry as described in Rev. 11:3. During that time, the believers amongst them fellow-shipped the sufferings of the Lord. Notice, too, that of the witnesses it is said that they had "power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy", that is for the 1260 prophetic days (Rev. 11:6). For further study see *Apocalypse Epitomised*.

VERSE 18

"And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" — This incident is reported in 1 Kings 18:42-45, and shows the efficacy of prayer. The word for "prayed" here is *proseuchomai*, and denotes supplication that is made towards God. Young renders it a pouring forth towards (God). There was earnestness and urgency in the expressions of Elijah's prayer. Seven times he poured out his heart before Yahweh, casting himself down upon the earth, and placing his face between his knees in the intensity of his petition and supplication. And on the seventh occasion he received his answer: there arose a small cloud from the west. Prayer, to Elijah, meant the full concentration of the mind towards Yahweh, and the most urgent appeal in the intensity of his feel-

ings. His prayer was not a mere utterance of words without concentration of mind and expenditure of effort, but one so fervent as to completely drain him of energy. He "agonised in prayer" (Rom. 15:30). The result was that it was answered. The rain came, and the earth brought forth fruit. It did so again in the first century after the ministry of the Lord, through the outpouring of the Spirit which is likened to a "former rain" (Acts 2:16-17; Joel 2:23). Men went forth preaching the Gospel and reaping a great increase of harvest. James' reference to the efficacy of prayer reminded those to whom he wrote of the tremendous power they could draw upon in time of need: but the examples he used showed the intensity of concentration, feeling and effort needed for such an exercise to be completely efficacious.

Supporting references: Jer. 14:22; Acts 14:17.

Saving From Sin — vv. 19-20

James closes his epistle with a final warning. The problems that were arising, and would continue to do so with the impending crisis would test all believers, causing some to err from the Truth. In such cases, other brethren, recognising their own weakness, should extend themselves, with sympathetic understanding, to come to their aid. Their assistance in such circumstances may not only save the sinner from the error of his way, but in doing so, help to save him in the day of judgment.

VERSE 19

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth" — The word "err" signifies to wander. The current trials could cause this. Hence it was necessary to carefully consider each other with the object of assisting one another in time of need.

"And one convert him" — The word *epistrepheo* means to turn back again, not to convert in the sense of teaching the truth. To act in the way James exhorts is an important part of a shepherd's work in the Lord. The shepherds of Israel were indicted because they were indifferent to the needs of their flocks (Ezek. 34:4,16). On the other hand, Christ advocated that the greatest care should be extended to them. See his comment in Matt. 18:3, and his parable of the lost sheep (Matt. 18:12).

Supporting References: Luke 22:32; John 13:13-15; Rom. 4:1-4; Gal. 6:1; 2 Pet. 3:17; Jude 22-23.

VERSE 20

“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death” — If a soul is saved from death, it is obvious that the soul is not immortal (Ezek. 18:4)! However, James is not interested in refuting a false doctrine but in emphasising the importance of the work of converting sinners. They face death, so that exhorting and guiding such in ways of righteousness are among the most important tasks that an ecclesial “shepherd” can undertake. Moreover, the work does not depend upon public speaking, but can be done quietly and effectively in private. And how important is the work! If one, in spectacular manner, were to save another from drowning, or from a burning building, he would receive widespread acclaim. But perhaps the one he saved may have preferred to have terminated his life, and, in any case, would be saved only for a life of frustration leading to death. But let one endeavour to save his brother from the consequences of an inconsistent walk, and though he may find himself repulsed or stigmatised as being too restrictive or narrow, in fact, he performs a service more valuable than that of the life-guard or fireman. A sinner is saved for a life of unending glory in the Kingdom, not for one of suffering and mortality! Unfortunately, it is frequently the case that the sinner does not realise that he is sinning, nor the gravity of his action. Care, tact and determination are needed to save sinners in the circumstances referred to by James.

“And shall hide a multitude of sins” — In saving the sinner from the error of his ways, he shall cause him to turn to where those sins can be “hidden” or forgiven. David, in his extremity, discovered the need of a covering, and vowed that if Yahweh granted it, “Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee” (Psa. 51:13). Receiving the mercy of Yahweh in the forgiveness of his own sins, he declared: “Blessed is he whose transgression is

forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psa. 32:1). As an example of that blessedness, he advanced his own cause. He declared: “I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Yahweh, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah! *For this shall every one that is Godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found*” (Psa. 32:5-6). Previously, David had hidden his sin, refusing to acknowledge it before Yahweh (v. 3); but with the revelation given him by Nathan (2 Sam. 12), he learned the fundamental lesson, that if one wants his sins covered, he must open them up to Yahweh, and seek His forgiveness.

The R.V. renders the verb *hide* as *cover*. James taught that believers can assist one another in this regard. When a brother is seen to be wandering from the path of righteousness, it is the responsibility of his fellows to endeavour to reclaim him. In contrast to that, Cain asked: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” In fact, he was! Therefore we dare not remain indifferent to the actions of others. Those who assist their brethren in the manner described by James help to cover the sins of those who stray. They will view the failings of others charitably, and try to help as best they can (1 Pet. 4:8). In doing so, they act towards their brethren as Christ acted towards them. And this being the concluding comment of James in this epistle, he ends it on the note of the Royal Law (James 2:8): consideration for others, recognising the need of all. He exhorts on the need for acknowledging that all fall short of the glory of God, emphasising the need of confessing this fact one to another. On that basis he urges all to mutually strive to help each other to the Kingdom.

On this note of service to others, rather than censoriousness of their sins, the epistle closes. In many ways, it is similar to the 1 Peter which now the student may take up as an extension of the foundation laid by James, namely, that we should look unto Jesus as “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

Supporting references: Prov. 10:2,12; 11:4,30; Rom. 11:14; 1 Cor. 9:22; 1 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 4:8.

The First Epistle of Peter

Setting forth the Principle of

Triumph in Tribulation

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

No one acquainted with the life of Christ needs any introduction to Peter — Peter the impulsive — the hopeful; and this epistle accords with his character. The keynote is hope (1 Peter 1:3). The occasion of the letter is impending trial; hence the consolation and encouragement. But the greatest exhortation is derived from the change in Peter himself. In the Gospels, Peter saw his Lord transfigured; in this Epistle, we see Peter transfigured by the boundless grace of God. The key-word is "suffering" which is referred to some twenty-one times in this short book, and in every chapter the sufferings of Christ are referred to. But the vision of Peter enables us to look beyond trials to the glory to be ultimately revealed (1 Peter 1:7).

Introduction

The First Epistle of Peter

THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE

The first Epistle of Peter is a most valuable study particularly from two aspects: (a) as a character study of the great Apostle himself; and (b) as a guide to Divine glory.

The Epistle testifies to the transforming power of God. Peter is a changed man, no longer belligerent, boastful and headstrong, but a mellowed "shepherd of the sheep" (Ch. 5:1-4), anxious to tend and guide with care those who might find difficulties in walking the pathway of life. Drawing heavily upon his own past mistakes and experiences he is able to help them.

It is recorded in the Acts that when the people saw the great change wrought in the Apostles of the Lord following his resurrection and ascension, "they marvelled"; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). We may marvel at the change effected in Peter as evidenced by the Epistle before us, and see in it the impact of Christ upon one who is prepared to receive his instruction. It is valuable to note the sections of the Epistle which obviously have developed out of Peter's own experiences. How deeply his own past failures must have been imbedded on the mind of the Apostle, as he exhorts the brethren to avoid the very things that he himself once committed. He had once impatiently repudiated with oaths the suggestion that he was a follower of Jesus, but now he writes:

"For what glory is it, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (Ch. 2:20).

He was the uneasy witness of Christ's sufferings, and could write from personal observation of his Master the following words:

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (Ch. 2:22-23).

Again:

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,

and the witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also the partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (Ch. 5:1).

We read that Peter after he had denied his Lord, and when the fact of his perfidy was brought home to him, went out into the night and "wept bitterly." Could it have been that the memory of those bitter moments caused him to dictate, by very contrast, the words of chapter 3:10-13:

"For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous (cp. Luke 22:61), and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good."

Peter was one who fell asleep when the Lord called upon him to watch in Gethsemane whilst he strengthened himself in prayer; but now the Apostle writes:

"The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch (keep awake) unto prayer" (Ch 4:7).

There was, furthermore, that poignant discourse, recorded in John Ch. 21, where the Lord asked Peter; "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" And Peter replied: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee" (v.15). Three times the question was asked, and three times a similar reply given. The Authorised Version, however, does not do full justice to the incident. We note that the word "love" used by the Lord in the first two questions is, in the Greek *agapao*, expressive of a self-sacrificing love that sees service to others as the sole concern. Peter in his replies used an entirely different word, *phileo*, which relates to a tender affection. Such Peter had always had for the Lord, even when in a moment of weakness he denied him. Now recognising his weakness, and remembering his past failing, he was careful not to over-estimate his feelings and abilities, and did not feel worthy of the greater love around which the Lord had built his question. He, therefore, admitted only a tender *phileo* affection for his Master.

When, on the third occasion, Jesus changed to the very word that Peter had used previously and asked: "lovest (*phileo*) thou me?" Peter was grieved. It was as if the Lord was calling in question even the very affection Peter claimed to have for him. But, when the question was humbly affirmed, the Lord pointed out that where such affection exists it must be revealed in action: "Feed my sheep."

As a result of this heartsearching conversation the gracious Lord gave Peter the assurance that he would mature even to the point where he would fully manifest that greater quality of *agapao* love:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest

thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God . . ." (John 21:18-19.)

Thus the conversion of Peter, for which the Lord had prayed earlier (Luke 22:31-32) was to be accomplished in the fullest sense.

The Epistle before us gives evidence of the fulfilment of the Lord's prediction. It reveals to us a transformed character, quiet, mature, and much different from the Peter introduced to us by the Gospel records. But notice how Peter himself draws upon this very incident, in exhorting his brethren. Virtually, he suggests that they should learn by his experience. So he writes in this Epistle:

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth unto unfeigned love (*phileo*) of the brethren, see that ye love (*agapao*) one another with a pure heart fervently" (Ch. 1:22).

Again the A.V. clouds the import of what is being said, as the reader can see. The two words rendered "love" in this statement are entirely different in the original Greek text. Peter is exhorting the brethren in exactly the same terms as the Lord exhorted him; he is calling upon them to see that their *phileo* love develops into the self-sacrificing *agape* love such as Christ exhibited when he "laid down his life for the sheep."

There are many similar exhortations in this letter that obviously are developed out of Peter's personal experience. It is very profitable to note these points, and to observe the great change in outlook and character exhibited by the Apostle.

THUS WE LEARN OF THE TRANSFORMING INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S POWER IN THE LIFE OF HIS SERVANT.

Our verse by verse comments are designed to emphasise that aspect of the Epistle, as well as underlining the significance of the Apostle's message.

CHARACTER SKETCH

Simon Peter, son of Jonah (or the Hearing Rock filled with the Dove—the symbol of Christ—Matt. 12:39), was a fisherman of Bethsaida (*House of Fish*) who became a foremost "fisher of men" (Matt. 4:19). He was in partnership with his brother and James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10). Though it is not specifically stated, he was probably a disciple of John Baptist, but he was introduced to Jesus by Andrew his brother (John 1:35-41), and given the name of Peter (*Rock* or *Stone*) by the Lord (v.42).

He did not immediately follow the Lord, but was given

three calls: Firstly, as a disciple (John Ch. 1); secondly, as a companion (Matt. 4:19); and, thirdly, as an Apostle (Mk. 3:14-16; Luke 6:13-14).

He also made a threefold confession of Christ (Matt. 14:33; 16:16; John 6:68-69), each one more vehement than the preceding, and a threefold denial of the Lord which was, however, atoned for by a threefold protestation of love (John 21:15-17).

His ardor, earnestness, courage, vigor, and impulsiveness of disposition caused him to make mistakes, but also brought him to the forefront of the disciples (Matt. 10:2; Mk. 3:16; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13—he is always mentioned first). His impulsiveness caused him to be first to confess Jesus as Son of God (Matt. 16:16), but then, immediately afterwards, to be equally forward in dissuading the Lord from his chosen path of suffering (Matt. 16:22). For these two contradictory approaches he was appropriately praised and then blamed.

His life reveals him as naturally impulsive (Matt. 14:28; 17:4; John 21:7), tenderhearted and affectionate (Matt. 26:75; John 13:9; 21:15-17), possessing spiritual insight (John 6:68), and yet sometimes being very slow to grasp deeper truths (Matt. 15:15-16). He was thus courageous in testimony, yet guilty of cowardly denial (Matt. 16:16; John 18:10; Mark 14:67-71), self-sacrificing, yet inclined towards self-seeking (Matt. 19:27), and even presumptuous (Matt. 16:22; John 13:8; 18:10). Once his mind was made up, however, he was immovable in his convictions (Acts 4:19-20; 5:28-29, 40-42).

The Bible records three stages of spiritual development in his life:

His Training: This comprised his association with the Lord in his public ministry, and concluded with Christ's testimony of confidence on his behalf (John 21:18-19).

His Leadership: He revealed firm, bold leadership in the early ecclesia, initiating the appointment of Matthias to take the place of Judas (Acts 1:15); proclaiming the Gospel publicly at Pentecost (Acts 2:14); healing, preaching and defending the faith (Acts 3:4, 12; 4:8); rebuking and judging Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3, 8); preaching the truth to Cornelius and baptising Gentiles (Acts Ch.10); and openly advocating his word at the Jerusalem conference (Acts Ch.15). But despite this bold and forthright leadership, which was the very thing the Ecclesia then required, the character of Peter was not then perfected. Paul found this to be the case, when he had to oppose and rebuke him at Antioch, "because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11-14).

His Shepherding: After the foundations of the Ecclesia had been laid, Peter gradually withdrew himself from the limelight, taking upon himself a more humble and subordinate position.

James dominated in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:9, 12), and Paul did so among the Gentiles. Peter became known as the Apostle to the circumcision (Gal. 2:8), and seemed to limit his activities to those outside Jerusalem: Antioch (Gal. 2:11); Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12); Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13), where, with his wife, he became a familiar figure (1 Cor. 9:5). In obedience to the command of Christ, he set himself to guiding and feeding the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-4), and in this was no longer self-assertive as before (cp. 2 Pet. 3:15-16 with Gal. 2:11-14). Thus he finally appears in the Bible records as a completely changed man, far more powerful in his humility than he ever had been in his self-assertiveness.

EACH PHASE OF PETER'S LIFE GIVES TESTIMONY TO THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CHRIST'S EXAMPLE (see Acts 4:13).

Always eager, ardent, impulsive, always the man of action, he exhibited defects as well as qualities of character. His virtues and faults had a common root in his natural enthusiasm. But it is to his praise that his rashness was modified through truth, and by his burning zeal to follow the Lord. He was afforded special treatment by Christ, being given special attention even during the most painful period of the Lord's ministry (Luke 22:31) and afterwards (John 21:15), and being treated with the honor of a special appearance by Christ after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:5).

Peter's experiences afford instruction, warning and comfort. His two Epistles reveal the depths of experience in Christ, and soar to the utmost heights of hope as he looks to the future.

Tradition suggests that he visited Rome during the reign of Nero, and a few years later suffered martyrdom by crucifixion, as Christ had predicted he would (John 21:19). Legend has it that Peter deemed himself unworthy to die in exactly the same way as his Lord had, and so begged his executioners to crucify him upside down, which, accordingly, was done.

THE EPISTLES AS KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

In Caesarea Philippi, Peter made the notable confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," in reply to which, the Lord declared:

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Ecclesia; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." (Matt. 16:17-18).

There are significant aspects in this statement deserving our attention. Firstly, there is a play upon the words Peter and Rock,

for Peter means Rock. But there is also a significant difference in the words here used in the context. The word Peter is *Petros* in Greek, and signifies a loose, rolling stone; whereas the word Rock is *Petra*, and signifies an immovable rock! Peter, as a loose, rolling stone, can be built into an immovable place in the spiritual temple on the foundation of Christ. So taught Peter himself (1 Pet. 2:4-5). But the *Petra*, the immovable rock, did not refer to the man, but to THE DECLARATION HE MADE: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It is on the foundation of this God-inspired declaration that the Ecclesia is founded.

It is significant to note in passing, that this declaration is affirming that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, and the Son of God. That which men are pleased to call "the church" is not prepared to accept this declaration, but rejects it. "The church" knows not the true hope of Israel, and therefore does not comprehend the true position of Christ as Messiah. It furthermore claims that he is God, not the SON OF GOD.

Only those who identify themselves with the original declaration of Peter are confirmed by the words of Christ as the true Ecclesia.

The Lord, in presenting the "Keys of the Kingdom" to Peter, also told the disciples:

"Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This statement is perhaps better rendered as it is in the C. B. Williams translation of the Bible:

"Whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is permitted in heaven."

Accepting this translation, Jesus was instructing his disciples that the Ecclesia, founded on the declaration of Peter, **must act in strict conformity to the will of God. All that it forbids, all that it permits, must be in accordance with the will of the Father, and it must learn to act within the compass of His Word.**

To Peter, then, were entrusted the keys of the Kingdom, and he proceeded to use them, first to unlock the mysteries of the Kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ to Jews on the day of Pentecost, and later, as recorded in Acts Ch. 10, to Cornelius, the Gentile.

What did Peter bring home to the notice of both Jews and Gentiles in using those keys? What, but the two keys that are essential to unlock the door that will reveal the Kingdom! And what are they? The truths concerning the SUFFERINGS of Christ, and the GLORY that shall follow. Christ is the door (John 10:9),

and in him we see how the sufferings of the cross had to come before the crown.

These two aspects of the Divine purpose were brought home to the Apostles immediately after the Lord had declared that he would deliver the keys of the kingdom unto them. He "began to shew unto his disciples, how he must suffer" (Matt. 16:21). Here was the "first key". It was one that the disciples did not appreciate at that particular time (cp. Vv. 22-23). Next Jesus afforded them a glimpse of the "second key"—namely: the glory that should follow. "After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them" (Matt. 17:1-2)—and so they saw his glory. It was a vision of the kingdom, and though they did not know it then, Jesus was handing them the other key, whereby they were enabled to unlock the "door" and behold the future.

It is significant, in the light of the above transactions, that Peter should write two epistles which reveal the twofold aspect of the Kingdom and the Name. In 1 Peter 1:11 he makes reference to "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," and refers to the majesty revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus Christ's example of suffering and glory is equivalent to the two Keys of the Kingdom, and Peter uses them, firstly at Pentecost, and afterwards for the conversion of Cornelius.

These two keys are presented to view in Peter's two epistles.

THE FIRST brings vividly before us the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21; 3:17-18; 4:1, 13).

THE SECOND shows us the glory (2 Pet. 1:4, 17; 3:9-13).

Thus Peter does for us what the Lord did on the road to Emmaus, when he instructed two disciples in the skilful use of these two keys (see Luke 24:25-27).

In *Ælpiis Israel*, Second Part, Chapter One, Brother Thomas shows how the "Keys of the Kingdom" were given unto Peter that he might unlock the secrets of the Gospel and reveal the way to life eternal to "whosoever hath ears to hear". This he did, first to Jews on the Day of Pentecost, and, second to Gentiles in the preaching of the Truth to Cornelius. In this manner, the way of the Kingdom was publicly opened to both Jews and Gentiles (hence the need of two keys). Bro. Thomas summarises this section of his invaluable exposition in the following manner:

"After this manner Peter used the keys of the kingdom of heaven given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ. When he had accomplished this work, he no longer retained the power of the keys. They were transferred to the multitude of the believing Jews and Gentiles. The spirit had revealed the mystery of the kingdom, and the fellowship of the mystery, by the mouth of Peter on Pentecost, and at Caesarea; so that the keys became the common property of all believers. The Lord

'who hath the key of David, hath opened, and no man can shut'; (Rev. 3:7-8) He hath set before the Gentiles 'an open door, and no man can close it', so long as the scriptures are in the hands of the people. The false prophet may dangle keys at his girdle, and affect the power of the Son of God; but so long as 'THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY' are accessible 'whosoever is athirst may come; and whosoever will may take the water of life freely'. The scriptures contain the keys. Popes, priests, clergy, and ministers may suppress, torture, and garble the truth, and throw hindrances in the way; but the man who discards their authority, and thinks for himself, may by the enlightening efficacy of the living word, become 'wise unto salvation by the faith which is in Jesus Christ'. Let the people then help themselves, if they would that God should aid them."

THE SETTING OF THE EPISTLE

Peter's Epistles were primarily directed to the same persons to whom James wrote. Their main purpose was the stabilising of brethren who were passing through a period of extreme suffering and testing. Peter, therefore, added to the main thought of James. Whereas James emphasised that faith must be manifested by works, Peter added that it is the *trial* of faith that will perfect works.

Peter had discovered that truth in his own life. In the solemn days in which Christ had foretold Peter's fall and restoration, he had declared: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you (i.e. the Apostles), that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy (Peter's) faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). In both his epistles the apostle carried out that commission.

The letter abounds with references to his own experiences. He epitomises the purpose of his writing as both "exhorting and testifying" (1 Peter 5:12). He exhorts his brethren on the basis of his own experiences, and he testifies, or witnesses, to the truth in Christ Jesus, having personal evidence of all that he stood for. The following analysis of the Epistle exhibits the Gospel as a way of life; whilst its contents witnesses to the transforming power of Christ in the author's personal experiences.

The Epistle warns of impending persecution that would be experienced by believers, and which would try them to the uttermost (see Ch. 4:12-5:11). This evidently related to that initiated by Nero against the Christians, following the burning of Rome. Nero reigned from A.D. 54-68. He has the reputation of being one of the most brutal rulers in history. He was only 16 when he began to reign. Seneca, the great Roman philosopher, was his teacher and adviser in the early years of his rule. Despite Seneca's help the power of his position went to Nero's head. He had his wife and mother murdered, and ordered Seneca and the poet Lucan to kill themselves.

In A.D. 64, a terrible fire swept Rome. Historians claim that Nero set the fire. And it is rumoured that he watched the flames while singing about the burning of Troy. In order to divert attention from himself, he claimed that Christians were guilty of the crime, and in punishment, he initiated the most frightful per-

secution of all time. For several months innocent Christians were ruthlessly executed. Men, women and children were put into an arena to face wild beasts that cruelly tore them to pieces, whilst huge crowds watched and cheered. In the evenings Nero staged "entertainment" in which Christians were soaked in tar, tied to tall poles, and then set on fire to provide light. The squares were illuminated by the blazing torches of the burning bodies of men and women whose only crime was their determination to serve their God according to their conscience.

Though this persecution was mainly limited to Rome itself, the repercussions were felt elsewhere. When persecution spread throughout the empire, laws were passed making it a crime to be a Christian. Worship, then, had to be held in secret.

In A.D. 66 the Jewish revolt broke out, and Nero despatched Vespasian to suppress it. This inaugurated the Jewish war that led to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. The antagonism for Jewish people this created throughout the Roman Empire was felt also by the Christians, for many Gentiles confused the former with the latter.

In view of Peter's prophetic warning of persecution to come (see Ch. 4:12), this Epistle, written from Babylon (Ch. 5:13), was probably penned about the year A.D. 60. It provided sound, practical advice on how believers were to live in view of the pressures and trials that were to try their faith.

Analysis

There are two methods of Bible study: the telescopic and the microscopic. The former takes the overall view of an episode; the latter deals with it verse by verse. Both systems of study are necessary to understand fully the matters of Divine revelation.

When we have grasped and memorised the telescopic outline, we are able to discern instantly the context in which a particular verse or statement is found, and are thereby better equipped to comprehend the meaning of that verse or statement.

We herewith set out an analysis of the Epistle, and suggest that the student read through at one sitting the whole of the Epistle with this outline before him.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER TRIUMPH IN TRIBULATION

The first of the two keys committed unto Peter, revealing the sufferings of Christ preceding his glory (Ch. 1:11) by means of which the doors of the Kingdom will be opened.

1. INTRODUCTION — Ch. 1:1-2

*The Definition of a Christian — Ch. 1: 1- 2;

2. THE CALL AND WHAT IT INVOLVES — Ch. 1:3-2:10

*Our Living Hope — Ch. 1: 3-12;

*The Living Way — Ch. 1:13-16;

*The Living Sacrifice — Ch. 1:17-21;

*The Living Word — Ch. 1:22-25;

*The Living Power — Ch. 2: 1- 3;

*The Living Stones — Ch. 2: 4- 8;

*The Living Priesthood — Ch. 2: 9-10;

3. THE PILGRIM LIFE AND HOW TO LIVE IT — Ch. 2:11-4:11

*Towards the World — Ch. 2:11-17;

*Towards Masters — Ch. 2:18-25;

*Towards Husbands — Ch. 3: 1-- 6;

*Towards Wives — Ch. 3: 7;

*Towards Brethren — Ch. 3: 8- 9;

*Towards Outsiders — Ch. 3:10-13;

*Towards Persecution — Ch. 3:14-17;

*Imitating Christ, the Pattern — Ch. 3:18-22;

*The Weapons of Victory — Ch. 4: 1-11;

- 4. THE FIERY TRIAL AND HOW TO BEAR IT —**
Ch. 4:12-5:11
*As Partakers of Christ's Sufferings — Ch. 4:12-19;
*As Elders Providing an Example — Ch. 5: 1- 4;
*As the Flock Submitting in Humility — Ch. 5: 5-11;
- 5. FINAL WORDS — Ch. 5:12-14**
*Greetings from Babylon — Ch. 5:12-14;



Nero Caesar — brutal persecutor of Christians.

SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION

(Chapter 1:1-2)

The Apostle introduces himself by the name given him by the Lord. He describes those whom he addresses as "the elect", and explains the meaning of the term.

CHAPTER ONE

The Definition Of A Christian — vv. 1-2

In his salutation, Peter indicates the position of privilege occupied by true followers of Christ.

VERSE 1

"Peter" — His real name was Simon, but he preferred to write under the honored name given him by Christ, a name, too, that is associated with the declaration upon which the Ecclesia is founded (Matt. 16:16. See the character sketch (p. 89), and *The Epistles As Keys Of The Kingdom* (p. 91), for the significance of his name.

"An Apostle of Jesus Christ" — The word "apostle" is from the Greek *apostolos* an adjectival noun from *apostellein*, "to send out", denoting a commissioned messenger or ambassador (cp. Eph. 6:20). The significance of the word differs from that of "disciple" inasmuch as it denotes one sent out on a special mission, whereas a disciple is a follower. The latter word is related to the word "discipline", for the life of a true disciple is governed, or limited, by the example and teaching of his Lord. All Christ's apostles were disciples, but all disciples were not apostles.

"Strangers" — Gr. *Parepidemos* — A sojourner (see R.V.) among a people not one's own. Thus he was writing to a people who had here "no continuing city," but "who sought one to come," and who were "strangers and pilgrims in the earth" (Heb. 11:13; 13:14).

"Scattered" — Gr. *Diasporas*, from, *dia* — through, and *speiro*

— to sow, and thus to sow or scatter seed. The Jewish dispersion carried abroad the seed of Israel's hope (Isa. 6:13; Amos 9:9), as the saints did that of the Gospel in the Name of Jesus Christ. Thus they were as the "seed of truth" scattered among the Gentiles, capable of producing fruit to the glory of the Father.

"Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" — This is a district east of the Aegean Sea and south of the Black Sea, and those to whom Peter wrote comprised both Jews and Gentiles (Ch. 4:3). It was an area in which Paul had labored, but now, imprisoned in Rome, his activities were limited, and Peter combines with him to instruct them in the principles of their walk.

VERSE 2

"Elect according to foreknowledge" — Elect signifies "chosen," and Peter is here expressing the same truth that he stressed at the Jerusalem conference when he told the delegates that God had visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name (Acts 15:14). It was acknowledged, then, that this agreed with the words of the prophets (V.15), and therefore was in accordance with what the foreknowledge of God recognised as a necessity.

"Sanctification of the Spirit" — This is the separation induced by the Spirit-word. Jesus taught that

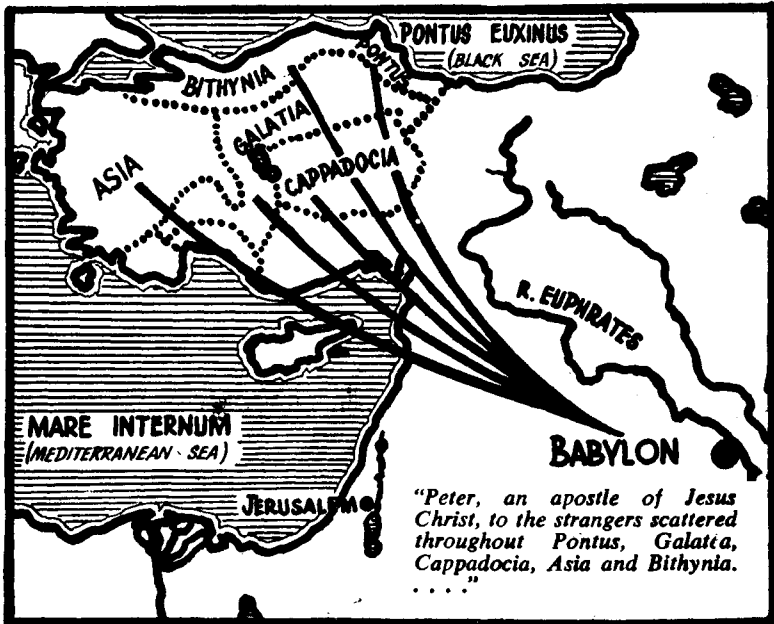
the truth comprised the spirit (John 6:63), and Paul and John did likewise (Eph. 6:17; 1 John 5:6). Christ, in his intercessory prayer, declared that the Truth is the means that God has provided for the sanctification of His saints (John 17:17), and where it does not have such effect—separating believers from the course of this world—its full power has not been appreciated. They only are true believers who are separated by the Spirit-word.

“Unto obedience” — Gr. *Hupakoe* — a submissive hearkening. The separation induced by the Spirit-word, will lead unto obedience in the act of baptism. (Cp. Rom. 6:17).

“Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”—This phrase is based upon the Mosaic ritual (Heb. 9:19; 10:

22; 12:24), and it points to blood shed in sacrificial offering. Such blood is the token of a life dedicated unto Yahweh, such as the Lord Jesus manifested. The first act of obedience is baptism, and Paul taught that a believer is baptised “into the death of Christ” (Rom. 6:3). This is a public demonstration that he is about to die to the flesh, and live unto God by dedicating his life in obedience to God’s commands. This is what is inferred by the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

“Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied”—Grace relates to Divine favor; peace speaks of fellowship which comes through grace (John 14:27); and these privileges can be multiplied if we live in accordance with the conditions that will permit them to be thus increased (1 John 1:7).



SECTION TWO THE CALL AND WHAT IT INVOLVES

(Chapters 1:3-2:10)

In this section, the Apostle outlines the great privileges that believers possess. LIFE is the keynote of all he has to say. He refers to a living hope, to living stones, a living sacrifice far surpassing the corruptible redemption-money of the Law, a living word that becomes the life-seed in a person, and a priesthood that will never fade. All this clearly sets before readers of the Epistle the great privileges they are granted when they embrace the call as it comes to them from God through His son.

CHAPTER ONE

(vv. 3-25)

Our Living Hope — Vv. 3-12

Death came by sin and is the negation of the purpose of God in creation; but life is found in Christ Jesus and in the fact that he lives, is revealed the living hope to which men become related in him (Rom. 6:4-5).

VERSE 3

“**Blessed**” — Gr. *Eulogetos* — Eulogise or praise Him for the benefits we have received from Him.

“**Be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**” — This description of God is contrary to the doctrine of the Trinity which would unite the Father and the son as one. The titles of “Father” and “Lord” remind believers of what is due to both. “If I be a Father,” declared Yahweh to disobedient Israel, “where is Mine honour?” (Mal. 1:6). “Ye call me Lord”, declared Christ, “and ye say well. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:13-15).

“**According to His abundant mercy**” — The Greek word *eleos*, “mercy”,

signifies kindness or goodwill towards those in need, particularly the clemency of God in providing and offering to men salvation by Christ. Peter well may describe this as *abundant mercy* or *kindness* on the part of God, for it is the greatest privilege man can possess.

“**Hath begotten us**”—This is our privileged position if we are in Christ, the only begotten son. The seed of the truth implanted in one (V.23) signifies that such a person is begotten from above (John 3:3-mg). The process has already been described: “Sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience . . .”

“**A lively hope**”—Better rendered, “a living hope.” It will enliven those who embrace it, and cause them to look confidently to the future with the conviction that God cares for them. (See Jerem. 29:11.) The trials of life sometimes cause some to imagine that God is indifferent to their sufferings, but, like Israel, the time will come when they shall realise that all things happened for an important reason that is not always comprehended now (Ezek. 14:23). A living, trusting hope will cause us

to see beyond the present troubles to the glorious future.

"By the resurrection of Jesus Christ"—If there had been no resurrection there would have been no justification, and no hope (Rom. 4:25). The resurrection of Jesus is a token of a newness of life that should be manifested even now (Rom. 6:4). If Christ is the first-fruits, a harvest must follow. The resurrection of Christ Jesus demonstrates how that hope can be fulfilled in us. He was as the seed producing a harvest of fruit (John 12:24), the shepherd, leading the flock through the dark defiles of death to the pastures beyond (John 10:15-18; John 12:32). Peter's hope had temporarily died at the death of Jesus. "We thought it had been he who should have delivered Israel," was the attitude of the despondent Apostles; but their depression was swept away by the fact of the resurrection, and in that wonderful event they could see the full meaning of many Scriptures whose significance was previously hidden from them (Luke 24:13-24).

A living hope had made these "strangers" (V.1) beloved children of the Divine family (Eph. 2:18-19).

VERSE 4

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled" — "Incorruptible" speaks of a change of nature, and "undefiled" speaks of a change of character. The Gospel is designed to effect both.

"That fadeth not away" — This is the "crown (*stephanos*) of glory that fadeth not away" (Ch. 5:4), in contrast to the coronal wreath that was presented to the successful competitors in the Grecian games, that did fade away. Ct. 1 Pet. 1:24.

"Reserved in heaven for you" — See Matt. 6:20. The inheritance is *reserved* in heaven, but is to be manifested on earth at the Lord's return. See v. 5; 2 Cor. 5:2-4; Phil. 3:20-21. Those deemed righteous will be "recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14). Notice that the margin renders the plural *you* as *us*. The variation is

due to various readings in mss. The common reading is *for you*. The sense is not materially affected.

"Reserved" is from the Gr. *Tereo*, signifying "to guard, preserve." God has provided all things necessary through His son to preserve for us the promised inheritance. We can only blame ourselves if we do not measure up to the requirements. (See John 14:2; Matt. 16:25-27; Col. 3:3-4).

VERSE 5

"Kept" — Gr. *Phroureo*, a military term signifying to "keep or preserve with a guard" (Cp. Rom. 8:35-39). The "guard" comprises the angels who encompass the saints about to preserve them (Ps. 34:7) and who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). The overshadowing power of Yahweh might bring us into trials, but they are for our ultimate benefit (Heb. 12:6-12).

"By the power of God" — Gr. *en*, or "within." Rotherham translates: "in." A true believer is "in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:1). His mind is in tune with the Father's, faithfully trusting in Him. The strength derived from God as a result of such unity of mind can ensure salvation.

"Through faith"—Without it we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). Faith teaches that God is, and that He will be a rewarder (this is the proper rendering of Heb. 11:6), of those who diligently seek Him. Paul observes that "faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17) what God has declared, and acknowledging what He has fulfilled. Hence develops a conviction that God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), and that He is able to perform what He has promised (Rom. 4:20-21).

"Unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" — The Divine preservation (*kept*) is designed for permanence, for salvation, and not merely for a short time, then allowed to fall away. The statement implies that we are not as yet saved, even though we

may have attained unto a position of privilege in Christ Jesus. It is possible for one to fall away (1 Cor. 10:12), for one to be so led astray as to lose his crown of life (Rev. 2:10; 3:11).

VERSE 6

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice" — Peter suggests that his readers should be rejoicing in the prospects of great relief to be manifested "in the last time", and this should enable them to endure patiently the trials and sufferings of probation.

"Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" — The term "season" in the Greek implies but a brief period. But even if trials continue throughout life, it represents but a brief moment in comparison with eternity (cp. 2 Cor. 4:17). The expression "if need be" suggests that God might consider there is a need for such trials. Trial develops character, and where spiritual maturity is lacking, Yahweh may subject such to trials in order to induce such development. Indeed, it is the trial of faith, and not faith in the abstract, that will be found unto praise and glory at the appearing of Christ (v. 7). Apparently, some in the Ecclesias were then experiencing trials, and so Peter enlightened them as to the reason and need of such (see Ch. 5:10).

"Temptations" — Gr. *Peirasmos*, from a root signifying to "pierce through as with a spear," and therefore expressive of sore trials. The word does not necessarily mean temptations in the normal use of the word, but rather trials, whether they be induced from within or from without. (See Acts 20:19; 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 4:14 for the use of the word in that way.) Peter is referring to persecution that believers have to endure, and proceeds to show the positive value of such sufferings, provided they are patiently endured in faith.

VERSE 7

"The trial of your faith"—Faith is tested by the fire of trial to bring to the fore all hidden weakness and impurity that must be eradicated. It is suggested that Peter based his analogy upon the ancient practice of purifying metals and one writer has commented

as follows: "The picture is of an ancient goldsmith who puts his crude gold in a crucible, and then subjects it to intense heat in order to liquify the mass. Under such treatment, the impurities rise to the surface and are skimmed off. When the metal worker was able to see the reflection of his face clearly mirrored in the surface of the liquid, he took it off the fire, for he knew that the contents were pure gold." What a glorious illustration of the purpose of God in testing His saints! Trial is designed to rid us of impurities of character, to the end that we might be better fitted to reflect the moral glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. When faith is strong, it will prove adequate to the fire of trial, so that ultimately, through willingness to be fashioned, the reflection of Christ will be seen in the perfected characters of the faithful. (See also 1 Pet. 4:11; Prov. 17:3; 25:4; Job 23:10; Lam. 4:2. In the light of Peter's words all these references deserve pondering.)

"Being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" — This does not express a comparison of faith with gold, but teaches that the trial, or testing of faith to demonstrate that it is or is not genuine, is a much more important and valuable a process than that of testing gold in the fire. The proceeds that come from the trial of faith are much more lasting than those that come from gold. The former include eternal life; the latter perish with the using. Of itself, gold does not perish, but the things for which it stands: fleshly prosperity, comfort, luxury, are transient and terminable. Not so those that a true faith will reveal: eternal life and glory in the Kingdom of God. Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ" as "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:26), not because he enjoyed reproach more than glory, but because he carefully assessed the temporary nature of the former with the eternal glory of the latter.

The expression "the appearing of Jesus Christ" denotes his *apocalypse* or unveiling. This requires the presence of the Lord in divine power, glory and

majesty.

“Praise, honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”—Praise at the judgment seat, honor by being incorporated into the perfected multitudinous Christ, and glory by being granted a change of nature.

VERSE 8

“Whom having not seen”—That is, the Lord Jesus—(Cp. John 20:29).

“Ye love” — The word *agape* denotes a divine, self-sacrificing love, and is described in greater detail by John. This love will express itself in self-discipline, and in self-devotion for the object of it. In relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, it will manifest itself in action, in performing his will. John summed up its requirements by declaring: “This is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 John 6).

“In whom, though now ye see him not” — See Christ’s commendation of those who believe without demanding to see the tangible evidence (John 20:29). John was able to reassure his readers with the fact that the Apostles had heard, seen, looked upon, and handled the Lord as the Word of Life (1 John 1:1).

“Yet believing” — i.e., believing you will yet see him.

“Joy unspeakable and full of glory”—Lit. “joy unspeakable and glorified.” The Diaglott renders: “Joy inexpressible and glorious.” Joy beyond the power of mortal, uninspired lips to express.

VERSE 9

“Receiving” — Gr. *Komizo*. The word is in the middle voice indicating something one does for oneself. It signifies to carry, acquire, obtain, receive in such a way as to preserve. The word is used particularly as a military term, so that a person is said to preserve something for himself by defending it against an attacker that is out for spoil.

“The end of your faith, even salvation”—With their eyes fixed

on Christ (V.8), and with the glorious vision of the future ever before them, saints have the incentive to defend what they ultimately hope to attain unto, namely, the salvation to which they have been called.

VERSE 10

“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently”

— Salvation is something for which one must search diligently. The prophets did so, though they had not received the full measure of revelation as it was given through Christ. The fulness of the Gospel, proclaimed in the name of Christ, and extended to the Gentiles, is described as “the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world (*kosmos*) began, but is now made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25-26). Though the fulness of the revelation was not revealed to the prophets, they enquired and searched diligently in an attempt to come to a better understanding. The word *enquired* is intensive. It means that they sought out, or scrutinised with care, the revelation given them that they may understand it completely. To *search diligently* means to search out, to trace out, to explore. An example of this is described in Dan. 9:2-3. The prophets were keen to come to full understanding, and did all in their power to do so. They therefore became students and interpreters of their own prophecies.

“Who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you” — The grace, or favour, thus prophesied is revealed in the Gospel as proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:12). In predicting the work of Christ in that particular (e.g. Isa. 53), the prophets ministered for later generations.

VERSE 11

“Searching, what, or what manner of time” — Gr. *Kairos*, signifying “seasons.” Time is broken up into seasons, and the prophets searched diligently at what season

the Christ should appear. Would it be at a time when Israel was in the Promised Land, or when the people were in dispersion? What would be the characteristics of the period at which he would make his appearance? So the prophets earnestly pondered over the "signs of the times" that should mark Christ's first advent. There are scriptural indications that some were in expectation of the Messiah in the days before Christ's public appearance, no doubt as a result of much searching (Luke 2:25, 38; 3:15).

The expression in the Greek here rendered *what* (lit. *unto what*) doubtless signifies unto what kind of person the prophecies related. That is, the prophets searched their own predictions to try and determine what would be his character and the nature of the work he would perform. There is no doubt that they understood that their prophecies related to the Messiah (see Acts 2:30-32), but their interest was such that they carefully pondered their own words to try to reach to a greater understanding of them in relation to him. Today we have prophecies concerning the second coming of the Lord, and it is a profitable exercise to carefully scrutinise them to ascertain the greatest details concerning the circumstances and the manner of his second coming.

"The Spirit of Christ"—There is only one Spirit, namely God's (Eph. 4:4), and this worked in the prophets (Neh. 9:20. 2 Pet. 1:21), and inspired them to testify prophetically of Christ. Later, this spirit was manifested through him without measure, for he is the central figure of God's purpose with man. For these reasons, God's spirit is here called "the spirit of Christ."

"Testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow"—Examples of this are seen in Isa. 53:2, 12. Ps. 22:1, 27, etc. The suffering and the glory comprise the two Keys of the Kingdom, entrance to which is through the Christ-door. Peter did not understand that truth when his attention was first directed to it (see Matt. 16:21-22), but he

came to appreciate it later (Acts 2:29-31). In similar manner, the prophets who were moved by the Spirit to prophesy of the sufferings and the glory of the Lord, did not always comprehend the significance and purpose of what they predicted. They were instructed, however, that in "the last days" these matters would be understood more perfectly (Jer. 23:20; 30:24). Such a revelation came with Christ's first advent in the "last days of Judah's commonwealth" (Heb. 1:1), as there has also come a greater understanding in these "last days" relating to Christ's second coming.

VERSE 12

"Unto whom it was revealed"—The prophets received certain revelations that they understood not, but were required to record for the benefit of future generations (see Dan. 12:4, 9, 13). These revelations had been of great use to the Apostles, the "us" of this verse. They had seen them fulfilled and had thus come to understand them. So that the preaching of the Gospel is described by them as "the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest..." (Rom. 16:25).

"That not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you"—With complete foreknowledge of future requirements, Yahweh proclaimed His will and purpose through the prophets, and so ministered unto believers of future generations. In that regard, they acted as "deacons". A deacon is one who performs the service of an attendant, or servant, to others. The prophets ministered unto disciples in this manner by their prophecies which are recorded for the benefit of others then to come. The "ministry of the prophets" (Hos. 12:10) has been confirmed by the Apostles in their preaching the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles. They reported the tangible evidence of the fulfilment of prophecies relating to Christ (cp. 1 John 1:1), and in doing so, like-

wise acted as ministers, or deacons, to those who "believed on the Lord through their word" (John 17:20).

"With the Holy Spirit" — The power of the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles into "all the truth," and brought to their remembrance all things taught them by the Lord Jesus (John 14:26). It came upon them on the Day of Pentecost, after which they immediately went out and preached the Gospel with such force that 3,000 were baptised (Acts 2:2-4,41).

"Which things the angels desire to look into" — Gr. *Parakupto* — "to look intently with head bent forward," "to stoop down to examine minutely," (such as when the faces of the Cherubim were set gazing at the Mercy Seat). The active interest of the angels in the redemptive work of God with mankind is here indicated, but also their limited understanding of certain facets of it (Cp. Mark 13:32). If angels and prophets have manifested eagerness and anxiety to comprehend the Divine purpose, how devotedly should our minds centre around these things. The mystery of God-manifestation has been revealed to us, and Yahweh desires of man that he should respond to the Hope of Glory that is so graciously extended.

The Living Way — Vv. 13-16

Having established that the call of believers is to a living hope, the Apostle now shows that this reveals a new way of life.

VERSE 13

"Wherefore gird up the loins"

An allusion to the long robes that were worn in the Eastern countries. Such robes impeded progress in running or similar exertion, unless they were gathered around the waist to give the greatest possible freedom of movement. It is significant to notice that the Israelites had to "gird themselves" in this fashion when they partook of the first Passover in Egypt, prior to the Exodus (Exod. 12:11). A person thus prepared stood ready to march

unhindered from the land of bondage as soon as the appointed time came. Peter used this figure of speech to indicate the need for a similar attitude of mind. "Strangers and pilgrims" with "no continuing city" must be ready to go wherever God desires. In the Greek, the phrase is in the aorist tense, implying something that is done once for all. Thus the *Diaglott* renders:

"Having girded up the loins of your mind." Saints having done this are required to remain in that state of mental attitude towards the truth and the world about them (see Luke 12:35).

"Be sober"—It suggests freedom from credulity and excitability. It is not lack of emotion, but control of emotion by sound reasoning based upon divine principles. It is a warning against artificially stimulating the mind (Eph. 4:18). Religion which is merely emotional does that. The Scriptures warn against figurative "drunkenness" induced by false doctrine (Rev. 17:2). As much care needs to be exercised in avoiding such, as in coming under the influence of intoxicating liquor.

"To the end" — Gr. *Teleios*, signifying "complete," "perfect." See the margin. The idea is: let this hope dominate your minds completely.

"For the grace that is to be brought"—This should be rendered in the present tense, not the future. Rotherham translates: "The grace being borne along to you." Yahweh is even now working to that end through His son (see Ch. 3:22), though the fulness of it will not be evident until the Lord Jesus returns.

"At the revelation of Jesus Christ" — The word "at" is *en* or *in*. Accordingly, Young renders the phrase: "the grace being borne to you in an uncovering of Jesus Christ". As believers come to understand the things in, or concerning Christ Jesus, they experience the grace, or favour, of Yahweh, particularly in relation to the forgiveness of sins.

VERSE 14

"As obedient children" — Peter stresses the need for this attribute (Ch. 1:2; 1:14; 1:22). The Greek—*Hupakouo* signifies "to hearken submissively," indicating that such a state of obedience is brought about by HEARING WITH THE INTENT TO DO. Sonship is predicated on action, and not merely words, as the Lord told the Jews (John 8:39). Examples of such obedience: Christ — Heb. 5:8; Phil. 2:8; Abraham — Heb. 11:8; The Believers—Phil. 2:12.

"Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts"—The gratification of these lusts (inordinate desires) was done in ignorance of the Divine will to the contrary. Once a person has come in contact with the living word of God however, there is no excuse for such an attitude. The living word must be allowed to mould, shape or fashion character, and reveal its fruit in the subjugation of fleshly lusts.

"In your ignorance" — What might have been tolerated in people of ignorance will not be in those of knowledge. Paul received forgiveness for the sins he committed because of his ignorance (1 Tim. 1:13), but with knowledge a different standard is required.

VERSE 15

"As He which hath called you is holy" — Holiness is an essential characteristic of Yahweh, and those who are really His children, must conform thereto. The declaration is cited from Lev. 11:44 where Israel was told: "Ye shall sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy". Earlier, in Exodus 31:13, God had proclaimed His name as *Yahweh M'qaddishim*, rendered *Yahweh that doth sanctify you*. This is the first appearance of this name, but it is frequently used afterwards (see Lev. 20:7-8; 21:8,15,23; 22:9,16,32). Yahweh thus commands true Israelites to "sanctify themselves", and to show that flesh requires help to that end, he adds: "I am Yahweh M'qaddishim, that sanctifieth". To sanctify is not only to set an object apart for a special use, but to make it worthy of such use.

However, Yahweh does not leave it to flesh to accomplish this. He offers His strength to "work in" those who reveal a responsive heart and dedicated will (Phil. 2:13). God's will is the sanctification of believers (1 Thess. 4:3). This must be manifested in prayer (1 Tim. 2:8); living (1 Pet. 1:15), and self-sacrifice (Rom. 12:1).

The purpose of the Law was to make Israel a "holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). That holiness was to be expressed in practical living, and so the commandments were given. Now Peter makes it quite clear that the requirements of the Law, in the realm of practical living, are still binding on those who claim to be true Israelites, even though, through weakness, the flesh cannot attain unto the standard set (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Nevertheless, Yahweh's grace has made provision for this in the forgiveness of sins (see Psa. 103:14), and Christ's disciples must strive for perfection even though it is beyond them. This is illustrated by the requirements of Lev. 19, for after stating: "Ye shall be holy: for I Yahweh your God am holy" (v. 2), the practical provisions of the Law in the realm of daily living are clearly set out. The chapter covers all the requirements of the Ten Commandments, and in doing so foreshadows the teaching of the Lord in his *Discourse on the Mount*. See notes on Leviticus 19.

"So be ye holy" — "Be" is *ginomai* in Greek, and signifies "become," so that holiness is a state to which we must ever be striving to attain and maintain.

"In all manner of conversation" — Better rendered, "all manner of living." Holiness in action is the only true criterion of a believer's life.

VERSE 16

"Because it is written" — Peter now cites the fundamental message of the Book of Leviticus, and of the Law: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44). Holiness signifies separateness, and in this context, the thing or person so separated is set apart for God's use. The Law revealed holiness as an active principle which regulates and shapes every ordinance of life, and thus it legislated for all life's activi-

ties from the day of birth to the day of death. The book of Leviticus sets forth these principles, and, it is claimed, was the first book of the Bible that Jewish children were called upon to study in their religious exercises.

The Living Sacrifice — Vv. 17-21

The Apostle shows the infinite cost of redemption through which alone the living way has been revealed.

VERSE 17

"If ye call on the Father" — God is recognised as a Father whenever His title as such is used, but Peter warns that if this title is used, it should be accompanied by a manifestation of filial respect and honor to His Name. This is the "fear" referred to in this verse, in the which, Peter exhorted, these strangers should "pass the time of their sojourning."

"Fear of Yahweh is the beginning (Heb. *firstfruits*) of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7), for it induces a healthy respect of God so that one fears to offend Him. On the other hand, love (*agape*) is the "bond of perfectness" or completion (Col. 3:14). It is the culmination of a process that commences with fear. Fear, as manifested in filial respect, was an element of Christ's perfection: for "he was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7).

"Without respect of persons judgeth every man's work" — Peter had not always clearly recognised this principle, for at one time he had resisted the preaching of the Gospel to Gentiles (Acts 10). The conversion of Cornelius, however, had very powerfully brought home to him the widespread extent of the call of Christ, and on that occasion, he had expressed himself in very similar phraseology as he does now (Acts 10:34).

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" — This is Peter's exhortation to "sojourners" or "strangers" (Ch. 1:1), who have accepted the Divine call. He is warning such not to rely upon personal, fleshly confidence, but

rather to distrust self lest they fall. Fear, or reverence, should be shown towards God, and this will induce His children to ever seek His help, and to rely upon the strength that can come from His word and from prayer. Note the exhortation of Rom. 11:20.

VERSE 18

"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things" — Yahweh had proclaimed His intention of "redeeming without money" (Isa. 52:3), though, under the Law, money was required as a token of redemption.

"As silver and gold" — Silver is the token of redemption, for, under the Law, a half shekel of silver had to be paid for the life of every Israelite when the people were numbered (Exod. 30:12-17); and gold is the token of a tried faith. But these tokens had to give way to the reality in the offering of the Lord Jesus. Under the Law, a person's life could be redeemed from death (Exod. 30:12-17), and he himself could be redeemed from slavery (Lev. 25:47-55). This was an earnest of the true redemption in Christ. In him, a person is "bought with a price," and therefore becomes his servant or slave (Rom. 6:16). The life of such is "not his own" (1 Cor. 6:19-20), and therefore should be dedicated in loving service unto the Master, who will redeem him from death and grant him eternal life if he proves worthy.

"From your vain conversation" — This describes a life made up of empty, foolish and unprofitable conduct; one that is full of vain hopes, vain fears, and vain wishes!

"By tradition from your fathers" — Both Jewish and Gentile believers were guilty of this. See Mark 7:13. Col. 2:8.

VERSE 19

"The precious blood of Christ" — There was no virtue in the blood of Jesus as such, for it was no different from that of any other man; the virtue was in what it re-

presented. The blood of Jesus was poured out as a token of a completely dedicated life, and because he rendered perfect obedience to his Father in all things, it ensured his resurrection to life eternal. It is this that saves (Rom. 4:25, 6:4), for without that perfect life (of which the "blood" is the token—see Lev. 17:11), there would have been no resurrection, and no hope for humanity. Christ showed the way: by denial of the flesh, and the dedication of his life to doing the will of the Father. But we fall short of perfection and constantly fail. What then are we to do? The love of God now enters, and offers forgiveness of sins to those who recognise His righteousness in Christ, and acknowledge His right to demand crucifixion of flesh, and dedication of life in obedience (Gal. 5:24). All this is summed up in the statement "the precious blood of Christ." Its value in the work of redemption is beyond all price, for apart from it, we cannot "buy" salvation (see Psalm 49:7-9).

"A lamb without blemish" — See John 1:29 where Christ is so styled. Peter identifies the Lord with the Passover Lamb, which is also described as being "without blemish."

The lamb is noted for its docility, so that one "without blemish" is representative of meekness and perfect obedience. The hero of the Apocalypse is "the lamb that had been slain" (Rev. 5:6), for the Lord is described in that manner in all his glory of conquest. It is the Lamb that destroys the wild beast of the Apocalypse, for having conquered self, Christ is competent to conquer the world (Prov. 16:32). See notes in *Apocalypse Epitomised*.

Through the forgiveness of sins that is available in him, Christ is able to present believers unspotted and faultless before the throne of glory (Jude 23-24).

VERSE 20

"Foreordained"—Gr. *proginosko*, signifying "to designate beforehand." From the very beginning, God purposed or designed to provide such a "lamb" (Rev. 13:8, Gen. 3:15) in order that redemp-

tion might be effected. The word "foreordained," therefore, does not signify that Christ pre-existed, but rather that God predetermined that He would provide such a one. The same word is used in regard to His purpose with the saints (Rom. 8:29, 1 Pet. 1:2). God determined beforehand what that should be, and from the very beginning, set in motion the means that would bring it to pass. Foreknowledge is the basis of all His dealings with man.

"Before the foundation of the world" — The Greek word rendered "foundation" is *katabole*. It is derived from the root word *ballo* "to hurl or cast", and therefore some have rendered *katabole* as "the disruption". The original "very good" creation was disrupted by sin; its restoration will be by conquest, as David realised and declared in Psa. 8:2. This was partially fulfilled in Christ (Heb. 2:6-10), who even when facing betrayal and shameful death was confident of his future victory and dominion over all flesh (John 16:33; 17:2 and see 1 Pet. 3:22). Peter's words in this place teach that before the disruption of the world through sin, God had already made preparation for the coming of one who would redeem His creation from sin and death. Though through foreknowledge He knew that Adam would sin, it was never His intention that His creation would always be subject to sin and death. Hence provision for the redemptive work of Christ was made before sin reared its evil head, before the foundation was laid after it had appeared. See the excellent comments on *The Foundation of the World in Elpis Israel* pp. 123-125.

"In these last times" — This expression relates to the last days of Judah's commonwealth then coming to its end. See similar expressions used in Heb. 1:1, 9:26. Though the Lord was foreordained from the beginning, his physical manifestation was at the "end of the age" (see Heb. 9:26). The word is *phaneroo*, "to publicly reveal".

VERSE 21

"Who by him do believe in God" — Or "through him." The death,

burial and resurrection of Christ give: hope to those who believe in God, that even as He raised up Christ, so He will also raise them up and give them eternal life. The salvation of Jesus, therefore, guarantees the salvation of all those who are truly "in him" (see Rom. 6:4-5).

"That raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory" — Jesus was raised from the dead because of his perfect obedience, the righteousness of God demanding this (Acts 2:24). His resurrection ensured the justification of those who come unto God through him in the way appointed (Rom. 4:25). It confirmed his status as Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4), and endorsed the titles of Lord and Christ conferred on him (Acts 2:36). Thus glorified, he should be given his titles in any approach through him to the Father.

"That your faith and hope might be in God" — The resurrection of Christ confirmed faith and provided the basis of hope, for in that he liveth those who are faithful shall live also (Rom. 6:4). "He ever liveth to make intercession for men" (Heb. 7:25; See 1 John 2). Faith, peace, grace and hope are all linked together in Paul's encouraging statement of Rom. 5:1-2.

The Living Word — Vv. 22-25

A knowledge of the way, and the work of redemption, can only come through the Word. The living hope is brought into existence by the living word, and leads to the living foundation stone. That is now the Apostle's theme.

VERSE 22

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" — No one is made pure without personal intention or effort; anymore than one becomes accomplished or learned without personal exertion. The amount of effort which we make "in purifying our souls" or lives, will ensure the success or otherwise of our effort. The process is first mental and then moral. The mental process is through the Word (John 15:3). This educates a believer to think aright, and lays a foundation for obedience, the first act of which is baptism (Rom. 6:17). This

must be followed by the purifying action of mortality in "obeying the truth", that is, yielding to its requirements.

"Through the spirit" — These words are not found in the best texts. However, they impose no problem to true doctrine. They do not teach the present possession of the gifts of the spirit, but rather the influence of the spirit word. John taught, "the spirit is the truth" (see 1 John 5:6). If the truth becomes the motivating force of our lives, it will be reflected in action.

"Unto love of the brethren" — Gr. *Philadelphia*, from *phileo*, a love born of liking. Peter was writing to believers who had turned from the world and found mutual companionship in the Truth. This created a common ground for mutual liking, and in their common acceptance of divine principles they were drawn one to another, and all normal social barriers were lowered. In Christ all the artificial stratas of society that normally exist are levelled, and unfeigned love results. But, as Peter himself had learned (see John 21:15-19), this quality of love is not sufficient; but has to develop into the intellectual, sacrificial love of *agape*. This latter "love" is the subject of Paul's discourse in 1 Cor. 13. There is evidence of the *phileo* love among brethren, but not sufficient of the *agape* divine love. The former caused Peter to boast above his brethren that he would never deny Christ, and drew him into the dangerous environment of the high-priest's Palace where he denied his Lord!

"See that ye love one another" — Here the word is *agape*. This is a Divine love, created by knowledge, and manifested in self-sacrificing devotion to the object of it. A knowledge of the Truth draws a person into the company of those who love the Truth, and so develops a *phileo* love. But an *agape* love is a further development, and comes from setting Christ as the standard of action. Hence it manifests a maturity above that of a mere *phileo* love. Concerning it, *Bullinger's Lexicon* states: "Love that is self-denying and compassionately devoted to its object. The highest word for love among the Greeks was *philan-*

thropy, but this does not denote love to a man as such, but rather justice, giving him who was entitled to it his full rights; it even falls short of the *philadelphia* (brotherly love) of the New Testament. *Agape*, therefore, designates . . . love in its fullest conceivable form; first exhibited by Christ (1 John 3:16), expressive of God's relation to us (1 John 4:9) and the relation between the Father and the Son (John 15:10; 17:26; Col. 1:13). Lastly, it is the distinctive character of the Christian life in relation to the brethren and to all." *Agape*, therefore, is pre-eminently God's love (John 3:16), and is reproduced in the hearts of believers by the power of the Spirit-word (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).

Peter's exhortation is that once brethren have attained unto brotherly love or *philadelphia*, they must progress to the self-sacrificing love of God, or *agape* (See Rom. 5:8).

"With a pure heart fervently" — This denotes a genuine love, proceeding from a heart in which there is no guile or hypocrisy; an intense love that is not cold and formal, but ardent and strong. The verse before us establishes the following points:

1. The truth is the basis of Godliness.
2. Godliness manifests itself in obedience.
3. The agency by which this is accomplished is the Spirit-word.
4. The effect is the manifestation of love towards all who belong to Christ.

VERSE 23

"Being born again" — This should be rendered "begotten" as it is in the R.V. We are "begotten" by the word now, the birth will come at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Notice that the Lord Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). His resurrection to life eternal constituted the seal of his Divine sonship. This will be so with all sons of God. Jesus told Nicodemus that unless a person is born of water and of spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). This expression speaks of gradual growth. There are three stages in birth: conception, quickening, birth. In the context of John 3:5, or the

verse before us, conception takes place when a person's interest is first aroused to the truth; quickening follows when he is enlivened to its significance; and birth of water results when he ultimately accepts Christ. He then begins to "walk in the Spirit" word, so that baptism denotes conception of the spirit. It is followed by quickening as he manifests the principles of Christ in a way of life; and the ultimate result will be the birth of the spirit by a change of nature at Christ's return. Peter's epistle is to those who have been "begotten" by the spirit-word, the seed of God (See James 1:18).

"Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" — Corruptible seed implies a begetting by a human father. Such will result in the birth of a body inheriting corruption and decay, and therefore begotten only to die. There is no permanent, enduring life produced by that means. On the other hand, incorruptible seed, defined as "the word of God" implies a begetting "from above" (see John 3:3 mg.), leading to a birth which is divine and incorruptible. The "seed" is the Truth expounded and believed. It motivates a life which provides a basis for the bestowal of eternal life, the promised "house from heaven" at the Lord's return (2 Cor. 5:2-4).

"Which liveth and abideth for ever" — God's truth will never die, though men can strangle its influence in their lives. Let that word work in them, however, and they will possess that which will provide the basis of life eternal.

VERSE 24

"All flesh is as grass"—In Vv. 24-25 Peter quotes from Isaiah 40:6, 8, and Psalm 102:11, to show how transient is flesh in spite of all its pomp and show, in comparison with the word of Yahweh that endureth for ever. This fact should ever be kept in mind. Mortal life is a vapor, as James reminds us; it appears for a little time, and then vanisheth away (James 4:14). In view of that fact, our prayer should be that of the Psalmist: "So teach us to number our days, that we

may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). This is often difficult to do, for flesh refuses to view the inevitable. As the Psalmist says in another place: "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations" (Ps. 49:11). So men live their lives as though they possess eternity: but how quickly it can all end! And then what remains? Only the record in heaven if any is retained there! And what will that be? For good or ill? It all depends upon how we have viewed flesh, and how we have applied ourselves to the principles of Divine wisdom.

"And all the glory of man as the flower of grass" — Man's glory is that in which he prides himself: wealth, status, talents, appearance, learning, splendour of possessions. Such things, like the flowers of the field, are transient. They flourish for a little while and then fade and die.

"The grass withereth, and the flower

thereof falleth away" — This is repeated for emphasis, to bring forcibly to mind the transient nature of fleshly glory.

VERSE 25

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" — Yahweh's word is immovable, fixed, permanent. Amidst all the revolutions on earth, and the fading glory of human pomp and pride, His truth remains unaffected; its beauty never fades; His prophecies never fail. Christ will return to consummate the purpose initiated at his first advent. Meanwhile, there is not an object of natural beauty on which we pride ourselves that will not decay; but the Word of God, epitomised in the Gospel, is enduring and fadeless. It will lead to eternal life, and to a glory that shall have no end.

"And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you" — Peter made a similar statement to this when preaching unto Cornelius. Evidently it was a favorite phrase with him (Acts 10:37).

CHAPTER 2

The Living Power — Vv. 1-3

The Apostle shows how the "soil" should be prepared in order that "the seed" may take root, and bring forth "fruit" to the glory of the sower.

VERSE 1

"Wherefore" — In view of the foregoing.

"Laying aside" — The new life created by the living word demands a conscious effort on the part of the believer to separate himself from certain habitual sins that may have become part of his character.

"All malice" — The R.V. renders as "wickedness." All things that offend God should be set aside.

"All guile" — Gr. *dolos*, from a verb signifying "to catch with bait," and thus "craftiness." Peter, the fisherman, would know what this meant! We are to be open, honest and sincere; not laying bait

to catch others.

"Hypocrisies, envies and all evil speaking" — Here is a trinity of evils to avoid! Hypocrisy is play-acting, making out that one is something that he is not! It is the putting on of an external show to hide a hidden wickedness; but God who searcheth the hearts, will cause all such play-acting to be revealed for what it is in due time. Envy is a deadly sin that has destroyed many a good worker in the Truth. "Envy," says the Proverbs (Ch. 14:30) causes "the rottenness of the bones." Let a person labor "as unto the Lord," and avoid attempting to be a "man-pleaser," and there will be no place for envy. The Pharisees, on the other hand, "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43), and the envy that this engendered when they saw men following and praising the Lord, caused them to com-

mit the greatest crime in history — the murder of the Prince of life. "Evil speaking" is slander, and slander is a form of relaxation to many! They cannot help passing on the failings of others, forgetting their own sins. It is one of the things that Yahweh hates, and which, therefore, we need to avoid, sternly disciplining the tongue. The Psalmist lists it as one of the deadly sins that will cause rejection from the Kingdom (Ps. 15:3). Therefore, let us learn to control the tongue — a very difficult thing, as James reminds us (Ch. 3). Often a person does not intend to slander, but as others lend a ready ear, he cannot help himself, and soon the tongue wabbles on until the talker, often to his dismay, finds that he has gone too far. Let us learn to control the tongue.

This trinity of evils draws attention in turn to habit (hypocrisies), emotion (envies), and speech (evil speakings). All three can be used for good or ill, and should be moulded by the Word to act for good.

"As newborn babes" — This expression describes those who have just embraced Christ. In point of years and worldly experience, they may be adults; but in Christ, they are babes, and need the same thoughtful care and supervision to ensure development as does a little child. That is one reason why Paul warns against appointing a novice to a position of responsibility (1 Tim. 3:6). A child is generally trusting (Matt. 18:3), and so should a believer in Christ. Nevertheless, there is a need for such to mature in the Word (see Eph. 4:11-15).

VERSE 2

"Desire" — Rotherham renders this as "eagerly crave." Observe the hungry baby seeking its food, and apply the same desire to absorbing the incorruptible Word of God.

"Sincere" — In the Greek there is a play on the word "guile," for here the word is *adolos* (see note above), and is the opposite of guile. It signifies that which is pure and unadulterated. Peter

would have us to desire the purity of Truth unmixed with the philosophies of men. Such theories as evolution, which today are fed to children at an early age, are the very opposite to this and develop a taste for a sophisticated form of mental "food" that can destroy one's desire for the pure, unadulterated milk of the Word.

"Milk of the word" — This will develop us until we are able to absorb the meat of the Word (see Heb. 5:13-6:1). Notice how carefully Peter outlines the development of the new life: 1st, begettal (ch. 1:23); 2nd, laying aside evil (ch. 2:1); 3rd, absorbing the milk; 4th, growing thereby. He would have us develop through the milk, not remain on that diet always.

"That ye may grow thereby" — In Christ, growth is necessary. Childish ways are engaging in an infant, but irritating in an adult. This is true also of those in Christ. Note Paul's exhortation — Heb. 5:12-6:3.

VERSE 3

"If so be" — The original suggests a fulfilled condition, as rendered by the Diaglott: "Since you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." Those to whom Peter wrote had experienced the goodness of God, and should have been responding in the way suggested in the earlier verses.

"Gracious" — Gr. *chrestos*, signifying "able to be used," hence "good, benevolent, kind, well-disposed in spite of ingratitude." These are characteristics of the Father which the Son also revealed, and which we should emulate. The word speaks of the condescending kindness of Yahweh in spite of the unthinking ingratitude of His creatures, and upon this Divine graciousness of character we not only trust, but having experienced it, should reflect it to others. To do so will give God pleasure, and will reveal us as His children indeed.

The Living Stone — Vv. 4-8

It is absolutely necessary to con-

form to God's requirements, because we must fit into a "building" of living stones, in which places will only be found for those who measure up to the foundation, even the Lord Jesus.

VERSE 4

"A living stone" — The Messiah, promised through Isaiah from where Peter is quoting (Isa. 28:16).

"Disallowed of men" — Gr. *apodokimazo*, signifying "to reject after scrutiny or trial." This is what flesh did to the Lord Jesus, as the Psalm predicted: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner" (Ps. 118:22).

"Chosen of God and precious" — The Lord Jesus Christ was especially chosen of Yahweh to approach unto Him (Psa. 65:4), and as such he is extremely precious. Only one who rendered perfect obedience could fill such a place, and there has been only one such!

VERSE 5

"Ye also, as lively stones" — This is better rendered as *living stones*. Christ is the chief corner stone of the spiritual Temple in which Yahweh desires to dwell (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). In the terms of that analogy, believers, as living stones, must conform to the pattern presented by the Lord; they must fit into the shape provided by the chief corner stone. A believer is called to a new life in Christ, for before accepting Christ he is accounted as "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). This new life is manifested in action, with Christ as the motivating power of such (Gal. 2:20). This, indeed, is "the hope of glory" to be revealed in the age to come (Col. 1:27).

"Are built up a spiritual house" — Rotherham renders this in the present tense: "Being built up". The process of building this spiritual Temple still continues, and will not be completed until the coming of Christ. The pattern of this is the Temple of Solomon. The stones of that Temple were extracted from the depths of the earth; carefully shaped according to divine specifications, and finally conveyed to the site to be placed in the position for which they were designed. As the record states, not a sound

of iron was heard (1 Kings 6:7). The stones that formed the building are described as "great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" (1 Kings 5:17), expressing both value and care in preparation. But, in spite of these stones and the care lavished upon them, the Temple had no real beauty until the glory of Yahweh entered it. Then it became His dwelling place on earth. Today, those in Christ are selected for that honour. For the present, the glory is mental and moral, but in the age to come it will also be physical. The process begins at baptism, and will be completed at the Judgment Seat. Meanwhile, believers need to build into their lives the divine virtues manifested in the Son of God. This will qualify them, as living stones, to grace the spiritual "house" of the age to come. The "house" will be revealed in its fulness and glory after the debris has been removed at the Judgment Seat (see Rev. 21:2-11). It will then be found that in that "house" are many "abiding places", as said the Lord (Jhn. 14:2; Eph. 2:21; Heb. 3:2).

"An holy priesthood" — Rotherham translates: "For a holy priesthood." As the priests devoted their lives to the work and will of the Father, so the "holy priesthood," constituted in Christ, should do likewise. The saints' full status as priests, however, still awaits the coming age (Rev. 5:9-10), when they will minister on behalf of mortals. Meanwhile, they are in training to that end, and the trials of life provide them with experience that they will then be able to use to advantage (Heb. 5:1-2).

"To offer up" — The word in the Greek signifies "to carry up," and is a reference to the priests ascending the incline to the altar with the sacrifices which they there offered. So our offerings must be borne to the altar, which is Christ Jesus (Heb. 13:10. See also Rom. 12:1).

"Spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" — The offerings of a believer in Christ are not dead carcasses of animals, nor the blood of bulls and of goats, but the sacrifice of self-interest, and the giving up of one's life in dedication to Yahweh. This constitutes a "living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God

which is the service of reason" (see Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:18). Peter reminds us that it is not sufficient to merely believe; we must be so motivated by belief as to manifest in action the fruits of such knowledge. This will cause us to turn from things of the flesh to serve God (1 Thess. 1:9).

VERSE 6

"Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture" — In support of his reasoning, Peter cited the words of Isaiah relating to the foundation stone Yahweh proclaimed He would lay in Zion. Reference to this Scripture has already been made in v. 4.

"Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious" — This Scripture is prophetic of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Peter has already declared. He is both selected and precious, and as the chief corner stone, the whole building must be based on him, conforming to the pattern he presents.

"And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" — This statement, part of Isaiah 28:16 is also cited by Paul (Rom. 10:11). The word "confounded" is perhaps better rendered *put to shame*. A believer, having built upon the sure rock foundation provided in Christ, will not be overcome by the storms of life that he must expect as part of his present pilgrimage, and therefore will not be put to shame. To build like that, however, is to both believe and obey, for one without the other is to build on sand (Matt. 7:24-27). Isaiah renders the phrase as: "He that believeth shall not make haste"; that is, he shall be firm and constant in his application of truth, and will not flee, or hastily retire in the face of a challenge. Instead, he will resolutely face up to trouble in faith. The word "believeth" is from the Greek *pisteuo*, "to be persuaded, rely upon, trust". It suggests complete reliance and trust in Christ in spite of any circumstances that may arise. The believer, manifesting such a faith, will not be confounded, or put to shame. Such a faith is developed through the word (Rom. 10:17).

VERSE 7

"Unto you therefore which believe" — As noted above, the word "believe" implies a conviction developed out of knowledge. Without such a faith, it is "impossible to please God" (Heb.

11:6). Conviction will give substance to hope (Heb. 11:1), enabling the believer to acknowledge that "God is and becomes a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

"He is precious" — The margin renders this: "He is an honor." To be associated with Christ was not esteemed an honor by the world in those days, when Christians were looked upon as the offscouring of the earth, and therefore, there was constant need to remind believers of the fact. What of these days? Do we honor Christ as we should? Remember his exhortation (Luke 12:8). The time is coming when we might wish that we had honored Christ more!

"Them which be disobedient" — Lit. "the disbelieving," those who "refuse to be persuaded," of the truth, and not merely those who sin in the truth.

"The stone which the builders disallowed" — Peter continues to quote from the O.T. Scriptures (Ps. 118:22 and Isa. 8:14-15). Perhaps his mind reverted to the time when he did not appreciate the significance of these Scriptures himself, and with the other Apostles, remarked, "we had thought it had been he who would have redeemed Israel!" What a revelation when the Lord, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). In such use of Scripture as this, Peter was revealing the fruits of Christ's labors in exposition.

"The same is made the head of the corner" — Though the Christ foundation stone is rejected by the mass of humanity, yet Yahweh has made him the corner-stone on which the whole spiritual Temple rests (Acts 4:11-12). There is no hope apart from Christ. As the "corner-stone" he gives stability to the spiritual Temple of which each believer forms a part.

VERSE 8

"A stone of stumbling"—The word for stone is *lithos*, and signifies a loose stone that can be removed. Stumbling is *proskomma*

tos, "to cut against," and thus "to strike." The Jews looked upon the Lord Jesus as a loose stone that they could easily kick out of the way, but when they attempted to do this, they found that he was no *lithos*, but a *petra*, an immovable rock, which cut them when they attempted to strike it.

"**And a rock of offence**" — These words, cited from the prophecy of Isaiah 8:14-15, describe what the Lord became to the Jews. The Greek word *skandalon* was the name given to the part of a trap to which bait was attached, and then the trap or snare itself. Vine declares that it is "always used metaphorically, and ordinarily of anything that arouses prejudice, or becomes a hindrance to others, or causes them to fall by the way. Sometimes the hindrance is in itself good, and those stumbled by it are the wicked" (See Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11 etc.). Christ became such to the Jews because they refused the truth in him. He becomes such to Gentiles for the same reason.

"**Which stumble at the word being disobedient**" — Here the word is *skandalou* with the same meaning as above. It describes those who "stumble at the word", and Christ was the "word made flesh" (Jhn. 1:14). Peter describes the Jews as "being disobedient" or "refusing to be persuaded" as the word signifies. Because of their ignorance, Christ became a trap that ensnared them, for they refused to be persuaded by the word which predicted his sacrificial death and resurrection. Paul wrote of Gentiles who are found in the same category: "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.... God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:11).

"**Whereunto they were appointed**" — They were appointed to keep this word, a word that was given exclusively unto the Jewish people. Thus they stumbled at the very oracles of God that were committed into their care (Rom. 3:2).

The Living Priesthood — Vv. 9-10.

Having been called to participation in the living Temple, believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, are

inducted into a living priesthood not restricted by the limitations of the Aaronic priesthood.

VERSE 9

"**But**" — In contrast to those who refused to be persuaded.

"**Ye are a chosen generation**" — A chosen generation is a race, or people brought into existence by Divine choice, and not by fleshly birth (cf. Jhn 1:13). "A seed shall serve him," declared the Psalmist (Ps. 22:30), "it shall be accounted to Yahweh for a generation." This generation will comprise the "house of David" which Yahweh promised He would build for David (2 Sam. 7:11). As a part of such, a person embracing the hope of David, becomes "a living stone" in this spiritual temple, and to him are given "the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:4). In Hebrew, *beith* signifies both "house" and "family," so that "house of David" can signify both building and progeny. The word *ben* signifies a "son," the word *bath* a "daughter," and the word *eben* a "stone." The common root of all these words is *banah*, "he built." Thus a house is made up of *abanim*, "stones," and a family (Ps. 68:6) is built up of *banim*, "sons" and *banoth*, "daughters," so that these offspring become to a family what stones do to a house. They comprise "the chosen generation," or the selected stones of the spiritual Temple.

However, Christ warns that "many are called but few are chosen" (Matt. 20:16). Those "chosen" will constitute Yahweh's "special treasure" (Mal. 3:17), to be incorporated into the spiritual Temple. The rest will be removed as the debris of a house after it is completed. It is not enough to be "called", we must see to it that we are among the "chosen" in that day. And Paul warned: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

"**A royal priesthood**" — Melchizedek was both king and priest (Heb. 7:2), and therefore the founder of a "royal priesthood" which is far superior to the Aaronic. The Melchizedek priesthood is based

on selection and faith, and not on blood-relationships or family descent (Heb. 7:3). It is to this priesthood that believers become related (Ps. 110. Rev. 1:6. 5:9-10. 20:6), for they will become both kings and priests, or members of a royal priesthood (cf. Zech. 6:13).

"An holy nation" — As with the expression above, this is derived from Exod. 19:6: "A kingdom of priests and an holy nation". The word "holy" signifies to be separated for a special purpose. Israel, once was regarded as a nation consecrated to God, has now been temporarily cast off because of disobedience, and Gentiles have been called into the relationship once enjoyed by them. The basic principle of holiness is that of separation (2 Cor. 6:17-18), but that does not complete the process: the separation is to be for a purpose; that which God has in mind.

"A peculiar people"—The margin renders: "A purchased people." The Greek is *peripoiesis*, and signifies something obtained or possessed. The R.V. renders: "God's own possession" (cf. Eph. 1:14). Saints are "God's own possession" because He has purchased them (Acts 20:28. 1 Cor. 6:20. 7:23).

All the expressions of this verse are those that were formerly applied to Israel. Israel was a chosen race (Deut. 7:6), a "kingdom of priests" until the tribe of Levi was selected as the priestly tribe (Exod. 19:6), a holy or separated nation (Exod. 19:6), Yahweh's own possession (Deut. 7:6). God's purpose in calling the nation out of Egypt was that it might be unto Him "for a people, a name, a praise, and a glory." But, as Jeremiah sorrowfully lamented, the people "would not hear" (Jer. 13:11). This came to a climax in their rejection of Jesus, at which point, God set them aside, and turned to the Gentiles to "take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). That is the status of believers today, so that whatever fleshly nationality they might have originally claimed, they now constitute the true Israel of God.

"To shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you"—This

statement can be linked with that of Peter's at the Jerusalem conference: "God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people ..." (Acts 15:14). The purpose was "for His name," or in the terms of the statement before us, "to shew forth His praises." The margin renders "praises" as "virtues." These are the attributes of God which Jesus revealed to perfection, and which saints should aim to build into their lives. When this is done, a common family likeness to Jesus Christ their elder brother, and to Yahweh their Father, will be revealed. As children of God, they must manifest the characteristics of God, or else He will disown them.

"Out of darkness into His marvellous light"—See Acts 26:18. "Marvellous light" is light to be wondered at as a marvel; it is the light shed forth by the Lord Jesus, the "light of the world" (John 8:12).

VERSE 10

"Which in time past were not a people"—This is a quotation from Hos. 1:9. 2:23, and there applied to the restoration of Israel. In Romans 9:25, Paul quotes this passage to show that as Yahweh is merciful and just in restoring disobedient Israel, so He is consistent in offering salvation to obedient Gentiles. The purpose of God in calling either Jews or Gentiles remains the same, namely, to reveal His virtues in a changed life, for only such characters are worthy of being perpetuated in immortal bodies.

"But are now the people of God" — As a "purchased people" those "in Christ" belong to God. They are not their own, they have been "bought with a price" (1 Pet. 1:19). Though freed from servitude to the flesh, they are the slaves of Christ, and should manifest obedience to his will (1 Cor. 7:22-23).

"Which had not obtained mercy" — The word "mercy" signifies, in general, to feel sympathy with others in their misery, but, by extension, to manifest

such sympathy in a practical way by relieving the sufferer. Those living in ignorance "have no hope", and are "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Those to whom Peter wrote were once in that condition, and should show sympathetic concern for those out of the way of salvation.

"But now have obtained mercy" — In Christ, the sympathetic interest of Yahweh is extended to those who previously were "without God". It is manifested by Him freely, in that He forgives their sins and strengthens them in time of need (Rom. 8:32-39).

Realities of Faith

We see the exquisiteness of the divine wisdom in the finished workmanship of creation around us; we see something of His exhaustless beneficence in the manifest design of all things to confer goodness; but we see these in Christ as they are nowhere else to be seen. They are here brought to a personal focus, and directed towards us in the pledge of unutterable well-being in due time. It is something for us to ponder, to rest on, to be comforted by, to admire. It is a glorious reality — the most glorious reality in creation — made ours in the gospel. It is a great possession now, though by faith only; but what shall it be when we stand before the presence of his glory to receive its healing effulgence in the company of the mustered friends of God of every age, and in the presence of a countless host of angelic spectators?

These things are not "cunning devised fables" though so gorgeous. They are the realities of sober truth, though hidden from the eyes of man for a necessary reason. They will burst upon our delighted vision by and by. It is only a question of time, and of a short time at the longest. The announcement of the Lord's arrival may any day hurry us into their presence, or the fall of death's curtain on our path may at any time, as with the wave of a magician's wand conjure us away in a moment from the horrors of this evil state, and show us the manifold glorious of the divine purpose in the presence of Christ returned.

In this sense, living or dying, our position is a position of constantly imminent hope. Living or dying, we are of the Lord's, and to be his, we are related to the glories of the great salvation which transcend the wildest dreams of the most imaginative of poets, and beggar all human speech to convey an adequate idea of them. They are well named by Paul, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is only a sober fact that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive of them. God hath revealed them by His spirit, but for all that, the vision of them in great measure lies latent in the words that convey them, and remains invisible to millions who have the words but discern them not.

R.R.

The Pilgrim Life and How to Live It

(Ch. 2:11 - 4:11)

Having clearly illustrated the privileged relationship that believers enjoy towards God, in being called out of Gentile darkness into the glorious light of Truth, Peter now lays down principles that should be observed by them during their pilgrimage on earth. As "strangers and pilgrims in the earth," it is necessary that they walk in wisdom towards those who are without, that by so doing they might grace the truth they hold, and reveal the "virtues" of Him who has called them (Ch. 2:9). This must be manifested in practical works that embrace all the normal circumstances of life, and particularly those that relate to the dealings of one person with another. Peter, in his treatment of what is required, touches upon the various classes of people within the Ecclesia, and shows how they should live towards the world, and towards each other.

Towards the World — Vv. 11-17

Peter urges the need for consistency of behaviour before unbelievers. By avoiding wickedness, by doing good, and by manifesting respect for the laws of the land where they do not conflict with those of God, the Truth can be most effectively preached by action, and can result in the conversion of some who are drawn to consider it by observing our disciplined lives.

VERSE 11

"Dearly beloved" — The Greek word is *agapetos*. It denotes the state of those for whom Peter was prepared to labour at the expense of his own convenience. He manifested towards them such a love as stemmed from God, for "love is of God".

"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" — He writes to them as "strangers and pilgrims" because this defines their true political status in the world. The word for stranger is *paroikos*, "sojourner," "alien." Bullinger renders it as "without the rights of citizenship." But Peter associates with this word, that of "pilgrim," implying that

whilst a believer has no real rights of citizenship in the world about him, he is, at the same time, a pilgrim looking for a kingdom to come, wherein full rights of citizenship will be granted (cf. Heb. 11:9-16). In Phil. 3:20, Paul declared (see *Diaglott*): "Our polity (or citizenship) begins in the heavens . . ." It begins there because it is vested in the Lord Jesus, "for whom," Paul says, "we wait . . ." Though it begins there, it will be finally manifested in the earth, for "the kingdoms of this world" shall become those of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 11:15).

"Abstain from fleshly lusts" — Live a life completely different from that lived by those about you, who are governed by fleshly desires and ambitions.

"Which war against the soul" — As soon as one elects to serve Christ rather than the flesh, a warfare commences, and in that battle, the "members of the body" (the attributes of feeling, speech, activity, etc.) can be ranged as weapons on the one side or the other.

Paul uses this analogy in Romans 6:13 where he exhorts: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." His words really signify (see margin), Do not present your members as weapons in the cause of King Sin, but use them in the service of Christ. He acknowledged that the latter involved a battle with the flesh. Peter does likewise in the verse before us.

VERSE 12

"Having your conversation honest"—The *Diaglott* renders: "Having your conduct upright among the Gentiles." We are "honest" or "upright" when we put into practice the principles we profess.

"Whereas they speak against you as evildoers"—The margin renders this, "Wherein." Peter is making reference to the way in which the world misjudges the motives and actions of believers, and accuses them of evil actions. Because true Christians refuse to compromise with other religions, to mix socially with worldly people, or to identify themselves with principles of fleshly patriotism, the world senses that they are condemning it (as, indeed, they are—see Gal 6:14), and is antagonised thereby. This, naturally, incites the world's opposition, and, in the first century, brought down upon the Ecclesias its active persecution, as it sometimes does also in the much more liberal world of today.

"They may by your good works which they behold"—The word "good" is *kalos* in Greek, and signifies that which is beautiful because it is in harmony with what it was intended to be. An object whose appearance is in perfect accord with that for which it was designed, is "good" in this sense. "Good works" as far as true Christians are concerned are consistent actions. Though the world may speak evil against believers because of their refusal to comply with its demands, it cannot but help commend them for their consistency, if the principles they pro-

pound are in accordance with the actions they reveal. Therefore, reasoned Peter, consistency of action is a powerful instrument in preaching the Truth.

"Glorify God in the day of visitation"—The unbelieving world will be forced to glorify God "in the day of visitation" (or judgment), for it will then have to acknowledge the wisdom and righteousness of believers in acting as they have in accordance with Divine instructions, even though, at present, it rejects Christ's teaching. A case in point is the instruction of Christ to his followers to flee Jerusalem when it would become the object of Roman attack (Luke 21:20-21—an outpouring of national judgment, a day of visitation, which believers were even then awaiting). Their attitude as conscientious objectors was doubtless looked upon as being most unpatriotic and cowardly at the time, but ultimately it was recognised as one resulting from sound wisdom, for the predicted destruction of Jerusalem came to pass as the result of Divine judgment, as Christ foretold. This was "a day of visitation" (see Luke 19:44), when national judgment was poured out upon Jewry; and if believers, through fleshly patriotism, had become involved in the defence of the country, they would have perished with the ungodly. That is true also of impending national judgments. The instructions received from Christ require believers to keep separate from the world, lest they perish with it; and whilst the world might decry them as "evildoers" now for so acting, it will ultimately be compelled to acknowledge the wisdom of this teaching in the "day of visitation" when it will see saints escape a destruction that will engulf all nations.

VERSE 13

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake"—The rules and regulations of the world should be obeyed except when they conflict with

those of God. Thus Peter, when commanded not to preach, replied: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). The three faithful Jews, in the time of Daniel, obeyed the ordinance of Nebuchadnezzar to assemble on the plain of Shinar, but refused to bow before the image he had set up (Dan. 3). They obeyed the law of the land as far as it was possible for them to do without breaking God's commands. The latter must ever take precedence over the former, even though man's laws should be respected (see Rom. 13:1).

"Whether it be to the king as supreme" — Peter commands that his readers submit to the supreme authority on earth, whether exercised by the sovereign in person, or by those who are appointed by him. The Government of the land is to be acknowledged as supreme, subject of course to the limitations as expressed by the Apostles: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Peter, writing in the age of Nero, still saw the State as the God-appointed organisation for the maintenance of society, in which Christ's followers should render to Caesar his due. By personal experience, Peter knew what it meant to refuse this when the law of Caesar conflicted with that of God (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29). However, he does not lay emphasis upon that aspect of duty here.

VERSE 14

"Governors are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers"—See the similar teaching of Paul (Rom. 13:4). He declared that rulers "bear not the sword in vain." God has ordained the powers that be, and they are permitted to wield the sword in order to preserve peace, limit tyranny, and enable the Truth to be proclaimed. To that end, the Apocalypse represents the "earth" (political opposition to tyranny) as "helping" the remnant of the woman's seed "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:16-17). See comments in *Elpis Israel* and *Eureka*. Believers, therefore, do not stand in judgment

upon unbelievers when the latter use the sword, for their attitude of non-resistance to evil is bound up in the terms of their call as a purchased people (1 Pet. 2:9), requiring them to separate "from out of the Gentiles, a people for the name" (Acts 15:14. Rev. 5:9-10). This separation is a very real thing, involving non-participation in politics, worldly religious organisations, or the wars of nations. Paul taught that salvation is bound up in observing it (2 Cor. 6:17-18). Thus, whilst recognising that "Governors are sent by God for the punishment of evildoers," and Rome was God's instrument to inflict judgment on Jerusalem, believers had to stand aside from all participation in such, as a separated people, as "strangers" scattered throughout the nation (1 Pet. 1:1).

"And for the praise of them that do well" — Praise here stands opposed to punishment. It is part of the State's business to commend and protect law-abiding people in their midst, and to acknowledge their righteousness in that regard. See also Rom. 13:3-4.

VERSE 15

"For so is the will of God" — In the relationship of believers with the State, the will of God must be acknowledged and obeyed. That sometimes, brings them into conflict with those with whom they would prefer to be at peace. See Ch. 3:17.

"With well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"—Well doing supplies an eloquent answer to all forms of criticism. The words, "put to silence" are literally, "to muzzle." Good actions muzzle criticism! This is excellent reasoning. What can the voice of criticism effectively say in the face of good works performed? Do not they testify to the power, influence and regard afforded the things believed? The word "foolish" in the Greek signifies "without reason," and therefore indicates unreflecting and unreasonable men. There are many such; people who cannot be convinced by the most reasonable

arguments, nor the most logical force of Scripture, but who cannot resist the appeal of good works. How often has a Christadelphian's claim to be recognised as a conscientious objector been decried as "illogical" by men who have never properly considered the full force of the evidence, and yet has been granted because of the consistent attitude manifested by the applicant? After all, does not James say that "faith without works is dead being alone"?

VERSE 16

"As free"—A believer is subject to the will of God, and therefore free of the domination of man. That is his real political status at present. Nevertheless, because God requires it, he cheerfully submits to the ordinances of men, even though they may appear tyrannical and unjust. Faithful Israelites had to submit to the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar because the purpose of God demanded his conquest of the land of Judah, and so Yahweh through Jeremiah declared: "By My outstretched arm, have (I) given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me" (Jer. 27:5). We should not question these matters, nor get upset over whoever is placed in power. It is our duty to submit to whatever Government is in force, and we need to do it without complaining. See the example of Christ in Matt. 17:26-27.

"And not using your liberty" — In Christ, believers have been purchased from out of slavery to sin (Rom. 6:18), and therefore are not under the domination of the flesh. However, in line with the example of Christ, they submit to the requirements of the Government, until they conflict with those of Christ.

"Cloke of maliciousness"—The word maliciousness is rendered "wickedness" in the R.V. It is possible for believers in Christ to misuse the freedom that association with him brings, as a cloke or cover of wickedness. They can claim exemption from the demands of the State because it is convenient for them so to do, and yet

live in complete disobedience to Christ, and inconsistently with their claim of liberty from these laws. Such an attitude becomes a "cloke of wickedness."

"The servants of God"—God has purchased those in Christ (1 Cor. 7:22), and in so doing, has freed them from the domination of man. But as they are His slaves, and are required to obey His will, and He has requested that they "submit to every ordinance of man," so they obey the laws of man, except where they conflict with the laws of God.

VERSE 17

"Honour all men" — Christ's followers respect authority by obeying its laws wherever possible. See Rom. 13:7.

"Love the brotherhood" — Apart from Ch. 5:9, this is the only place where "brotherhood" is found in Scripture. It relates to the whole fraternity of believers, which is regarded as a band of brothers. The term *love* is expressive of a self-sacrificial service rendered to all. Whereas we *honour* or respect all in authority (the word *men* is not in the Greek), we *love* the brotherhood.

"Fear God" — This is a duty everywhere enjoined in the Scriptures (Lev. 25:17; Rom. 3:18; 2 Cor. 7:1). In Prov. 1:7 (Heb.) the "fear of Yahweh" is classified as "the firstfruits of knowledge" whereas Paul sets forth "love" as the "bond of completeness" (Col. 3:14). "Fear" in this context, is a reverential veneration of God; a fear not so much of punishment as of His disapproval.

"Honour the king" — As King of heaven believers pay Yahweh the supreme honour; and as a token of this, they respect kingly authority on earth.

Towards Masters — vv. 18-25

Among the duties required of those who enjoy the privileges granted those in Christ is the attitude of servants towards their masters. They are called upon to submit to those things laid upon them. Even though the conditions are difficult, and they are called upon to suffer wrongfully, they are exhorted to bear with it, following the example set by Christ. Of course, as Paul remarks, if they can obtain freedom from such servitude, they are advised to do so (1 Cor.

7:21). *Certainly they are to avoid agitation, such as is the custom of labourers today; but, in faith, to look to Yahweh to lighten their difficulties, and avenge the wrongs they suffer.*

VERSE 18

“Servants, be subject to your masters” — The duty of servants to their masters is outlined by Paul in Eph. 6:5-9. However, the word here rendered “servants” is not the same as there. It is the title *oiketes*, derived from a root signifying *to occupy a house*, and hence a *domestic*. Such a person might have been a bond-slave, or might not. The word would apply to one whether he was hired, or owned as a slave. Nor is the word rendered “masters” the same as that used by Paul. Here it is the plural of *despotes*, signifying absolute rulers. The context implies that such were unbelievers, exercising absolute dominion over those under them. In spite of their dictatorial attitude, Christ’s followers are exhorted to be subject to them with all reverence and respect.

“With all fear” — With proper respect. They are not to despise their masters, or agitate against them, as is often the case today.

“Not only to the good and gentle but also to the froward” — The attitude of subjection must be shown towards both the gentle (*epieikes* — fair, moderate, forbearing) as well as to the froward (*skolios* — crooked, curved, thus perverse and unjust). It is difficult to follow this advice unless daily activity is viewed as a service to Christ (see Eph. 6:5). By so doing believers manifest a virtue of Christ’s character, and witness to the power of the truth espoused by us.

VERSE 19

“This is thankworthy”—Gr. *charis*, the same word elsewhere rendered “grace” or that which is expressive of unmerited favor (see Ch. 1:2). It suggests a service which occasions pleasure, or causes favorable regard, and, as in the use of the term, the grace of God, indicates an action beyond the ordinary course of what might be expected. A slave in the performance of his duties would not be normally thanked unless he conducted himself in a most excep-

tional way. Peter here enjoins them to so conduct themselves that they become the subjects of such commendation.

“If a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully” — If our daily chores can be viewed as a service to God, a “conscience” in such matters will be developed, and the believer will become a conscientious labourer in the things appointed him to do in his daily avocation. Christ endured the contradiction of sinners against himself (Heb. 12:3); he “suffered wrongfully”, experiencing injustice and pain. But he was sustained by Yahweh, and rose triumphantly from the grave. His example is one for all believers to follow in the normal pursuits of life.

VERSE 20

“For what glory is it?”—Gr. *kleos*, signifying “fame,” “reputation.”

“When ye be buffeted for your faults” — The word “buffeted” means to strike with clenched fists, a punishment that slaves might expect from evil, tyrannical masters. The same word is used in Matthew 26:67 of the treatment meted out to the Lord, who, as Yahweh’s suffering servant, set forth an example for all to follow. Peter’s memory of that awful night, when he was a witness of the indignities heaped upon the Lord, must have been very vivid. He reverts to it in this verse, and shows what a wonderful example of patient endurance in suffering the Lord gave under those terrible conditions.

However, Christ was not “buffeted for his faults” but in spite of all that he had done for suffering humanity. The term “for your faults” is literally for *sinning*, that is, “if being guilty of an offence, or having done wrong”. Under such conditions, punishment would be just.

“Ye take it patiently?” — The word “patiently” is derived from a word signifying *to abide under*, and therefore to *endure*. A person might do this whilst deserving the discipline he receives; in that case it is no honour for him to submit to the punishment laid on him. He is deserving of it. However, a believer suf-

fers injustice, and yet patiently submits to whatever indignity may be laid upon him, because he recognises that it is the will of God that he manifests such a characteristic. It is pleasing in the sight of the Father Who will avenge in due time (Rom. 12:19). We attribute no particular credit to one who submits to a just punishment even with a calm temper. We feel that it would be wrong in the highest degree for him to do otherwise. So it is when calamities are brought on a person on account of his sins. If it is seen to be the fruit of intemperance or crime, we do not feel that there is any great virtue exhibited if he bears it with calmness. But when one patiently bears with suffering or criticism that is not justified, and it is seen that this is done in submission to God, a powerful witness to the influence of the Truth is exhibited.

"But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it" — On the other hand, if a person is not deserving of the punishment he receives, it will excite sympathy; and if he accepts it patiently, it will receive praise. An onlooker will recognise that he is motivated by worthy principles, and might be drawn to consider them, and so be attracted to Christ.

"This is acceptable with God" — The Greek for "acceptable" is *charis*, for which see the notes on the word "thankworthy" (v.19). Here it indicates the pleasure of God in the attitude of His servants who patiently endured ill-treatment meted out to them beyond the normal lot of slaves, because they were Christians.

VERSE 21

"For hereunto were ye called" — Believers are called upon to patiently endure trials even as did the Lord Jesus. Peter makes this fact abundantly clear, and endeavours to impress it upon his brethren. These verses should be the subject of constant meditation that the important principles set forth therein should be given practical expression in action. Faith will enable us to rise above trials, suffering and all frustrations, and will provide us with the vision to see beyond these things to the glorious consummation to be re-

vealed at Christ's return.

"Because Christ also suffered for us" — He did so as our representative, not as our substitute. He revealed by his actions what his followers should attempt to manifest, whereas if he suffered *instead* of us, we should not need to suffer to any degree. True disciples are called upon to "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

"Leaving us an example" — Gr. *hupogrammos*, lit. "an under-writing," from *hupographo* "to write under," "to trace letters for copying." The word suggests the old-time copy-book, in which the letters of the alphabet were perfectly formed, and children learned to shape them according to the example given. The slow, clumsy, laborious efforts of young students, unused to the letters, are suggestive of the wavering, difficult efforts of Christians to copy the example of Christ. As with children, however, practice makes perfect; the more Christians try to imitate Christ, the more they will succeed.

"Ye should follow his steps" — Follow him as sheep follow the shepherd, in trust, confidence and faith that he will protect and truly guide them.

VERSE 22

"Who did no sin" — The Lord's perfect obedience stemmed from his divine begettal, teaching the lesson that a person must be begotten from above in order to develop spiritually as required of God (see John 3:3 mg). Even so, they will fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Christ was unique among the sons of Adam. See *The Blood of Christ*.

"Neither was guile found in his mouth" — See note on v.1. Christ was open and sincere in all his words. He did not try to evade the suffering to which he was subjected by a cunning use of words.

VERSE 23

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again" — The natural tendency of flesh is to retaliate when reviled. Christ

revealed a "more perfect way". He did not use harsh words in return for those which were directed against him. He was accused of being seditious, deceptive, a blasphemer; but he did not answer in kind. The Lord was forthright in his denunciation of evil, as witness his description of the Jewish leaders recorded in Matthew 23; but he was not personally vindictive, nor did he indulge in false accusations, nor in reviling. On the cross he called for no revenge, but instead sought the good of the nation, praying that the enormity of the action of its leaders might be brought home to the people, that they might be saved from their sins.

"When he suffered, he threatened not" — When he suffered in justice in his trial, and in the form of his death, he did not give way to idle threats, but submitted in accordance with the will of Yahweh.

"He committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously" — Christ gave an example of absolute non-resistance to evil and complete trust in God. He could have avoided all his trials (Matt. 26:53), but he knew that the path of salvation lay through suffering and death, and like a good shepherd, he led the way. Peter was an uneasy witness of all that he describes in these verses; so that his exhortation was born out of his own experience.

VERSE 24

"Who his own self" — The Apostle emphasises the personal identification of the Lord with the nature common to all. Christ himself described it as being the source of all sin (Mark 7:15-23). He came in "the likeness of sin's flesh" (Rom. 8:3), and though he did not succumb to its desires he needed redemption from it by a change of nature. Peter's descriptive terms are similar to those used by Paul: "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, *he also himself likewise* took part of the same" (Heb. 2:14). The apostles were insistent upon identifying the nature of Christ with that of those he came to save.

"He bare our sins" — To "bare" means "to bear up," hence to lift up as a sacrifice to the altar.

How did Jesus do this? By submitting to the death of the cross. Paul says that in doing this "he died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10), even though "he did no sin." What then was "the sin" he died unto? The term is expressive of the "flesh with its affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24), so that we are called upon to do, what Jesus himself did (see Rom. 6:11). Christ never gave way to the flesh, but submitted to the will of the Father in all things. "Not my will, but Thine be done," was his prayer, and in the performance of this, the flesh was not only suppressed in life, but put to death upon the cross. This is called "dying unto sin," because active sin springs from the promptings of flesh (Rom. 7:17-18. Mark 7:21-22). Christ's death exhibited what his followers must figuratively do: crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24), or subordinate their wills to that of the Father. Christ's perfect example, his complete sinlessness, emphasises their shortcomings and the extent and reality of active sin, and therefore makes more obvious the need for them to seek the forgiveness that will be granted all who approach God through him to that end (Rom. 3:25).

"In his own body" — The preposition "in" is *en* in the Greek, and signifies "within." Jesus had a nature identical with that of all mankind, for he was made "in all points like we are," though he sinned not. He had to triumph over the flesh in order to render perfect obedience unto God, and to be a fit sacrifice for the salvation of man. Thus Peter taught that he "suffered in the flesh" (1 Pet. 4:1).

"On the tree" — The same expression is used in Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29. The significance of it is explained by Paul in Gal. 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This is a citation from Deut. 21:23, and it describes the form of execution suffered by criminals (see Josh. 10:26). The public

display of Christ's death was designed to illustrate to believers what is required for salvation: to recognise the flesh for what it is and figuratively crucify it (Gal. 5:24). The law cursed Jesus in the mode of his death (Deut. 21:23), a form of death that was a prominent feature of the Atonement (see John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32; Acts 2:23; 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; 1 Pet. 2:24). It illustrated that the flesh is evil, and must be put to death by a figurative crucifixion if humanity is to please God (Gal. 5:24). Christ's death was prominently displayed (Gal. 3:1) that all may understand what is required for salvation. In that way, he represented those whom he died to save. He demonstrated that eternal life is only possible through death. He "died unto sin, once" (Rom. 6:10), and his disciples are to account themselves also as being "dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

"That we being dead to sins" — The word "dead" does not appear in the Greek. Instead there is the word *apogenomenos*, a combination of *apo*, "off" or "removed" and *ginomai*, "to become", and therefore to become separated or removed from sins. This is effected by the forgiveness, or blotting of them out through the atonement granted in Christ. The word is not elsewhere used in the N.T.

Paul writes (Rom. 6:10-11). "Reckon (take into account) ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." Paul uses the term "sin" as relating to the lusts of the flesh and shows that we should so live, as to be dead to such desires that run counter to the principles of God. A person that is "dead to sin," does not obey the dictates of the flesh, but instead he "lives unto righteousness," as Peter observes.

"Should live unto righteousness" — Disciples of Christ "die unto sin" when they pass through the waters of baptism; and as they come forth therefrom, it is to "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Both death and life are necessary to salvation. There are both negative and positive aspects to the life in Christ. The one must pave the way for the other. It is not enough merely to die unto sin, there is a need to build into our lives a divine likeness: to reveal those divine characteristics manifested so beautifully in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, though dead in

respect to sin's flesh, disciples reveal a real life in another respect. They are made alive unto God, in righteousness, to true holiness. See Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:20.

"By whose stripes ye were healed" — These words are from Isaiah 53:5, showing that Peter now plainly understood the prophecy of Yahweh's suffering servant, a feature of Christ's ministry that he at one time did not understand (Matt. 16:22). As he wrote these words, his mind must have gone back to that tragic night when he denied the Lord as the latter was suffering. Christ was "buffeted" (v. 20), tormented (v. 21), reviled (v. 23), scourged (v. 24), and yet endured it all without retaliation, providing a wonderful example of patience for the sheep to follow. The sufferings he endured on behalf of humanity were terrible. One writer has written: "In scourging, the Romans used a scourge of cords, or thongs, to which were attached pieces of lead, brass, or small sharp-pointed bones. Criminals were ordinarily scourged before crucifixion. The victim was stripped to the waist, and bound in a stooping position, with the hands behind the back, and tied to a pillar or post. Suffering under the lash was intense. The body was frightfully lacerated. The Christian martyrs at Smyrna about A.D. 155 were so torn by the scourges, that the veins were laid bare, and the inner muscles and sinews, and even the bowels, were exposed." In the case of the Lord Jesus, his face was pummeled by the hard fists of the mob, his back was lacerated through scourging, his heart was torn by the bitter, malevolent words flung at him, and yet he bore it all patiently. What an example of endurance! How far we fall short of what he tolerated!

VERSE 25

"For ye were as sheep going astray" — This is likewise an allusion to Isa. 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray". Peter, of course, wrote to Jewish believers (Ch. 1:1), who had turned

from the truth of God. Christ, in his parable of the good shepherd, described the Jewish people as sheep, and declared: "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold" (John 10:16). Those "other sheep" are Gentile believers. They could not be described as having "gone astray" for until the call came to them they had never been in the fold. But the Jewish people had, so that Peter's comment is correct and apt.

"Returned unto the Shepherd"

—They had heard the voice of the Shepherd, and had returned to him.

"Bishop of your souls" — The word "bishop" signifies "overseer" and does not relate to an official position such as "bishops" assume in the "churches" of Christendom. All the spirit-appointed elders of the early Ecclesias were bishops, or overseers, and Christ was the chief Bishop of them all. The same word here rendered "bishop" is translated "visitation" in v. 12, where it relates to the Day when all things will be reviewed, or brought into account.

CHAPTER 3

Towards Husbands — Vv. 1-6

The Apostle advises regarding the important duties and position of wives when joined to unbelieving or believing husbands. Sisters can help their husbands in the work of the Truth or hinder them; they can encourage them in their duties or by their conduct drive their husbands away from them. Some of the ordinances Peter laid down may be opposed to what the flesh would desire, but, in fact, the principles set forth really lay down the basis of a successful and happy marriage now. Let wives remember, as they read this section, that Peter had a wife (1 Cor. 9:5).

VERSE 1

"Ye wives, be in subjection to your husbands"—The word "subjection" in the Greek is a military term signifying "to submit to discipline." But why should wives be expected to do this? Because of Divine appointment. See 1 Cor. 11:3-7. But this, like the injunction of Ch. 2:13 is subject to the provision of Acts 5:29. A wife is not expected to submit to her husband in unlawful matters that would lead her from God.

"If any obey not"—Gr. *apeitheo*, signifying "a refusal to be persuaded" and thus relating to stubborn, obstinate husbands—of which there are many in the world, as wives would undoubtedly agree!

The obvious reference, however, is to husbands who have not embraced the Truth. Special care should be exercised towards them. The reference to "the word" which they refuse to obey, is the Word of God.

"They may without the word be won"—There is no definite article in the Greek, so the phrase can read: "without a word be won." Mere talking, or nagging, will not win over such husbands, though the conduct (conversation, i.e. behaviour) of the wives may well do so.

"By the conversation of the wives" — This is an unfortunate rendition. It is not the "conversation of the wives", as we understand the term, that will win over husbands, but their manner of living. The word "conversation" is *anastrophe* in the Greek, and is derived from a verb signifying to *turn back, return*, hence, *to move about in a place*, and so conduct oneself, indicating a manner of life and character. A husband is more likely to be won over by the pleasant personality and loving assistance of his wife, than by her conversation!

VERSE 2

"They behold your chaste conversation"—The word in Greek for "behold" is an intensive form of the verb, and signifies a very close scrutiny. Peter is advising that the chaste or holy living of wives may well cause a stubborn husband to more closely consider the cause of such an attitude on the

part of his spouse, with the result that he may be won over by such practical manifestation of Godliness.

"Coupled with fear"—Render as "reverence." The wives not only desist from nagging, they not only reveal a holy way of life, but they pay due respect to their husbands, even though the latter may not have accepted Christ.

VERSE 3

"Whose adorning"—The word is *kosmos*, the word frequently translated "world" and signifying "arrangement" or "order of things." Here it signifies an harmonious arrangement or order, particularly as relating to the person. The Apostle is exhorting that such external adornment will never bring unbelieving husbands to Christ.

"Let it not be that outward adorning"—A loving, bright, thoughtful spouse is sure to appeal to a husband more than a cantankerous woman who seeks to appeal by mere artificial aids. Such external beauty may merely camouflage a stubborn, sullen or disagreeable character. Inward virtue is far more lasting and appealing than outward, superficial deportment, for external beauty soon fades. Nevertheless, the apostle does not say that a wife should wholly neglect her personal appearance. Neatness, cleanliness, and a proper attention to outward appearance according to one's circumstances in life can lead to a better appreciation within the domestic circle, and even in the proclamation of the Truth. A person maintaining standards of dress and appearance is bound to appeal to those to whom the Truth is preached, than one who is a sloven. Peter's words should not be used to justify sloppiness in personal appearance, nor untidiness and neglect in the home.

"Plaiting the hair"—A reference to the intricate, artificial and elaborate hair-styles of the times. God does not need the appeal of the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) to win people to Christ; and that is Peter's main point in this section of his epistle. He is discussing what a believing sister should

do to win over an unbelieving husband. It will not be done by mere external appeal, but it can be done by proper conduct and thoughtful consideration of her partner. (See also 1 Tim. 2:9.)

"Wearing of gold"—The word "wearing" comes from the Greek *perithesis*, and signifies "a wearing around," i.e. so as to cover the body. Thus Peter is advising against an exaggerated use of jewellery such as Jeremiah makes mention of in Jer. 4:30. In Jer. 2:32, the prophet warns against placing emphasis on such external show to the exclusion of the things of God. Isaiah warns that an over-use of such things can be a cause of condemnation at the Judgment Seat. See Isaiah 3:18-24.

"Putting on of apparel"—Gr. *himation*, "a robe," used especially of an outer cloak or mantle (Vine), and therefore an article of dress the exclusive use of which is for show. Care needs to be exercised less undue emphasis is given to these things. Let women dress neatly, and in good taste, adorning the doctrine they believe, but let them avoid the extremes of fashion that are so evident in the world.

VERSE 4

"The hidden man of the heart"—This is Christ (Eph. 3:17 cf. Rom. 12:2), and he must be found "in the heart," at the seat of affection, and not merely as an outward profession. Christ in the heart is the finest adornment that anybody can have. A scarecrow can be made to look pretty, but it still remains what it is! If one needs to rely upon externals in either face, form or fashions to impress others, the fact shows that such a person lacks those essential personal and spiritual qualities that make one really interesting and attractive. See Col. 3:9-10.

"That which is not corruptible"—Such a character is the result of the incorruptible seed of truth (1 Pet. 1:23), and is incorruptible because it is recorded in Yahweh's

Book of Remembrance (Mal. 3:16). Thus Christian wives are to be noted, not for a lavish, gaudy display of jewellery; not for conspicuous, immodest dress, nor elaborate highly artificial hair-do's, but for the manifestation of the Christ-character in gentle, loving service. In choosing her dress, her ornaments, the manner of wearing her hair, she must be guided by the principle that her chief and basic adornment must be the Lord Jesus. External dress and accessories must be in keeping with the sweetness, simplicity, purity, meekness and quietness of spirit of a follower of the Lord. The dress of such a person will be attractive without detracting from Christ whose excellence of example she will reveal. These remarks not only apply to wives in the natural sense, but they also apply to the bride of Christ which is made up of both sexes; so that the admonition of Peter to married sisters, becomes admonition to all who have embraced Christ.

"The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit"—This is something with which we must "adorn" ourselves, not something that is ours by nature. A meek and quiet spirit represents a way of life (2 Cor. 12:18; Gal. 5:16), developed and constantly renewed by the spirit-word (Eph. 4:23; Ezek. 36:26), and manifested by our attitude one towards another (1 Cor. 4:21). The "wearing" of such an ornament will be rewarded by immortality (Rom. 8:6; Gal. 6:8). Notice that it is a "meek" spirit and not a "weak" one that is commended. Jesus was a meek man, but not a weak man (Matt. 11:29); Moses, also, was "the meekest of men" (Num. 12:3), but he was nevertheless a strong personality. He was "little in his own eyes" and willing to humble himself under the mighty hand of God.

"In the sight of God"—A reminder that we all walk under God's observant eyes Who does discern our inward qualities (Heb. 4:12-13).

"Of great price"—i.e. "of highest cost," the very limit of preciousness.

VERSE 5

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God adorned themselves" — The allusion here is particularly to the times of the patriarchs. Several of the matriarchs, such as Sarah and Rebekah, were noted for their attractive appearance; but their true beauty was in their loving and trusting dispositions, the faithful, submissive attitude that they adopted towards God and their husbands. The words "adorned themselves" is from the Greek *kosmeo*, "to arrange, put in order". The same word is used for "trimming" of lamps (Matt. 25:7). Such adornment was not natural to those women, but became a way of life that they developed in their reverence for God, and their love of their husbands.

"Being in subjection unto their own husbands" — This characteristic stemmed from the standing of husband and wife as established from the very beginning (Gen. 3:16), and endorsed by the Apostles (Eph. 5:22; 1 Tim. 2:9-15).

VERSE 6

"Even as Sara obeyed Abraham" — Sarah submitted to the requests of Abraham, sacrificing her own convenience to do so. She gave up all the amenities of Ur to follow him in his pilgrimage, cheerfully enduring the difficulties of the journey of faith, and sharing with him the loneliness of the way. She was a real help-meet, encouraging her husband in the things that were necessary for their mutual spiritual development.

"Calling him lord" — The reference to this incident is recorded in Gen. 18:12. It is the only time that we learn of Sarah doing this, but it is obvious from Peter's comment, that it was characteristic of her. It is significant she addressed him thus "in her heart", so it was a genuine expression of feelings, and was not openly said merely to impress. Certainly, there was nothing of women's liberation principles in her attitude to her husband; nor do they find endorsement in the instruction of the Apostle in the advice now before us. Sarah's love for Abraham found expression in her reverential care of him, and was repaid in his

consideration and affection for her.

"Whose daughters ye are"—A true son of Abraham is one who manifests Abraham's characteristics (John 8:39); and a true daughter of Sarah is one who imitates her virtues. The life of Abraham is recorded as typical of a life of faith in which God takes pleasure (Rom. 4:16-24).

"As long as ye do well" — It is not enough to claim to be a son of Abraham, or a daughter of Sarah: the claim must be manifested in action.

"Are not afraid with any amazement" — *Diaglott* rendering: "Not fearing any terror," i.e. putting implicit trust in God. Sarah submitted to Abraham's directions in complete trust and without fear, knowing that he, in turn, was obeying God's command. Typically, Abraham was in the place of God, and therefore entitled to respect. So in an age when women had few rights, they who were married to unbelievers (v. 1) had to submit themselves to God's will in the way outlined in these verses, confidently trusting Him at all times. They were to fear Him rather than their husbands.

Towards Wives — V.7.

The secret of real marriage is mutual consideration, co-operation, and sacrifice. So now Peter addresses the husbands.

VERSE 7

"Ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge" — The word signifies an understanding developed from enquiry or investigation. A husband should not please himself, but by careful investigation and inquiry ascertain the needs of his wife and so dwell with her in love.

"Giving honor" — Gr. *Time*, "something of highest value for which a price has been paid." The price that husbands should pay is their liberty of will to please themselves. Christ did not please himself, but paid a high price for his bride, giving his life on her behalf. He has set a high

example of loving service for husbands to emulate.

"The weaker"—As such the wife is in need of help and protection, so that in the perfect state, husband and wife are well matched. The beauty and femininity of the bride is matched by the strength of the husband, and each provides what the other needs. This is the purpose of marriage. Eve was provided as "an help meet" for Adam. The Hebrew words are *ezer kenegdo* and signify "one as his front," i.e. his counterpart, or one to match him (see Gen. 2:18 margin). In *Law of Moses*, Robert Roberts writes: "Man is for strength, judgment and achievement. Woman is for grace, sympathy and ministrations. Between them they form a beautiful unit — 'heirs together of the grace of life'" (P.220). Husband and wife make one complete unit, and, in the perfect state, blend all the above mentioned attributes together. That perfect state will be seen in the marriage of Christ and his bride, a glorious unity or blending of all these desirable characteristics (cf. Rev. 19:7; John 17:21). Christ manifested in himself the best of both male AND female qualities of character which he revealed to his contemporaries. Marriage in the truth is designed to this end, namely, that husband and wife should reflect the various aspects of Christ's character. (Note, how Peter, after having described Christ's attributes — Ch. 2:23-24 — then demands: "Likewise, ye wives"—Ch. 3:1—, "Likewise, ye husbands"—Ch. 3:7). Unfortunately, like so many other things, marriage often falls far short of the Divine ideal.

"Vessel"—A receptacle designed to hold precious contents, namely God's word and God's glory (cp. 2 Cor. 4:6-7). The same figure of speech is used in Rom. 9:22-24; 2 Tim. 2:21. Peter refers to the wife as the "weaker vessel" in order to indicate her weaker physical constitution, and her greater need of guidance and of help. As a "weaker" vessel she is more easily broken with the result that the

"contents" will be lost. Peter does not say that the CONTENTS of the vessel are weaker, i.e. that she has less spiritual qualities, for a weak receptacle can nevertheless be filled with a full measure of precious contents — namely the Spirit word, but he is suggesting that wives are more susceptible to being adversely affected by circumstances which may not affect the more rugged male constitution of their husbands. The wife is the "weaker vessel" in physical strength and mental ability. This, as a rule is undoubtedly true, despite some exceptions to the rule. However, husbands frequently disgrace the position of authority that they, by nature, should hold. Nevertheless, brethren as well as sisters need to remember that what is true of the relationships between husband and wife is illustrative of the position of the Ecclesia towards its Lord and Husband with this exception that he has never disgraced his position of authority.

"And as being heirs together of the grace of life" — In this statement, Peter places the wife on the same level as the husband, each contributing to the other's welfare.

"That your prayers be not hindered"—"Your" is in the plural, and refers to the mutual prayers of husband and wife. Peter's whole treatise is designed to make the home an oasis for the truth. The adage is true that says: "The family that prays together, stays together."

Towards Brethren — Vv. 8-9

An harmonious state should not only exist in the home but in the Ecclesia which is the home of the Truth, and the training ground of the Bride of Christ. Here, likewise, should be found mutual consideration and understanding one toward another.

VERSE 8

"Finally"—Peter is not concluding his letter at this point, but this specific section of it.

"Be all of one mind"—Be like-minded. This requires that brethren must think as one, viewing life from the same perspective. That is only possible when the mind of Christ dominates each unit. When that is achieved, there will be found a glorious unity, with each member co-operating to the good of the other. Members will not become argumentative for the sake of argument, they will not be lifted up in pride, nor be concerned with personal aggrandisement, but will be concerned with the welfare of others, "rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them who weep." (Rom. 12:15-17; 1 Cor. 12:25-26.) Happy is the Ecclesia whose members are moved by these considerations.

"Having compassion one of another" — The Greek word *sumpatheo* is similar to the English word "sympathy". One who truly sympathises with another enters into his feelings, and evinces a regard for his welfare. Therefore, he is prepared to suffer for him, which is the meaning of the expression before us. There should be developed a family atmosphere of mutual consideration in the Ecclesia of God.

"Love as brethren" — Gr. *Philadelphos* = "be brethren who are loving." (See margin.)

"Be pitiful" — *Diaglott* renders: "be compassionate." Be thoughtful and kind to others.

"Be courteous" — *Diaglott* renders: "be humble." Have a modest opinion of yourself, and meet your brethren clothed in that humility. Do not be overbearing.

VERSE 9

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing" — Instead of doing this, we are called to follow the example of Christ. See Matt. 5:39,44; Rom. 12:17; 1 Tim. 6:4; 1 Pet. 2:23.

"But contrariwise blessing" — The appeal is to manifest a spirit contrary to that of retaliation towards another.

"Ye are thereunto called"—This is your calling and business in life. Therefore, to put these things into practice is to your personal benefit. Notice, that the virtues

mentioned in this verse are those which Peter says were manifested by Christ (Ch. 2:23), and virtues that he revealed UNDER EXTREME PROVOCATION. If we imitate them, Peter taught, we will receive a blessing. This statement must be accepted in faith, and we must submit to evil in the realisation that God will vindicate us, and, if necessary, He will punish the evil-doer. This demands of us stern discipline of self and iron control of our words and actions.

"That ye should inherit a blessing"— Though compensation for good deeds may be received now (Luke 6:38), the fulness of blessings will be granted at the resurrection (Luke 14:14). It will be then that the promised blessings enumerated in Matthew 5:3-12 will be inherited.

VERSE 10 — Towards evildoers

"For he that will love life, and see good days"— The Greek text is more direct. It has been rendered: "He that is *willing*, or *that wills* to love life, and see good days". The whole passage (vv. 10-12) is taken from Psa. 34:12-16 with minor variations. It implies that there is a need to create this desire for life and good, and to pursue the means that will bring it about. Paul claimed that crowns of righteousness are reserved for "them that love the Lord's appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). He also reminded Timothy that the Truth "has promise of the life that *now is*, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8), and whilst Peter's words undoubtedly point to the future, we can even now learn to "love life", and can find "good days" if we "will" to do so. It is a matter of adjusting present circumstances to Christ's requirements. There is such a thing as "more abundant living" now, whilst also "laying hold of eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12). The section of the Psalm quoted by Peter provides four rules of life that can lead to better life and days. These four rules build one upon another.

1. Negative: "Keep thy tongue from evil"—i.e. do NOT speak evil, but discipline your tongue (V. 13). In contradistinction to David, Saul did indulge in speaking evil and deceit (1 Sam. 18:22-25).

2. Negative and Positive: "Depart from evil and do good" (V.

11). Do NOT do that which is injurious or morally wrong, but having ceased from evil, fill the vacuum thus created by doing something positive: Do good! (cp. Christ's example Ch. 2:23).

3. Positive: "Seek peace and pursue it." Seek peace, not for selfish reasons, but for the good of others. David did so (1 Sam. 19:4), Christ did likewise (Rom. 5:8-10). This is an action solely positive, a further step towards spiritual perfection and thus towards the goal of eternal life.

4. Positive: A declaration of FAITH: "The eyes of Yahweh are upon the righteous" (V. 15).

Much might be endured by those who heed these four rules, but in faith, this can be done, knowing that vindication will ultimately come, when "the remembrance of evil doers will be cut off from the earth" (V. 16).

"Refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from guile"—(Do as Christ did!—Ch. 2:22-23). Peter doubtless remembered the time when he went out into the darkness of the night, and "wept bitterly" because his tongue had uttered evil, and his lips had spoken guile in denying his Lord. Thus, out of his own experience, he gives heartfelt exhortation.

VERSE 11

"Let him eschew evil, and do good"

— In doing this, the believer will follow the pattern of Christ who is described as having "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" (Heb. 1:9). Both are essential for there are negative and positive principles in the Christ-like life. To "eschew" is to *turn aside from*. It is natural for man to do evil, hence the exhortation of Peter for disciples to turn aside from doing that which comes naturally to them, and to seek to do good.

"Let him seek peace and ensue it"— The Greek word *eirene* describes a state of harmony. It is from a root denoting to *be at one*. Accordingly, it is similar to the Hebrew word *shalom*, "to be at one". Such a peace implies fellowship with God. It therefore means much more than the cessation of enmity, for it em-

braces complete unity of outlook, and fellowship one with the other. Peter is again drawing on his personal experiences to exhort his brethren. He found no peace in the time of the Lord's trial, but was "offended" by the circumstances that led Christ to the cross (Mark 14:72). And yet the Lord had offered him peace (John 14:27). Peter's exhortation is to "seek" peace, that is, to go out of one's way to find it when it is lacking. The word "ensue" is from the Greek *dioko*, and signifies "to pursue". It is so rendered in the R.V. Disciples are called upon to *seek* for peace when it cannot be readily found, and to *pursue* it when it seems to evade one. His words indicate that great effort needs to be spent in securing the desirable peace.

VERSE 12

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers" — This being portion of the citation of Psa. 34:15, the reference is to Yahweh. Though the righteous sometimes may imagine themselves to be abandoned of Yahweh, it is far from true. His eyes are ever on them, and He will never allow them to be "tempted (tried) beyond what they can endure" (1 Cor. 10:13). He is, in fact, their Protector, and will avenge them in due time (Rom. 12:19-21). When adverse pressures were strong, and opposition was powerful, Noah "walked with God" (Gen. 6:9); that is, he was conscious that the eyes of Yahweh were upon him. Similarly, at a time of trial, Abram was told by God: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (or *mature* — Gen. 17:1). To do that, is to be conscious of the presence of God. Now Peter quotes the Psalm, to remind his readers that the eyes of Yahweh are upon them, and they should walk accordingly.

"And His ears are open unto their prayers" — Yahweh hears their prayers. In times of stress or difficulty, instant relief can be obtained by turning to God in prayer. Not that the trouble is necessarily removed, or the problem solved, but great comfort and help are derived in sharing trials with God. Strength will be obtained to surmount them, even though they may remain.

"But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" — Prayer will become powerful when the one exercising the privilege conforms in life to what is re-

quired. As the face of Yahweh will be towards the righteous to help; so it will be against the evil, and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God".

VERSE 13

"Who is he that will harm you?" — God can deliver, as Peter's own experience proved. He was imprisoned but was miraculously released (Acts 12:11). And yet his brethren, who were praying for his release, refused to believe it when it happened (V. 15). How true this is of human nature when faced with Divine omnipotence. Consider Ephesians 3:17-21.

"If ye be followers" — Gr. *Minetes* = Imitators. But some texts read *Zelotes* = "to burn with zeal," "to desire earnestly."

"Of that which is good" — Those who are upright, and who aim to do good to others in imitation of God, are those who usually enjoy tranquility and security in life. See v. 11.

Towards Persecution — Vv. 14-17

Christ taught that his disciples must expect the hatred of the world (John 15:18), and in fulfilment of these words, the world came to hate his followers mainly because of their refusal to conform. Though Rome was generally tolerant of the religious opinions and worship of its subjects, there came a time when the Government encouraged Caesar worship, and once a year every inhabitant of the empire had to burn his pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar. By so doing he showed that he was a loyal citizen of the Empire, and he received a certificate to indicate this. It was a custom and a law that made all feel they were part of Rome. Apart from this Rome was the essence of toleration, and so long as a man burned his pinch of incense and said "Caesar is lord," he could go away and worship any god he liked, so long as the worship did not affect public decency and order. True Christians refused to comply, however, as they also refused military service. They were then opposed and hailed before the authorities as insurrectionists. They

were also hated because their very manner of life was a constant reproach to that of the ungodly. They were different, and men disliked them because of that. Christ's followers are called upon to manifest the faith and courage to be different, and to continue this attitude in the face of the world's opposition, and, if necessary, active and brutal persecution.

VERSE 14

"But"—Gr. *Alla*. This preposition is more emphatic than *De* (the usual word for "but"), and marks a sudden interruption to what has gone before (see Bullinger's Lexicon). It is followed by the word "if," and the attached statement is in the optative mood which indicates an uncertainty, implying a possible but unusual eventuality. The construction in the Greek can read: "If you chance to suffer..." Peter is thus stating that active persecution is a possibility, but it is not the usual experience. This has been true of every age, though persecution was more rife in Apostolic times than now.

"And if ye suffer for righteousness' sake"—This is a reminder that even the righteous suffer, so that adversity is not an indication that God has abandoned one.

"Happy are ye"—The word is translated "blessed" in the R.V., and signifies "fortunate" or "prosperous" (see the comments of James 1:12). The man who endures active persecution and comes out of it "approved" will receive a greater reward because of his faithful endurance than those who are not brought unto such trials. So Christ pronounced them to be "blessed" or "happy" because of the ultimate reward that will be paid them by God (Matt. 5:10). No person can be happy under persecution unless he understands its purpose and recognises the ultimate reward for patient endurance (see Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:3).

"Be not afraid of their terror"—This is a citation from Isaiah 8:12-13, and the context describes Whom they should

fear: "Sanctify Yahweh of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread". Peter not only drew upon personal experience in order to help and encourage his brethren, but also directed them to the inspired Scriptures. This is an excellent procedure to adopt.

"Neither be troubled"—Do not be overcome with apprehensions of approaching danger. "Let not your hearts be troubled," exhorted the Lord (John 14:1). Seeing that Yahweh is the Protector of those who are faithful, let such bear in mind the words of Hezekiah in a time of trouble: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (2 Chron. 32:7-8).

Faith will enable those motivated thereby to conquer the fear and terror of man. This is stated in the context of Isaiah 8:12, for it follows: "Sanctify Yahweh of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread". Christ exhorted his disciples: "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me" (Jhn. 14:1). Christ will provide a peace of mind passing the understanding of man if we seek him in faith.

VERSE 15

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts"—To sanctify is "to separate," i.e. to give a place of honor. (Contrast Numb. 20:12). This statement is also a citation from the Immanuel prophecy, and was particularly appropriate to those times, for the circumstances were similar to those existing in the days of Isaiah, when the Assyrian was about to sweep down from the North to destroy and scatter the nation (Isa. 8:12-13). As Israel was called upon to seek and sanctify Yahweh, that He, in turn, might become manifested for them as a place of refuge, a sanctuary, so Peter exhorts his readers to do likewise. Meanwhile, the "sanctuary," the place of refuge, which Isaiah predicted Yahweh would provide had since been made manifest in the Lord Jesus. It is important to

notice the three principles of this verse that Peter stresses believers should reveal in times of opposition or persecution:

(1) "*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*": This is done by hearkening to His word and seeking communion with Him by prayer.

(2) "*Be ready to give an answer*": This requires the study of the Word that we might be able to skilfully divide it, and simply express it.

(3) "*With meekness and fear*" (reverence—margin): This indicates that deportment is important. It is not enough to be able to express belief or give answer to every question, but the manner of reply is important; it must be expressed in such a way as would be pleasing unto the Father, and reflect honor to His Son whom we elect to follow.

..."**Always ready to give an answer**" —Gr. *apologia*, a verbal defence as in court.

"**A reason of the hope that is in you**" — The word "reason" is *logos*, and signifies an account, as well as a reason. The context implies that outsiders observing the deportment of believers may be induced to seek a reason for it, and an account of the hope that motivates them. The manifestation of Christlike characteristics is the most compelling form of preaching the Gospel; it gives power to any witness.

"**With meekness**"—This requires that we exercise care in the presentation of the Truth, and that we avoid any bumptiousness in so doing. We are to imitate the meekness of Christ, whose attitude before Pilate is set forth by Peter as an example to follow (cf. Matt. 11:29; James 1:21).

"**And fear**"—The margin renders this as "reverence." We need to show respect to those to whom we are presenting our case, reverence to God Whose Truth we are expounding, and distrust of self in view of the frailty of the flesh, and its tendency to fall. "Fear" as

expressed by Peter is the opposite of highmindedness (Cf. Rom. 11:20).

VERSE 16

"**Having a good conscience**" — A good conscience is one that does not accuse the possessor of having done wrong. It signifies that whatever may be the accusations of others, a person so lives that he is at all times conscious of uprightness. He has a mind that correctly discerns right from wrong. Therefore, "a good conscience" comes from the mind enlightened as to those principles. There is such a thing as having "a conscience seared as with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2), so cauterised as to be beyond feeling, and therefore impervious to the promptings of righteousness. A person's mind can be so dull to truth as to manifest sincerity in wrong doing. Paul thought he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9); Christ warned that the time would come when those who would kill the disciples would think that they were doing God service (John 16:2); Solomon taught, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). The most atrocious crimes have been committed in the name of religion by men who have been sincere but unenlightened in the way of true righteousness.

"**That whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers**" — The tendency of the flesh is to treat the demands of the Truth as wrong, and describe Christ's followers as narrow, bigoted and evil. The profession of the Truth has always been subjected to such criticism. Christ pronounced a blessing upon those who experience such opposition. See Matt. 5:11; Luke 6:26. See also 1 Pet. 2:12.

"**That they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation**" — Here, again, the word "conversation" means "behaviour." The people of the world do not understand why believers stand aside from man's way, and feel incensed that they should do so. Thus insults are heaped upon true Christians, and false accusations are made against them of cowardice, or other failings. The Greek *Eperaeazo* signifies "to spitefully abuse," "to insult," or falsely

traduce one. The Jewish leaders did this to Christ, and he, in turn, warned his followers to expect the same treatment, saying: "the disciple is not above his Master." What they did to him, they will do to them (Matt. 10:24-25, John 15:20).

VERSE 17

"It is better, if the will of God be so"—Peter now sets forth the possibility of his readers having to endure active persecution. He sets it forth as a possibility, not a probability. Note the comments on V. 14, and cf. Ch. 2:19-20.

"That ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" — God may deem it necessary for His servants to suffer in order that they may be disciplined for their future good. There are effects to be accomplished through affliction which can be secured in no other way. Christ "learned obedience from the things that he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). His sufferings taught him what obedience to the will of God can mean, and the lesson educated him in developing a fellow-feeling for those who suffer (see Heb. 4:15). Disciples who suffer for well doing will develop a greater sympathy for others who are afflicted, and so will be equipped to assist them as they are able. To suffer for evil doing confers no merit whatsoever.

Imitating Christ the Pattern—Vv. 18-22

In all the circumstances of life, whether suffering opposition or enduring active persecution, Christ presents a pattern of patient suffering and of ultimate triumph, and if we follow him, as sheep following the shepherd, we too will win through to final victory.

VERSE 18

"Christ suffered for sins"—Christ did not sin (Ch. 2:22), therefore these "sins" relate to the sins of humanity. He suffered by dying upon the cross. But what did that effect, and what did it do for the sins of humanity? His death was a demonstration as to what is due to sin, but even more, his public crucifixion dramatised what every believer must attempt to do in a

figurative sense. Paul declares that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Only criminals were crucified, and therefore, "they that are Christ's" must treat the flesh as a criminal if they are to follow Paul's exhortation. When the emotions (affections) and lusts of the flesh run counter to God's will, they must be suppressed, or figuratively put to death, and this was very graphically taught when Christ hung upon the cross, for it was a demonstration that only by suppressing the will of the flesh was he able to fulfil the will of God.

Believers are baptised "into his death" (Rom. 6:3). In other words, his sacrifice leads them to sacrifice also, and teaches them to "put to death" the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; Rom. 6:11). But we do not gain complete victory over the flesh, and so a loving heavenly Father, Who strengthened Jesus to conquer (Ps. 80:17), and Who recognises our weakness (Ps. 103:13-14) extends forgiveness of sins "for Christ's sake." Thus, Christ suffered for our sins, not his own, for he was without sin. He suffered for our sins because they are the sins of all humanity, springing from the flesh (Mark 7:20-23), of which Jesus was a sharer. Jesus obtained redemption from mortal flesh by his own offering (Heb. 9:12, 13:20) and therefore benefited from his own death. To teach otherwise is to teach that God is unjust calling upon the Lord to suffer for something to which he was not related and from which he did not benefit. The true doctrine of the atonement sets out God as just, Jesus as obedient and both motivated by a love of humanity (see Rom. 3:23-26 and read *The Blood of Christ* by R. Roberts).

"The just for the unjust"—Christ "the Just one" (Acts 3:14, Acts 7:52) was just, or righteous in character, but he was nevertheless a son of Adam, and thus subject to death, as is all flesh. If then that just one so willingly submitted

to God's decree to show that only through death of the flesh with its lusts can we attain unto life, how much more should the unjust who deserve to die, acknowledge their utter dependence upon God's mercy and redemption from death, and apply the lessons thus learned. This, according to God's will (Acts 2:23), was the lesson Christ demonstrated to all mankind (Rom. 3:23-26), by being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8-9).

"That he might bring us to God"—Gr. *Prosage*—"to lead as a general," (for which see Isaiah 55:4); "to guide as a shepherd" (for which see John 10:14-18). Peter thus teaches that the crucifixion of Christ pointed the way for believers to follow; demonstrating what they must do mentally and morally, if not physically. *Prosago*, as a technical term, signifies "to gain audience at court for another," and that is the present work of Christ in heaven (see V. 15).

"Being put to death in the flesh"—The Lord Jesus put the flesh to death in a figurative sense during his life, and completed the process on the cross. His actions provide an example for his followers to imitate, for they, too, are called upon to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). The bread and wine of communion witness to this two-fold aspect of Christ's sacrifice. The former recalls the flesh put to death; the latter, his life of dedication. His disciples must attempt to follow in his footsteps.

"Quickened by the Spirit"—The *Diaglott* literal translation gives: "Put to death indeed in flesh, being made alive but in spirit." Peter is not referring merely to the resurrection of the Lord, but to the final change in the resurrected body when it was clothed with Divine nature, or spirit. This was complete "newness of life," and Paul exhorts that as we are "baptised into his death," so we should rise therefrom to walk in "newness of life." This demands true conversion, a completely changed life that is no longer governed by the flesh, but by the spirit-word (Rom.

6:4; cf. Rom. 8:11). The death, burial and resurrection of the Lord is thus set before believers as a guide and a pattern of what God requires of them: death and burial of the lusts of the flesh, and a resurrection and walking in newness of spirit (John 3:3-5).

VERSE 19

"By which"—The subject of the verse is the spirit which was granted the Lord Jesus without measure (John 3:34), and by, or in which he preached unto the people.

"He went"—Christ went.

"Preached unto the spirits in prison"—It was predicted of Jesus Christ that he would "lead captivity captive" (Psalm 68:18), and Paul taught that this was fulfilled in him (Eph. 4:8). The people to whom the Lord preached, therefore, were people imprisoned to sin, from which imprisonment he sought to give them freedom. To do so he had to take sin itself captive (See Luke 4:18-19; Isa. 49:8-9).

The orthodox view teaches the doctrine of a second chance, and that Jesus went to hell that he might there preach to those imprisoned, and perhaps save them even at that late stage. But this is contrary to Bible teaching (see e.g. Isa. 38:18). The day of salvation is NOW (2 Cor. 6:2), and Christ's work of preaching ceased at death (John 9:4; 17:4) by which death "he lead captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8; Luke 4:18-19; Isa. 42:6-7).

But why refer to men as "spirits" imprisoned? Because "spirit" relates to the sentient element in man by which he perceives, reflects, feels and desires (Mk. 2:8; Luke 1:47-80; Acts 17:16; 2 Cor. 7:1). "Spirit" is also used as a synonym for teaching, and is identified with those who proclaim such teaching (1 John 4:1-2). Thus the Lord preached to "spirits in prison"; He appealed to the thinking part, the mind, of man that was imprisoned to sin, limiting his appeal to those who

were capable of responding to it.

VERSE 20

"Which" — The subject is the "spirits in prison" to sin and death. God, through His spirit strove with these at all times, using Noah (Gen. 6:3), the prophets (Neh. 9:30), and Christ (Heb. 1:1-2) in His endeavours to deliver them.

"Sometime were disobedient" — Rotherham renders: "(Spirits) unyielding at one time." Peter is not teaching that Christ preached to these unyielding spirits of Noah's day, but rather that Noah's days were typical of Christ's (see Luke 17:25-26), and even as the people were unyielding at the time of the flood to the warning voice of Noah (2 Pet. 2:5), so they were also at the first advent of the Lord.

"God waited" — Gr. *apekdechomai* = "to eagerly await", and suggesting a reaching out in readiness to receive something. Rotherham renders: "God was holding forth a welcome." The mercy and grace of God was revealed during the centuries before the Flood, but flesh was indifferent to the appeal of God's figuratively outstretched hand and offer of grace.

"When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah" — God was longsuffering in the days of Noah providing ample opportunity for all who would to accept the invitation to escape the threatened judgment extended to them. He does the same today (2 Pet. 3:15). The delay provides time for those who have accepted Christ "to make their calling and election sure", and for those who have not as yet done this to do so. However, when the period set for the outpouring of judgment came in the days of Noah, the longsuffering came to an end. So it will in regard to the present generation. Meanwhile, Yahweh "waits" (Isa. 30:18). The Greek word in the verse before us is *apekdechomai* and denotes "to eagerly await", suggesting a reaching out of the hands in readiness to receive one. Rotherham renders: "God was holding forth a welcome". The mercy and grace of God was revealed in His longsuffering during the years before the Flood, but

the majority was indifferent to His appeal, ignoring His figuratively outstretched hand. That also is the case today.

"While the ark was a preparing" — Noah was informed that 120 years would elapse before God's judgments would be poured out upon that evil generation. During portion of that time, at least, the ark was being built, a witness to the world of his day. that he believed in the divine warning. It was not until the ark was completed, and the animals with Noah's family were gathered therein, that the Flood commenced. So it is in the divine economy in relation to the Christ ark. The purpose of God with this epoch will be completed, and all who are to be saved will be gathered in, before the storm will break out upon the world of the ungodly. See 1 Pet. 4:17.

"Eight souls were saved"—Eight is a significant number, pointing back to the rite of circumcision, the token of the Abrahamic covenant of faith (Gen. 17). In 2 Peter 2:5, Noah is styled "the eighth person," though he was not the eighth from Adam. Spiritually, however, he was the eighth, for he observed the significance of circumcision in a figurative sense (cp. Col. 2:11), denying the flesh. The Flood of which he warned, circumcised the world by cutting off all flesh. The word translated saved is *diasozo*, signifies "to bring safely through." These eight were brought safely through a destructive Flood that wiped out millions.

"By water" — The water saved Noah and his family because it lifted them up above the destruction that swept the world. To the world that water spelt death, but it did not to Noah because of his relationship to the ark. This is true also of our experience with the water of baptism. The water brings us into close contact with death (Rom. 6:3), but because of our relationship to Christ (the Ark) we are brought safely through, even to newness of life. Christ, therefore, can be a savour of life or of death (2 Cor. 2:15-16) as was also the water of the Flood.

VERSE 21

"The like figure"—The Greek is in the neuter gender, relating this statement to the water and not to the ark. Rotherham renders: "Which (water)."

"Baptism doth now save us" — The word for "save" here is *sozo* (cp. V. 20), and signifies "to save or deliver." Baptism opens the way to salvation, for through it is received forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

"Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh" — Baptism does not change us physically; the prompting of the flesh to do evil still remains as Paul observed in Romans 7:18-25, but in Christ we derive the power to rise above it.

"A good conscience towards God"—(see V. 16; 1 Tim. 1:5). This does not mean complete sinlessness, but the realisation that past sins are covered (Rom. 4:7-8), that every effort has been made to perform God's will, and, in the face of failure; that "we have an Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1).

"By the resurrection of Jesus Christ"—The resurrection of Jesus was essential to the justification of those he came to save, for without it they would be without hope (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:17; John 10:17-18). Furthermore it is a token to believers of the "newness of life" in which they are expected to walk after rising from the waters of baptism (Rom. 6:4).

VERSE 22

"Who is on the right hand of God" — The right hand is a position of privilege. It is a position that Christ now holds, and by virtue of which he is able to intercede for his followers. Christ's position fulfills the prophetic words of Psalm 110:1 which relate to the priestly functions of the Lord Jesus (V. 4) and his power to conquer (V. 2). (Notice how the martyr Stephen refers to this fact as a source of comfort for himself, and a warning for his adversaries—Acts 7:56).

VERSE 21

"Angels" — In order to bring to consummation the divine purpose with the earth, the angels of heaven have likewise been placed under the Lord. One such angel was sent to John in Patmos to give him *The Apocalypse* (Rev. 1:1). Other angels assisted in that duty as the Apostle states. The angels are represented as pouring out the vials of judgment upon the nations (Rev. 16:1), so that under the direction of the Lord they are supervising the developments of current history. When Christ returns, it will be in company of the angels of heaven who will assist him in the resurrection and judgment of the household (Matt. 25:31 etc.).

"Authorities being made subject unto him"—A repetition of the statement which Jesus Christ made to his Apostles after his resurrection (Matt. 28:18). These words reveal the extent of power given unto him by his Father, and must have encouraged the Apostles to go forth preaching with the realisation of the hidden source of strength that they could command (see Phil. 4:13). "Authorities" is the Greek *Exousia*, and signifies "delegated power." It therefore relates particularly to individuals such as magistrates and others who have power delegated to them. (See the comment of the Lord to Pilate who was one such —John 19:11). The same word is translated "powers" in Romans 13:1, and there indicates delegated authority, God having "ordained" these powers. The dominion, authority, or power thus given to the "son of man" fulfills in part the intention of God stated at the epoch of creation (Gen. 1:26), and reaffirmed by David in the Psalm that commemorates his victory over Goliath (Ps. 8:4-8). Christ predicted his triumph and power when going forth to meet his shameful death (Jhn. 16:33, 17:2), and at his resurrection, told his Apostles that "all power" had been granted him (Matt. 28:18). The Lord's present glory will be manifested ultimately by his brethren (see Heb. 2:6-10) that the prophetic decree of Genesis 1:26 might have its complete fulfilment.

"Powers" — Gr. *Dunamis* = indicates inherent right, an authority that stems from within. It relates here to constituted Governments rather than their officials (the "authorities") who exercise their power, and perform their decrees.

Peter is teaching that both governments and their officials are subject to the authority vested in the Lord. Therefore, nothing can happen to his elect, without him permitting it.

CHAPTER 4

It will be to the benefit of the reader to ignore this man-made Chapter division, and to allow the Divine flow of thought to penetrate the mind. Having set before us the sufferings of Christ, even to the point of death (3:18) as an essential pattern to attain unto redemption and glory (3:22), Peter now demands of the reader that same attitude of mind to the end that God, Whose judgments are soon to be manifested, might be glorified (4:5.7.11).

The Weapons of Victory—Vv. 1-11

Having indicated the attitude that should be adopted by those claiming to be Christ's in the various circumstances of life: in the home, the ecclesiae, and in the world, and having warned of the possibility of active and hurtful persecution, Peter now emphasises the weapons we can use to ensure the victory of faith.

VERSE 1

"Forasmuch then" — This establishes a connection with thoughts previously expressed. Rotherham renders: "Christ then having suffered in flesh, DO YE ALSO . . ." This rendering makes the connection with Ch. 3:18 even more apparent. It is upon that statement that Peter wishes to now build.

"As Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh" — Christ suffered as our representative showing the need for putting to death the lusts of the flesh that are opposed to the commands of God.

"Arm yourselves" — Christ has called believers to him as soldiers in a spiritual warfare (2 Tim. 2:3-4). The weapons that are to be used are not carnal ones, however

(2 Cor. 10:4-5). Peter here instructs believers of something they must do for themselves. They must "arm themselves with the same mind" as Christ, determining to fulfil the will of God (See Rom. 13:14; Phil. 2:5; Heb. 12:3; Rom. 8:6). This armour will protect them from the enemy (Heb. 2:14) that would destroy them.

"With the same mind" — The mind of the spirit (Rom. 8:6), the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), the mind that says: "I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

"He that hath suffered in the flesh"—Christ suffered because he denied the flesh, and that is the kind of suffering to which Peter is referring. It is possible, as he has already observed, for one to "suffer for evil doing" (Ch. 3:17), but Peter is not referring to such as that. The statement of this verse should be equated with that found in Ch. 3:18, where Christ's sufferings are described as "being put to death in the flesh." Paul likens this to "dying unto sin" (Rom. 6:10), for he uses the term "sin" as a synonym for the flesh with its lusts. These lusts ceased to make any demands on Christ in death for they were silenced thereby, and when he rose from the dead, it was to "newness of life." Therefore, he that has "suffered in the flesh" in this manner,

has "ceased from sin." But how can we thus suffer in the flesh and continue to live? Only by figuratively "crucifying the flesh with its lusts" (Gal. 5:24), by "mortifying (putting to death) the deeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13; Eph. 4:22), by recognising that baptism is a "baptism into his death" (Rom. 6:3), and that we, too, are to account ourselves as "dead to sin" (V. 2), making no provision "for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). Peter's words can therefore be understood thus: "He that is dead hath ceased from sin."

VERSE 2

"That he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh"—This verse is explanatory of V. 1. To suffer in the flesh, and to cease from sin, is to deny the flesh, and to obey God rather than the unrestrained lusts of the flesh. If we "arm ourselves with the mind of Christ," and seek to do God's will, we will gradually gain the mastery over the lusts of the flesh, so that ultimately that which was obedient only to its desires will automatically respond to the will of the Father. So Paul teaches in Romans 2:14-15.

"To the lusts of men"—Such lusts as men of the flesh commonly live for and indulge in. Some of these are enumerated in the following verses.

"But to the will of God"—Christ's disciples are called upon to subordinate their natural desires (or lusts) so that their lives conform to the will of God. The Truth must be manifested in practice, and not mere theory.

VERSE 3

"The time past of our life"—Christ's true disciples have died to the old way of life, and have risen from the waters of baptism to a newness of life. For them the past is over and done with, they are completely severed from it, and are now walking in the new way which Christ has revealed (Rom. 6:4).

"May suffice us"—Sufficient time has been spent prior to accepting Christ in indulging ourselves, and following the

propensities of the flesh.

"To have wrought the will of the Gentiles"—Before accepting Christ, disciples whether Jew or otherwise, lived as Gentiles, that is, in ignorance or indifference to the will of God. In Christ, different standards are set and must be observed as best they can. For example, Matt. 6:32.

"Lasciviousness"—disgusting sensuality.

"Lusts"—Inordinate desires.

"Excess of wine"—The word used here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It signifies *overflowing of wine*, and therefore drinking to excess. Apparently, some to whom Peter wrote were one time guilty of this, but they had come under the influence of the Word, and had changed their ways in that regard. They were to be commended for so doing.

"Revellings"—Wild carousals, the consequence of drunkenness.

"Banquetings"—Gr. *Potos*, drinking bouts.

"Abominable idolatries"—The word "abominable" is *Athemitos*, and signifies "unlawful." Peter is doubtless referring to the vile religious ceremonies that were a feature of some pagan forms of worship, and which were so lewd and shocking, that even the very liberal Roman law forbade them, so that they who indulged in them did so only secretly.

VERSE 4

"They think it strange"—A disciple's changed life is the most powerful testimony to the truth he has espoused that he can present. It was so in the case of Peter, for in the changed character of the once belligerent Simon there is seen the transforming power of Christ's influence. How much more is this so, when one has been caused to turn from a life of fleshly indulgence to do the will of God. Such a changed life is the seal of truth. Others, who were once boon companions, observe the great difference wrought, and note how unusual (the real significance of "strange") is the attitude now revealed, and thus a powerful testi-

mony to truth is proclaimed without a word being spoken. Note that Peter was himself the subject of such observation (Acts 4:13).

"That ye run not with them" — To "run" implies an eagerness to possess, whilst the addition "not with them" indicates separation from those who perhaps were once boon companions.

"Excess of riot" — The flood of profligacy which is typical of the world, and which sweeps away every law of restraint. The changed disciple will no longer perform the very things in which he once found delight, and his very action stands in judgment upon those who continue to do such, and condemns them without words of censure. Worldly people cannot bear the silent rebuke of such an attitude, and therefore, though they have no cause to do so, they "speak evil of" Christ's followers.

"Speaking evil of you" — The Greek is *blaspheming*. To "blaspheme" in that way is to falsely accuse another, or claim a relationship with God one does not possess (see Rev. 2:9). Those who once associated with the brethren now spake falsely of them and their relationship with Christ, and therefore blasphemed.

VERSE 5

"Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge" — Recognising that they must give account at the Judgment Seat, Christ's followers restrain the lusts of the flesh in accordance with the Divine will, seeking to please him who has called them (2 Tim. 2:4). The A.V. would imply that the judgment is immediate, for "he is ready to judge," but Rotherham renders these words: "who is holding in readiness to judge," and the *Diaglott*: "who is prepared to judge." Christ overshadows the lives of his disciples from this standpoint, that he might ultimately judge them according as they have obeyed him (Rev. 22:12).

"The quick and the dead" — This implies the resurrection. See 2 Tim. 4:1.

VERSE 6

"For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead"—The gospel is preached to them who are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), in order to create in them an awareness of God. Such unilluminated people are the "spirits in prison" to whom the Lord preached the word during his ministry (Ch. 3:19). The objective of such preaching is to make known unto such the purpose of God in all its goodness, in the hope that the hearer may be led to repentance, i.e. to a completely changed mental attitude, moral disposition, and habits (Rom. 2:4). This new life will find approval at the judgment seat of Christ. With this in mind, one must be prepared to bear the ignominy of men with indifference.

"That they might be judged according to men in the flesh"—This phrase is awkwardly expressed in the A.V., for it reads as though the purpose of preaching the gospel is in order that people might be judged according to men in the flesh, whereas the truth is the very opposite. MacKnight has translated the statement as follows: "...although they might be condemned indeed by men in the flesh." He thus contrasts two things: though men might condemn them (see V.4), Christ will not. The *Diaglott* and Rotherham render it in a similar way. The word "judged" signifies "to divide, separate, to make a distinction, to come to a decision." Men of the world, looking at one converted to Christ, will judge him and condemn him according to the reasoning of flesh, whereas, actually, he is "living according to God in the spirit." The spirit in question relates to the spirit-word (John 6:63; 1 John 5:6), concerning which Paul exhorts: "Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). (Consider Paul's attitude in this matter—1 Cor. 4:3-5.)

"But live according to God in the spirit" — Whereas men of the flesh

might ridicule or condemn a Godly person, God will not. By *Him* they would not be condemned, but would be energised to live the true life. Whereas men of the flesh are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1-2), those "in Christ" have been raised to "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). The energising power of that new life is the Spirit word, concerning which, Paul exhorted: "Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). That way of life is God-approved and will lead to life eternal in the Kingdom of God.

VERSE 7

"The end of all things is at hand"—The "end" referred to is that concerning which Jesus spoke in Matth. 24:14, and which was fulfilled in the destruction of the Jewish State in A.D.70. As far as the Jews were concerned this was a crisis comparable with the flood, when God determined that the "end of all flesh shall come" (Gen. 6:13). The destruction of the Jewish State was to involve further trials for Christians, because, to the Roman authorities, Christianity was but a branch of Judaism, and though they were very tolerant towards religion, the Jewish revolt caused a hardening of attitude towards their religious principles. In the face of these impending greater trials, greater vigilance was required on the part of every disciple. None was to give occasion for authorities to falsely accuse him; hence the instructions of Peter in this verse.

"Be sober"—The Revised Version renders this "sound mind," the *Diaglott*: "a sober mind." Sobriety of mind was required in the face of trials that were about to fall upon them (see V.12).

"Watch"—Gr. *nepho*, signifying "to abstain from wine." Peter is using the word metaphorically, exhorting his readers not to become over-excited by external stimulants that may befuddle them, but to remain calm, for such a spirit will lead to effective prayer. Perhaps Peter remembered the occasion when he did not put this advice into practice, and excited by ex-

ternals, forgot to watch his own attitude and words and "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man" (Matt. 26:74). Paul exhorted the Ephesians: "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Emotional, evangelical religion can be likened to the heady, intoxicating influence of wine; it induces religion of emotion divorced from understanding, and causes its disciples to act irrationally and rashly. Such an attitude must be avoided, warned Peter.

"Unto prayer"—"Unto" is *Eis* and signifies "to the end that..." Rotherham renders: "Be of sound mind therefore, and be sober for prayers." Such prayers are absolutely necessary if a man wishes to withstand the pressure from without and incitements from within. In answering prayer God will grant strength.

VERSE 8

"Above all"—In view of impending troubles, there was a vital need that ecclesias should be strong and united, manifesting the same self-sacrificing love of Christ one towards another.

"Fervent"—Gr. *Extenes*, signifying "stretched out," and thus extended to all.

"Charity among yourselves" — "Charity" is *agape*, elsewhere rendered "love". Such a quality should characterise a community that belongs to Christ. He instructed his disciples: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). A knowledge of the Truth in the absence of this divine characteristic is useless.

"Charity shall cover the multitude of sins"—For the significance of the word *agape* (charity, or love) see comments on Ch. 1:22, p. 23. Such a love will not broadcast the sins of others, but will hide them and do its best to prevent scandalous gossip. In this it is like God's love which blots out the sins of those who come unto Him. Paul therefore exhorts: "God commendeth His love towards us

...” (Rom. 5:8).

VERSE 9

“**Use hospitality**” — Gr. *Philoxenos*, “love of strangers.” Peter would have us show hospitality to those brethren who are strangers to us, and not merely to our friends. There should be a general atmosphere of friendliness in the ecclesia of God (cp. Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2).

“**Without grudging**” — Here the word is *Gongusmos*, and signifies a murmuring, a muttering of displeasure mostly offered privately. Peter is referring to that class of hospitality that is extended grudgingly to others, and with a muttering of displeasure, and a complaining of the need to do so. The host, or hostess, is put out by the inconvenience, and instead of seeing a service to Christ in the hospitality offered to one of their brethren, only feels the inconvenience entailed.

VERSE 10

“**As every man has received the gift**” — There is no definite article in the Greek, so that the statement is better rendered “a gift.” Everybody has a gift of some kind or other. It might be the gift of speaking, the gift of ministering to others, the gift of exposition; but whatever it is it should be manifested not on the grounds of its merits, but as by a “steward of the manifold grace of God.” The gift comes from Him, and we are bound to use it as His. We become merely His good steward in manifesting the particular gift we may have. When natural ability, or talents, are viewed in that light, we will appreciate the need of using all such natural attributes in His service, and not merely for our own pleasure.

“**Even so minister the same one to another**” — As the gift comes from God, the disciple becomes the channel of God’s goodness to others when he ministers to them of his ability. A disciple needs to regard any gift he may have as given him for the common good; and so be ready to impart it as the needs of others require.

“**As good stewards**” — A disciple needs to view himself as a mere steward of God; that is, as appointed by Him and under His direction to minister to others the gift that he has received. His particular talent is to be extended to help others so that all may benefit.

“**Of the manifold grace of God**” — The manifold grace or favour of God relates to the variety of gifts possessed by individual brethren (see Rom. 12:6-8). These can include both spiritual and material resources and the disciple must be prepared to share these with others recognising his possessions, whether of wealth or wisdom, as coming from God for that purpose (see 2 Tim. 6:17-19).

VERSE 11

“**If any man speak,**” etc. — Peter now lists some of these natural attributes, and shows how they are to be used to the glory of God.

“**Let him speak as the oracles of God**” — Let him speak in accordance with the Truth as revealed in the Word.

“**If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth**” — This can relate to ministering the Word of truth, or any other service which might be rendered. It is to be performed in humility, with due recognition in heart, if not publicly, that the ability enabling him so to do comes from God, not from flesh. He needs to be motivated by the Word, and extend himself to the full extent of his ability. No one is bound to go beyond his ability, but everyone is required to come up to it.

“**That God in all things may be glorified**” — This statement sums up the doctrine of God manifestation. When a person uses the natural ability that he possesses to the glory of the Father, he reflects God in action. Humble acts of generosity and good can accomplish this (Matt. 5:46-48); the knowledge of God’s love in Christ can induce it (Eph. 3:17-19); the disciplining of the lusts of the flesh will reveal it (1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31); imitating Christ will manifest it (John 17:22; 13:31). The purpose of calling people by the Gospel is designed to this end (John 17:17), so that the beautiful words of Psalm 90:17 are fulfilled in those who reach out to this perfection:

"Let the beauty of Yahweh our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." Where a person is fully moved by the influence of Christ, so as to reveal him in action, there is revealed "the beauty of Yahweh," and, in the words of Peter: "all things are glorified through Jesus Christ."

"To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever"—The *Dia-*

glott renders: "For the age of ages." The reign of Christ on earth will be made up of lesser epochs, climaxing in the change at the end of the thousand years when the kingdom shall be handed over to God that He might be "all and in all."

"Amen" — Amen signifies *so be it*. Peter rounds off this part of his Epistle in this way to give added emphasis, and Apostolic endorsement in his exhortation.

The Victory of Faith

How are we to overcome? John answers: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith.*" What is "our faith?" Paul answers: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." It is a question of confidence in things to come. Whence comes this confidence? Paul tells us: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It comes to what Paul said to the Ephesian elders in his farewell address: "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." The advice remains good to this day. The diligent, sympathetic daily reading and studying of the oracles of the living God, with prayer to Him who slumbers not nor sleeps, will fortify a man for successful conflict with all the enemies he has to encounter on the road to eternal life; while the neglect of them will certainly ensure his failure, however gifted he may be as a natural man, or however successful in the objects of life which the common run of men set before his eyes. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever."

— R.R.

The Fiery Trial and How to Bear It

(Chapter 4:12-5:11)

In this fourth section of the Epistle, Peter warns of a fiery trial that was soon to come upon the ecclesia. Most likely this relates to the bitter persecution initiated by the Emperor Nero against the Christians. History has it that Nero set fire to Rome, but in the face of public censure, he blamed it on the Christians, and instituted the most brutal persecution against them. Christians were made to do service for a Roman holiday. Tacitus reports that, as an entertainment, the Emperor dealt with the Christians in three ways: 1. He ordered them to be dressed in the skins of wild animals and thrown to dogs which tore them to pieces. 2. He crucified them. 3. He had them dipped in boiling pitch, and, after dark, used as human torches. As a refinement of this last method he had his garden specially equipped for the human flares. Then, dressed as a charioteer, the Emperor, amid the plaudits of a specially-arranged crowd, raced round the arena in his chariot by the light of the burning Christians. No one knows how many Christians were martyred in the butchery ordered by Nero in A.D. 64, but it was a large number. Although the mass murder waned after a time, persecution continued, and Paul and Peter became martyrs to the Nero terror.

Nero was a brute governed by an insatiable blood-lust, and many others besides Christians were destroyed by him. He gratified every sensual and fleshly evil, and his actions became so coarse and abandoned as to occasion even the censure of the hardened Roman people. Ultimately the whole empire seethed with revolt, and this flared into open mutiny in Gaul. The revolting general issued a proclamation accusing Nero of being "Murderer, Matricide, Poisoner, but worst of all a dreadful singer who did not even know the rules of art!!" It is said that this last incensed Nero more than anything else, and with great cruelty the revolt was suppressed. But ultimately even his own bodyguard, the Praetorian Guard, the soldiers in Rome, had had enough. They turned on Nero, and he was forced to flee. But he found no place of refuge. He was forced to watch his grave being dug, and commanded to kill himself. Terror-stricken he tried to avoid the inevitable, but finally, urged on by his companions, he plunged a dagger in his heart, and so died.

Meanwhile, Judah had revolted against Rome, and Vespasian had taken the field against the Jews. The death of Nero was followed by the elevation of Vespasian, to position of Emperor. Ordering his son, Titus, to assume command of

the army, Vespasian hurried back to Rome to assume the purple. Thus, no sooner had the scourge of Nero ceased, than the terror and bloodshed of the siege of Jerusalem commenced. It was the epoch of the fiery trial.

**Partakers of Christ's Sufferings—
Vv. 12-19**

Faith must invariably be subjected to a "fiery" trial in order that it might be perfected, but in those days, sufferings of unprecedented extent were about to be experienced, and brethren were in dire need of the strengthening counsel of the Apostle. He sought to fortify them by indicating the purpose of trial, the inevitability of it, and the way to overcome it.

VERSE 12

"Beloved" — The word *Agapetos* is a term denoting one who stands in a special relationship with God, having experienced the divine love as expressed in John 3:16.

"Think it not strange" — Do not consider your tribulation as unique, as something you had no reason to expect, and as incidental only to you. Paul warned that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). He warned Timothy that "the last days" in which he was living were such that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). At the Judgment Seat, there will be only one among the sons of God who has never sinned, but there will be nobody who has never been tried. Trial is incidental to a life in Christ, for only through it will a godly character be developed. The testing, however, takes various forms; even that of affluence.

"The fiery trial"—Gr. *Purosis*, "a burning," relating to the smelting process. In the Septuagint the word is found in Prov. 27:21; Psalm 66:10: "Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried." The term, "fiery trial," therefore, indicates the process whereby the faith of believers will be tried that they might produce the gold of 1 Pet. 1:7, and does not necessarily refer to any specific period of persecution, even though one was impending at that

time. Believers are not to think it strange that they are subjected to trial, for such is absolutely necessary to purge the dross from their characters, and to reveal in them that which will be fit for the Master's use.

"Which is to try you"—The *Diaglott* and Rotherham's translation give this in the present tense: "...the fire among you, occurring to you for a trial." Trials are always experienced by believers, though not always to the same extent of suffering, and the trials are always "fiery" inasmuch as they are designed of God to purify. Some are tried by opposition, some by persecution, and some by prosperity. The brethren to whom Peter wrote were already being tried, but there was to be an intensification of trials.

"Some strange thing" — Trials and tribulations are not foreign to the life in Christ, but incidental to it, being the means designed by God for the purification of saints, and the testing of their faith (1 Pet. 1:7).

VERSE 13

"But rejoice"—A reminder of the Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:11-12). Rejoicing in tribulation is only possible if the person tried sees the divine purpose in it. The Apostles rejoiced under such conditions because they recognised that they were thus considered "worthy to suffer" (Acts 5:41). Paul taught that we should "glory in tribulations," "knowing that tribulation worketh patience (endurance)" (Rom. 5:3-5). Here glorying is connected with KNOWING. If we do not know the purpose of tribulation we will not endure it patiently. But Paul saw that it developed endurance, then "experience (Gr. *Dokimen* = "full proof under trial") by which our con-

fidence in God is put to the test, and, if approved, leads to hope, and "hope maketh not ashamed." In other words, we realise when we have successfully endured trial that God's strength is available to us and is adequate to all our needs. This experience engenders hope that He Who sustained us in the past will do so in the future. Hope, in turn, will give us confidence that we will find approval in the day of judgment. Such an attitude to trial will enable one to surmount it and to come forth from it purified and upbuilt. Only when we recognise this divine purpose in tribulation will we understand why it is permitted, and will be able to "rejoice," in that we are considered worthy to be tried by it. If we are able to rejoice in this fashion in the time of tribulation, how much more shall we rejoice with exceeding joy when Christ returns to be glorified in his saints. This is what Peter wishes to impress upon us by using the word twice, for, both "rejoice" and "be glad," in this verse, are from the Gr. *Chairo*.

"Inasmuch as"—This can be better rendered: "To the extent that . . ." They were to rejoice in sufferings to the same extent as they suffered "for Christ's sake," but not if they did so through their own folly.

"Partakers of Christ's sufferings"—Sharers with him, fellowshiping his sufferings. We can better appreciate and identify ourselves with Christ's sacrifice if we suffer for the Truth's sake, for when this happens, we fellowship his sufferings. See 2 Cor. 1:5-7; Phil. 1:29. The person who has had the experience of adversity or of suffering, is better able to sympathise with those who are in a like position, so we can better understand, share, and sympathise with Christ's sufferings if we suffer ourselves. (See the principle expressed in Heb. 5:1-3.)

"When his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad"—Suffering now causes a believer to look for-

ward more ardently to Christ's return and the relief that will then come. In this he rejoices, and when it occurs, he will be made glad (cf. (2 Tim. 4:8).

"With exceeding joy"—Every one who conquers trial through faith will ultimately, at Christ's return, experience a joy of such extent as to be beyond expression now. See Rom. 8:18,28; Eph. 3:20-21.

VERSE 14

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye"—This is a quotation from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:11). The word "reproached" is perhaps better rendered "reviled."

The frame of mind suggested is that manifested by the Apostle who "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Great faith is needed to manifest such an attitude.

"The spirit of glory"—The Greek has the definite article: "The spirit of the glory." If trials and sufferings are looked at properly, refreshment will come from the "spirit of the glory," or looking forward to the fulfilment of the purpose of trials, even the bestowal of glory at Christ's coming (cp.Ch. 5:1; 2 Tim. 2:10-12).

"The spirit of God"—The spirit of God is a term synonymous with the truth believed. The Truth enables the believer to look at trials from the proper perspective.

"Resteth"—Gr. *Anapauo*, "to refresh," and is so rendered in 1 Cor. 16:18; Philemon V. 20. The teaching of the Truth, and the anticipations of coming glory are well calculated to refresh one during the dreary period of trial and suffering. *Anapauo* can also be rendered "to give rest again," thus Rotherham renders: "The spirit of glory and the spirit of God unto you is bringing rest."

"On their part he is evil spoken of"—Cf.Ch. 2:12.

"But on your part he is glorified"—God is glorified when He is honoured and obeyed, and when endurance is manifested under trial. By so doing disciples witness in a practical manner that

they are prepared to submit to whatever is laid upon them, recognising that God knows best.

VERSE 15

"Let none of you suffer as a murderer"—There is no need to supply the ellipsis here: "suffer reproach as a murderer."

"Or as a thief, or as an evildoer" — Thieves and evildoers are guilty of injustice and wrong towards others. It is incongruous that those who have been given so much by God, should so act towards their fellowmen.

"Or as a busy-body in other men's matters" — The Greek word *allotriopiskopos* occurs nowhere else in the N.T. It is said to literally mean, *an inspector of strange things, or of the things of others*. It is rendered *meddler* in the R.V. According to Vine it was "a legal term for a charge brought against Christians as being hostile to civilised society, their purpose being to make Gentiles conform to Christian standards." Such a charge would accuse disciples of Christ of undue political activity and pressure, from which, of course, they should stand aside. Whether the legal term be accepted, or it be considered as denoting one who pries into the affairs of others, or busies himself with what does not concern him, the practice is condemned by the Apostle.

VERSE 16

"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian" — There is great merit in such suffering. Indeed, Paul earnestly desired to "fellowship the sufferings" of Christ (Phil. 3:10). The disciple who does so will appreciate better what Christ has accomplished for him.

"Let him not be ashamed"—But Peter was ashamed when he was called upon to suffer as a Christian (Matt. 26:75). Perhaps he recalled the unpleasant incident, and out of his own personal experience, exhorted his brethren, encouraging them by the example of his own "conversion."

"But let him glorify God on this behalf" — Let him be as the Apostles, and praise God that he is deemed worthy to suffer in such a cause. It is evidence of God's interest in the future of such, revealing that He is treating them as sons

(see Heb. 12:7,11). See also Acts 5:41; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24. Christ made it clear to Peter, that the cross must come before the crown (Matt. 16:20-28).

VERSE 17

"For the time is come" — The Mosaic epoch was about to end, and with it came an intensification of persecution. Rome bitterly attacked Jews throughout the world, and made no distinction between those who followed Judaism or those who followed Christ. Nero, who persecuted the Christians so bitterly, also launched the attack on Judea that saw the overthrow of the Jewish State and the destruction of the Temple.

"Judgment" — Gr. *Krime*, signifying "decision, verdict," or "the process of judgment leading to a decision" (Vine). Thus a testing by examination.

"Must begin"—The trials about to fall upon the Christians through the persecution of Nero would thoroughly test them. It was a form of judgment that would commence at the "house of God," and then would involve the Jewish people (God's nation) in the Roman invasion of A.D. 70, and finally would extend to the Empire itself. The first related to the persecution of Nero, the second to the overthrow of the Jewish State in A.D. 70, and the last to the judgment of the seven seals of Rev. Ch. 6 which consummated in the defeat of paganism (see "Eureka" vol. ii). Peter thus set forth a principle of Judgment for all time: first upon the household, then upon Israel, finally upon the world. Whilst his words applied primarily to that age, the principle remains true for the future, and Christ's judgment will be first pronounced upon the elect, then upon Israel, and finally upon the Gentile world. The saints shall participate in the execution of these latter judgments (Psalm 149:5-9).

"At the house of God"—See this principle set forth also in Ezek. 9:1-7. The preposition "at" is *Apo* in Greek, signifying "from." So judgment extends from believers (the house of God) to engulf their persecutors. Christ told his Apostles

they would suffer persecution, but also shows that the persecutors would be judged.

The Jews were foremost in persecuting Christians (see 1 Thess. 2:14-16), and because of this, divine judgment and justice decreed the overthrow of the Jewish State (see Matt. 23:37-38). Though true Christians did not retaliate against the Jews in any way, the judgment is represented as issuing forth from "the house of God" because God avenged them on their enemies (Rom. 12:19). The term "house of God" defines the family or people of God (Num. 12:7; Hos. 8:1; 1 Tim. 3:15).

"And if it first begin at us" — Peter does not answer this question, but leaves it to his readers to use their spiritual discernment. If God is going to try and judge His people, what measure of judgment will He pour out upon those who have completely turned their backs upon His offer of mercy in the Gospel? In the age to come, the Judgment of the Household will precede that of the world, for those who are glorified as a result of it, will assist Christ in the outpouring of judgment upon the world at large (see Ps. 149:4-9; Zech. 14:5).

"What shall the end of them be that obey not"—The answer is found in such places as Matt. 23:35; 2 Thess. 1:8-9.

VERSE 18

"If the righteous scarcely be saved"—This verse is a quotation from Prov. 11:31, and teaches that the righteous can only be saved with difficulty.

"Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear"—In the terms "ungodly and sinner" the suggestion of negative (ungodly) and positive (sinner) wickedness is expressed. The answer to the question is self-evident: they will be blotted out.

VERSE 19

"Them that suffer according to the will of God"—A person does

this if he suffers because of doing God's will. Nero persecuted people because they were Christians, in other words, because they performed God's will.

"Commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing"—The word "keeping" is *Paratithemi*, "entrust." It is a banking term, implying the giving in trust of valuables as a deposit. The lives of those who perform God's will in spite of the threat of persecution are entrusted to God as unto a "faithful Creator," and they will not lose thereby, for He knoweth those who are His (2 Tim. 1:12). The use of this banking term by Peter is interesting in the light of the legal use of another term that is of similar significance. The word we have in mind is the Greek *Hypostasis* ("substance"—Heb. 11:1). In colloquial Greek, *Hypostasis* was a legal term indicating the right to property, and has been translated in Hebrews 11:1 as "title deeds." "Faith is the title deeds of things hoped for." Faith places our name on the title deeds of the inheritance, and if the terms and conditions are fully carried out by us we will receive that "property" indicated by faith. In like manner, Peter sees our lives as entrusted to the Bank of Heaven, where by "well doing" interest is accrued to be claimed in due course.

"As unto a faithful Creator"—Complete trust can be placed in God. As Creator, He brought the earth into being that it might be inhabited (Isa. 45:18), and created man, that he might glorify Him (Isa. 43:7). For that purpose He is "taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). And His intention is to ultimately fill the earth with His glory (Num. 14:21). He is faithful in that His purpose will be accomplished without doubt, and His spiritual sons and daughters find Him true to His purpose; even in spite of their own failings.

CHAPTER 5

Elders to provide an Example — Vv. 1-4

In the face of impending persecution there was the possibility of many deserting the faith, and so elders are called upon to give an example that the flock may follow.

VERSE 1

“The elders which are among you I exhort” — The word “elder” can relate to age, but is applied frequently in the N.T. as a title for those who manifested maturity in the word and experience and so were appointed to oversee Ecclesias. Timothy was an elder, though he was comparatively young in years. Elders were ordained to their positions by the Apostles (Acts 14:23), who had spirit guidance in such matters. Such elders were expected to care for the Ecclesia in instruction of both doctrine and ethics. On the other hand, those appointed to attend to the business of an Ecclesia were elected by vote, as in the case of the seven brethren referred to in Acts 6:3. Apparently, a qualification of eldership was age, or at least experience, and certainly maturity, for the Apostle contrasts them with younger members in v. 4. Notice, also, that Peter “exhorts” these elders. He appeals to them, rather than commands them, as he would have the authority to do as an Apostle. This illustrates the maturity of Peter in his status as a shepherd to the flock (see our character sketch on him).

“I am also an elder”—Gr. *Sum-presbuteros*, “a fellow elder.” Notice that Peter does not claim to be the chief elder, or pope! There had been a time when the Apostles argued among themselves as to who was the greatest and submitted the question to Christ (Matt. 18:1), but Peter had now by far outgrown such an immature state of mind.

“A witness”—Gr. *Martus*, “one who testifies unto death.” The word does not always have this rigid significance, but in its literal form it does so. Christ had told Peter that he would die for the faith he

espoused (John 21:19), and this use of the word by the Apostle implies that he was ready to do so.

“Of the sufferings of Christ”—Peter, indeed, was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, because in full view of them he denied his Lord, though afterwards he wept bitterly. He also apparently followed him to the place of crucifixion, with others of the Lord’s “acquaintances” (Luke 23:49). Yet despite the manner in which the Lord conducted himself, Peter still doubted. However, the Resurrection completely changed the Apostles attitude, and contributed to the spiritual maturity that he subsequently manifested.

“And a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed”—See notes on Ch. 4:13. Peter kept his eyes firmly fixed upon the goal of his hope, and was confident of sharing in the glory to be then revealed. Indeed, he had received that assurance from Christ, who had told him that he would “glorify” the truth in death (John 21:19), and to do that is to be sure of receiving the glory in the future (cf. Rev. 2:10).

VERSE 2

“Feed the flock of God”—The word means “to shepherd” the flock, and is so rendered by Rotherham, and the noun of the verb is translated “pastors” in Eph. 4:11. Christ had exhorted Peter to do this as a manifestation of love towards him (John 21:16), and now Peter passes on the exhortation to his fellow-elders.

“Not by constraint”—If any had the ability, they should willingly assume the responsibilities that eldership entails, and not wait to be unwillingly forced to do so, nor to seek material reward for such service.

“Filthy lucre”—Gr. *Aischroker-dos*, “greed for base gain” (1 Tim. 3:3). The term, therefore, does not mean money as such, but an un-

warranted greed of gain. The words of Peter should be compared with those of Paul (1 Cor. 9:11), for despite seeming conflict, there is actually perfect agreement between the two Apostles. There is a world of difference between the proper payment for services rendered, and the greed for base gain that dominates some, and causes them to make merchandise of religion.

"But of a ready mind" — The elders were called upon to labour cheerfully, and to act promptly, on the behalf of others. There is all the difference between one who does a thing because he is *paid* for it, and one who does it for *love*. As Christ had suffered to help them, they should sacrifice to help others.

VERSE 3

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage"—Elders were not to be overbearing (see margin) in their demands. "Heritage" is *Kleros*, "a lot" or that which is assigned by lot; in other words, God's heritage or portion among humanity (Acts 15:14). The so-called successors of Peter have not kept his exhortation in this regard, and those who assume responsibility in ecclesial life today, need to bear it in mind.

"Ensamples to the flock"—Gr. *Tupos*. It signifies "type." The exhortation is that these elders should manifest an example in conduct such as would prove an inspiration in leadership to those under them. Their lives were to typify the life demanded of the flock. They were to lead and guide by practical example rather than mere words (cp. 1 Tim. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:7-9).

VERSE 4

"The chief Shepherd"—This is the good shepherd, even the Lord (John 10:11), and Peter and his fellow-elders were but under-shepherds. (See Ezek. 34:23; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25). As chief Shepherd, the Lord had led the way through death to life, and the Apostles, as under-shepherds, were appointed to continue in the same service (see 1 Cor. 4:9).

"Appear"—Gr. *Phaneroo*—"to be publicly manifested."

"A crown"—Gr. *Stephanos*. This was the crown that was given to victors in contests, or the winners in games, so that figuratively it speaks of success after striving (Rev. 3:11; 2 Tim. 4:8, and see Eureka vol. i).

"That fadeth not away" — The crown given those successful in the contests were of laurel leaf, and soon faded; but the crown to be given those successful in the race of life will never fade, because it is the golden crown of eternal life.

The Flock to Submit in Humility —Vv. 5-11

The flock also has responsibilities to play its part in manifesting the will of God in action. The shepherds are there to lead, but the flock must follow; and it must learn to discriminate between the voice of a true and a false shepherd. It is the voice of the Good Shepherd that must be heeded.

VERSE 5

"Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder"—Age and experience should be respected where the Truth is held in regard.

"All of you"—The responsibilities of the Truth reach out to every individual, for salvation is a personal, individual matter (see Rom. 12:10).

"Be subject one to another"—This is omitted by many texts, so that the R.V. reads: "All of you gird yourselves with humility." The expression is derived from the custom of the day of tying or tucking up the long outer garments as a roll around the waist so as to work better. When humility is the girdle, work will be better performed. The expression also suggests the attitude of Israelites when eating the Passover (Exod. 12:11).

"And be clothed with humility" — The Greek word here used, occurs nowhere else in the N.T. It is *egkombaomai* and signifies to engirdle oneself. According to Strong it points to the

apron, as a badge of servitude, the garment commonly worn by slaves. Peter's exhortation, therefore, was that disciples should be willing to take any place, and to perform any office, however humble, in order to serve or benefit others. They are not to assume an attitude of lordship over others, nor refuse a form of service as being beneath their dignity, but cheerfully give themselves to whatever labour or duty asked of them. Peter, doubtless, recalled the incident when the Lord, in the upper room, girded himself with a towel, and humbled himself by kneeling before the Apostles, providing them with a lesson in humility (John 13).

"God resisteth the proud"—This is another quotation from the Proverbs (Ch. 3:3-4). The word "resisteth" is a military term, and Rotherham translates: "God arrayeth Himself against the haughty." He thus fights against both them and their deeds, and in bearing this in mind, Christ's brethren can remind themselves of the great Power that is on their side.

"Giveth grace unto the humble" — Yahweh's favour is extended to those who humble themselves in service. The passage is from Prov. 3:34. Humility is an act of grace, and shall be rewarded by grace from on high. See notes on James 4:6 where the passage is also quoted.

VERSE 6

"Humble yourselves therefore"— This is in the passive voice: "allow yourselves to be humbled." Peter might well be referring to his own past experience, namely, the heart-searching discourse with the Lord, recorded in John Ch. 21. There he was tested by the Lord as to his humility, and after conceding his limitations he was exalted by Christ, and declared worthy of "feeding the flock" in the absence of his Master.

"Under the mighty hand of God" — Seeing that God resisteth the proud (v. 5), and recognising His omnipotence, how wise it is to humbly submit to whatever trials may come upon one; to act the part of a slave, if necessary, realising that if it is done in faith it is pleasing to God Who is able and willing to reward and elevate those who do His will.

"That He may exalt you in due time" — This exhortation demands that disciples also recognise the wisdom of Yahweh, and in view of such knowledge, await His time to exalt them. They may be partially elevated now, but they certainly will be completely so at the coming of the Lord. Then acts of humility motivated by faith and love will be recognised for their true worth.

VERSE 7

"Casting care upon Him"—True humility will recognise the need of God, and the weakness of flesh to conquer all the problems of life that face one. Peter's exhortation was particularly needful then in view of the impending persecution about to be initiated against Christians by Nero.

"He careth for you"—How wonderful to realise that God does this, and that He overlooks our lives with a desire to help! His thoughts towards us are for good and not evil, as He Himself has stated (Jer. 29:11).

VERSE 8

"Be sober" — Gr. *Sophroneo*, which signifies "to mentally control oneself." We should not be guided by fleshly emotions, but by the Word of God.

"Be vigilant" — "Keep awake, keep on your guard, do not sleep." This word Jesus had used when speaking to Peter, James and John on the night he was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. There they had failed (Matt. 26:38,40,41).

"Your adversary"—Gr. *Antidikos* signifies an opponent at law. There were many prepared to hail Christians before the courts, even as Paul had done before conversion. With the hardening attitude of Rome towards Christians the danger was about to grow.

"The devil"—The adversary, the false accuser. Like Christ before the Jewish authorities, many Christians were hailed before the courts and falsely accused of crimes they never committed. Nero himself made false accusations against

Christians and ordered their deaths.

"As a roaring lion"—The adversary is likened to a hungry, ferocious beast, seeking prey (see 2 Tim. 4:17; Ps. 22:12-13,21).

"Walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"—The figure is that of a hungry, roaring lion stalking his prey. It is an apt illustration of the ferocity of Rome against the Christians in the days of Nero, and of the Roman Catholic Church in its persecuting fervour during the fulness of its power.

VERSE 9

"Whom resist steadfast"—Gr. *Stereos* = "inflexible, hard, firm, solid, immovable"—like the closed up ranks of defensive infantry, co-operating one with the other, and with determined countenance facing the enemy (see 2 Tim. 2:3).

"In the faith"—It is faith that will win the victory in such circumstances, because faith sees beyond this life to that which is to be revealed. See notes 1 John 5:4.

"The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world"—These brethren in the world were the Jews who were likewise subject to persecution, particularly after A.D. 70, but who had not the advantage of the defence of faith (Rom. 9:3, same word).

VERSE 10

"But the God of all grace"—This is, the same God as is described as "Mighty" in v. 6, and Who is capable of resisting the proud, and giving grace to the humble (v. 5). He is the God of "all grace" for "every good and perfect gift" cometh from Him (James 1:17). Among the gifts He can grant is the strength to rise above every problem, every difficulty. This Paul learned when he was taught that the divine grace is all-sufficient for every need, so that His strength "is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:7-9). The greatest gift of grace, of course, will be the bestowal of life eternal in the age to come.

"Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus"—In these words Peter underlines the difference between Jews "in the

world" (V. 9), and the believing "strangers" (Ch. 1:1) to whom he was writing. Both were subjected to persecution, and both had to endure it. But the one group had faith on their side, and the assurance that they were suffering for a worthy cause and a glorious calling. This strengthened them to endure all things, and enabled them to view their trials in faith, knowing that God would not desert them. That had been Peter's own experience (see Luke 22:31-32). So, out of the depths of his own personal knowledge the Apostle exhorted his brethren that God would perfect them, removing all defects; that He would strengthen them, so that they would be enabled to overcome every adverse force. This would be the result if they met their impending sufferings in the manner suggested in the earlier verses.

"After ye have suffered a while"—Christ warned Peter that a measure of suffering and endurance is needful to perfect a character for the Kingdom (see Matt. 16:21-28). Christ first suffered and then "entered into his glory". Suffering can take various forms, and is not limited to physical persecution. A person may suffer mentally or in other ways, but it is of comparatively short duration in contrast to life eternal. Paul wrote of "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, and worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:15-18). He called upon disciples to arm themselves with that knowledge, and "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal".

"Make you perfect"—Gr. *Katartizo*—"to make fully ready, put in full order, thoroughly equip" (cp. Luke 6:40). The word is used of James and John "mending" their nets and making them ready for service (Mark 1:19). Trials and suffering, if met in faith, and viewed properly, can help equip believers for proper service in the Age to come (cp. Heb. 5:2).

"Stablish, strengthen, settle you"—The first word signifies to *set fast*; to *fix*

firmly; to *render immovable* (Luke 16:26; 9:51; 22:32). The second word denotes to provide sufficient spiritual strength to successfully bear anything one is called upon to endure. The third word is omitted by many texts, but relates to one being established on an immovable foundation (see Matt. 7:24).

VERSE 11

"To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" — This verse is expres-

sive of the proclamation of the angels at the birth of the Lord: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). See also the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:13), and the following places (Jude 25; Rev. 1:6; 5:13). The word "ever" is in the plural, "the ages". Long epochs, such as the Millennium, are divided up into smaller ages, so the use of the plural includes them all.

"Amen" — See note on Ch. 4:11.

Final Words

(Vv. 12-14)

The "Amen" (So be it!) brings the main portion of the Epistle to an end. A few words of personal greeting remain to be uttered, and a final plea for unity, love and fellowship.

Greetings from Babylon — Vv. 12-14

Peter gathers his co-laborers about him, and sends forth his final words of encouragement and hope from the city that was the symbol of fleshly power, even Babylon.

VERSE 12

"By Silvanus"—Silvanus is also known as Silas, and his name signifies "Lover of words." He was a distinguished member of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem, and was sent with Paul to communicate the decision of the council held at that city to the Christians at Antioch (Acts 15:22,27,32). When Paul declined to take John Mark with him on the second missionary journey, and parted from Barnabas, he chose Silas as his companion (V. 40). Silas gave him faithful, consistent support. The two were imprisoned together at Philippi (Acts 16:19,25,29), but joining together in prayers and praises in the prison-cell, they converted the jailer of the prison. Silas was with Paul also during the riot at Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), and afterwards with him at Berea, there remaining with Timothy after the Apostle had been forced to de-

part, (V. 14). Timothy and Silas, were then directed to follow Paul to Athens, though it does not seem as though they came up with the Apostle till after his arrival at Corinth (Acts 18:5). In this city, Silas was noted as an esteemed co-laborer (2 Cor. 1:19), and is mentioned by Paul in his epistles to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 2:1). Though he is invariably named Silas in the Acts, he is given his full name of Silvanus in the Epistles. At the time of the writing of Peter's Epistle, he had evidently become associated with the Apostle and was made the bearer of this first letter.

"A faithful brother"—Gr. "the" faithful brother. The brother well known for his faith.

"As I suppose"—Gr. *Epizomai* = "reckon," "esteem." Rotherham renders: "As I account him." There was no doubt in Peter's mind as to the qualifications of Silvanus.

"I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying" — Though the Epistle is short, it is profound. It expresses ideas with the minimum of words. The Apostle's purpose was not to write a lengthy treatise, but to comfort, or exhort believers as the word can signify. The word "testifying" signifies to bear witness.

Peter accomplished his purpose in sending this Epistle to confirm the brethren in the faith so that they might be fortified against the problems and persecutions that are incidental to a walk in Christ; and particularly in view of the "fiery trial" which was to try them.

"This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand"—In view of the prevailing trials and tribulations, and the impending heavier ones to come, some may have doubted that God was with the believers, or Christianity as such, or that they stood in a position of favor with Him; and so Peter wrote to give them comfort and assurance in this matter.

VERSE 13

"The church that is at Babylon"

—The words in italics should be omitted, and the phrase read, as per Rotherham: "She at Babylon . . ." The "she" constituted the ecclesia, portion of the bride of Christ. She was "elected" or "selected," as the word signifies. The Babylon in question comprised the ancient city, which still partially remained, and included a large community of Jews. It is sometimes thought that Peter was at Rome, and was using the term Babylon to define Rome, in a similar way in which it is used in the Apocalypse, but there does not seem any warrant for such an interpretation, nor any need for Peter to use Babylon as a synonym for Rome. If he had so used it, surely he would have included some indication of its mystical use and significance as is done in the Apocalypse (Rev. 17:18). When Peter wrote, Paganism was still triumphant in the capital, and the term Babylon as indicating an apostate religious system did not apply. These and other reasons suggest that he wrote from the site of the ancient city, and that there had been an Ecclesia established there.

"Saluteth you"—The word expresses a graceful acknowledgement from a sister Ecclesia, in paying its respects to another.

"Marcus my son"—The word "Mark" signifies "a large hammer,"

but the word John that is appended thereto, signifies "Yah has been gracious." Mark was probably a convert of Peter, and is thus described by him as "my son" (see Paul's similar use of the phrase in regard to Timothy: "my son in the faith"—1 Tim. 1:2). He is thought to have been the young man referred to in Mark 14:51-52, and it is considered that he wrote this Gospel account at the instigation of Peter, who declared his purpose of arranging to put on record an account of Christ's life (2 Pet. 1:15). Mark's mother was in comfortable circumstances, and her house was a meeting place for the disciples (Acts 12:12-17). Mark was related to Barnabas (Col. 4:10), and accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 12:25), and afterwards on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). But the rigors of the work proved too much for Mark at the time, and at Perga he deserted his companions and returned home (v. 13). This earned for him the severe disapproval of Paul who refused to have him as a companion on the next projected journey, despite the pleadings of Barnabas (Acts 15:38). So sharp was the interchange between the two brethren that they parted: Paul leaving with Silas, and Barnabas with Mark.

But Mark was evidently a young man of courage, who had sufficient faith and determination to surmount his early failure. He applied himself to the work of the Truth so conscientiously as to soon vindicate himself in the eyes of Paul. He associated himself with Paul when the latter was imprisoned in Rome, and gave him great assistance (Phil. 24). Paul makes a special mention of him as being among the few who, at that time, were "a comfort unto" him (Col. 4:10-11). As Paul's ministry neared its end, he came to more greatly esteem Mark, so that to Timothy he wrote: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). This statement indicates the

extent to which Mark had risen above his earlier weakness, and the degree to which he had vindicated himself in the eyes of the great Apostle. It is obvious, from the comments of the verse before us, that he was also very closely associated with Peter in his labors. At the time the Epistle was written he was resident in Babylon.

VERSE 14

"Greet ye one another" — Peter would have disciples develop the warmth of fellowship one with the other particularly in view of the growing hostility to the Truth, and the fierce persecution about to be unleashed against the brethren.

"A kiss of charity"—The kiss was the normal form of greeting in Apostolic days, and a "kiss of charity" signified that more than a mere formal, conventional greeting is required. Conventional greetings can very often hide hidden animosity or antagonism, but "a kiss of charity" expressed a genuine warmth of regard for one another, a mutual consideration generated by a mutual intellectual

understanding of the principles and precepts of Christ. The very opposite of the "kiss of charity" was the kiss of deception and betrayal by which Judas greeted Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and of which Peter had been an indignant witness!

"Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus"—Such peace implies fellowship, for to "be at peace" is to be at one. This is the peace that Christ left with his Apostles (John 14:27), and which, through their words, reaches down to us (John 17:20-21).

"Amen"—This word is transliterated from Hebrew into both Greek and Hebrew (Vine), and expresses the certainty by which a certain thing shall be done. In the mouth of God it signifies "it is and shall be so," and by men, "so let it be." Yahweh is styled the "God of truth (Amen)" in Isa. 65: 16, implying the faithfulness and certainty by which all He promises and predicts shall be fulfilled. However, the word "Amen" in the verse before us is omitted by the Diaglott.

The Foundation of the World

In 1 Peter 1:20, the Apostle declares that Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world." This statement has not been defined in the verse-by-verse notes, as it requires more detailed exposition than it was possible to give in our brief comments.

What is meant by the phrase "the foundation of the world?"

It is normally suggested that Peter refers here to the establishment of the material world upon which we live. However, the Greek word *kosmos*, here rendered "world," signifies primarily "the order or arrangement of things," and denotes, apart from few exceptions, the political, religious or social order of things relating to particular epochs of time. For example, the Mosaic world was that system of things introduced by the Law of Moses, whilst the Gentile world is that arrangement of things established by the "powers that be," the rulers of this present *kosmos* which shall soon be overthrown.

In the beginning God had established a Divine order, or arrangement, in which, according to Genesis 1 and 2, He had pronounced that man and woman should have dominion over the lower creation (1:26). He had provided them with all things needful for life (v.29), had placed them in the Garden of Delight (Ch. 2:8), had instituted marriage (Ch. 2:23-25), and had subjected them to law (Vv. 16-17).

In that garden there was complete harmony, and Adam and Eve, walking in the light of the Divine revelation, had fellowship with God through the angels who conversed with them. The obvious objective (in the light of Isaiah 45:18 and Num. 14:21, etc.) was that ultimately they should attain unto Divine nature by continued obedience. However, sin intervened, to destroy the original harmony, and to require a new system of things to replace the first that had been overthrown.

Therefore, in *Elpis Israel*, Brother Thomas uses the term "foundation of the world" in such a way as to indicate that it referred to the new order of things that was introduced by God when sin and death had entered (pp. 122).

This new arrangement, or *kosmos*, involved a changed status for man and woman, effected the condition of the lower creation, the state of the earth, the mortality to which man was now made subject, and so forth.

Does, then, the phrase "foundation of the world" as used by Peter, and many others of the N.T. writers, refer to that new order of things instituted by God according to Genesis Chapter 3?

To answer that question, it is necessary to consider the literal meaning of the word "foundation." We note two altogether different Greek words occur in the New Testament, both of which have been translated "foundation."

1. *Themelios* — "belonging to a foundation," used in such references as Luke 6:48-49; Luke 14:29; Heb. 11:10.
2. *Katabole* — which in its literal meaning does not signify a foundation at all, but a "casting down" (*Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

Moulton & Milligan, *Vocabulary of the New Testament*, shows that the frequent use of *Katabole* in the normal Greek papyri was that of a payment made, or money thrown down in payment. This is the word contained in the phrase "foundation of the Kosmos" and found in such places as: Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 11:11 (conceive); 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8.

The verb *kataballo* is used for payment of taxes, payment of debts due, and also of a woman "stricken" with sickness.

In the New Testament, the verb occurs three times and is rendered as follows: 2 Cor. 4:9: "cast down"; Rev. 12:10: "cast down"; Heb. 6:1: "laying again". The first two references relate to a casting down, an overthrow, and are very appropriate, for the verb is compounded of *kata*, "down", and *ballo*, "to hurl, or cast".

As the *Companion Bible* suggests, consistency demands that the same idea should be incorporated in the translation of Hebrew 6:1, in which case we would read: "... not casting down again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God" (the word "foundation" here is our first word above, *themelios*). This rendition is appropriate to the background of Hebrews 6:1, for the Apostle was writing to those who had virtually "cast down" or "overthrown" the foundation already laid, and he was writing to them to restore them to the faith, and now appeals to them to not "cast down again" the foundation laid, but to go on unto perfection.

Granted this meaning of the verb *kataballo* (and this cannot be disputed), what of the noun *katabole*, found consistently in the phrase: "the foundation of the kosmos"? It is acknowledged (see *Vine*), that its meaning is "a casting down," but it is claimed that it is never so used in Scripture, and is accordingly rendered metaphorically as "the foundation" of the world. But if that were the meaning to be conveyed, why did not the New Testament writers use the obvious word *themelios*? There

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seems no reason why they should not have done so, if they wanted really to express the idea of a foundation being laid. But, did they want to express that idea? An investigation of all the passages where the word *katabole* occurs suggests that the spirit of God in the writers speaks of a *casting down* of the kosmos. This occurred when sin entered the world, and the original "very good" state of creation was changed. At this point, the promise of redemption through the conquest of sin was made, and sacrifice was introduced as a means thereto. Such were the changed circumstances brought about by the "casting down" of the Divine order that had existed in the beginning. What did that Divine order involve?

God had intended man to "have dominion" over all His creation; this was promised to both "male and female" when they were formed (Gen. 1:27-28). Thus the conclusion of the sixth day saw man formed in the "image" of the Elohim; woman made in the glory of man (Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 11:7); a perfect marriage instituted (Gen. 2:23-24) and the proclamation of man's dominion over all God's creation on earth with the invitation to fill it with fruit (Gen. 1:28).

A pattern with great spiritual significance had been laid. Adam typified Christ, Eve typified the Ecclesia, the marriage related to the coming union (Rev. 19:8), and the dominion given to their coming rule (Rev. 5:9-10).

Sin brought disharmony in Eden, and made obvious that what was originally intended, would now only be attained by war and conquest. David revealed this when he quoted the words of Genesis 1:26-28 as expressive of the future intentions of Yahweh, and saw a typical fulfilment of them in his victory over Goliath (Psalm 8:5-8). Paul says that this has now been partially fulfilled in Christ (Heb. 2:6-10), that many other sons might be brought to glory. In anticipation of this victory, the Lord could tell his Apostles, though facing betrayal and shameful death, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And again, in his prayer to the Father: "Thou hast given him (the Son) power (dominion) over all flesh..." (John 17:2). "All flesh" is a Hebraism denoting all of the lower creation (Gen. 6:19; 7:15,16,21 etc.) and Christ's use of this statement in this intercessory prayer indicates the means whereby the promise of Genesis 1:26,28 could alone be fulfilled; by his conquest of those forces of sin and death that were adverse to the purpose of God. Thus Peter was able to write:

"Jesus Christ . . . is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. 3:22).

The two references alluded to here (Psalm 8:4-6; Psalm 110) both show Christ as Son of Man gaining the victory over the enemy.

The Divine order (*kosmos*) was overthrown by sin in the beginning, but is to be restored by the Lord Jesus. Thus the term "foundation of the world," seems to signify the overthrow of the harmony set before man at the epoch of Creation.

With this in mind, see how the references where this phrase occurs, fit into the picture thus presented:

Matthew 13:35: "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Not things kept secret since the creation of the literal world, but concealed things that were brought into being as the result of the overthrow of the original harmony that existed in Eden. (The word "from" is the preposition *apo*, and signifies something that develops from out of that with which it is associated.)

Matthew 25:34: "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the

foundation of the world.”

An implication of the special preparations entailed in establishing the kingdom (the dominion promised in Gen. 1:26,28) because of the overthrow of the unity that had existed in the beginning between God and man.

Luke 11:50: “The blood of prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world.”

A particular reminder of the murder of Abel as first victim of the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, in consequence of the overthrow of the original order.

John 17:24: “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

In this statement the preposition is *pro*, and signifies “before” in the sense of time. It shows that Christ was in the mind of the Father before the overthrow of the harmony that took place as recorded in Genesis 3. Evidence of this is seen by the provision of Christ as the seed of the woman, in the declaration of Genesis 3:15. The “foundation of the world” does not relate to physical creation.

Ephesians 1:4: “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” See comments on John 17:24 above. The term “seed of the woman” refers not only to Christ, but embraces all “in him.”

Hebrews 4:3: “The works were finished from the foundation of the world.” In this statement the word “finished” (Gr. *ginomai*) signifies “to cause to exist,” “to bring into being.” The “works” of God include His provision for the true rest of His creation through the blood of the Lamb, and these were “brought into being” from out of the overthrow of the original harmony, caused by sin, and are revealed in the provisions implied in the promise in Gen. 3:15, and the sacrifice of the animal by which the coverings for Adam and Eve were provided.

Hebrews 9:26: “He must often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” This obviously means that he must often have suffered since the overthrow of the original harmony, for there was no need for sacrifice before the introduction of sin. The word “since” is the preposition *apo*, indicating something that has developed out of the circumstances indicated.

Hebrews 11:11: “Sara received strength to conceive seed.”

In this statement, the word “conceive” is a translation of *katabolen*, and the *Diaglott* renders it as “a laying down of seed.” This is the only place where the noun is not associated with the word *kosmos* in the New Testament, and can be explained as “received strength as regards the deposition of seed,” the throwing down, or depositing of the male seed in the womb.

1 Peter 1:20: “Foreordained before the foundation of the world.”

The word “before” is *pro*, and the same explanation applies here as in John 17:24 above.

Revelation 13:8: “The book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

At the time of the overthrow of the original order of things the record of the book of Life was commenced on behalf of those who would gain conquest over sin and death through faith in the sacrifice of the “Lamb slain.” The word “from” is the preposition *apo* concerning which see notes above.

Revelation 17:8: “Whose names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.”

Here, see again the comments on Revelation 13:8.

Every time the phrase “the foundation of the world,” or rather

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"the casting down of the kosmos" is used, or read, it is to bring to mind the disruption of the original harmony between God and man, caused by sin. The term thus indicates the extent of the disruption caused, and the use of the phrase, particularly in the light of the significance of the prepositions *apo* and *pro* indicates how Yahweh immediately moved to counter its effects, and to eventually restore the unity that existed at the first. Peter, in the statement under consideration, thus shows that what was foreordained had been made manifest at the appointed time, in the victory that the Son of Man had gained in his conquest of sin and death.

Brother Thomas has beautifully commented:

"Men were not ushered into being for the purpose of being saved or lost! GOD MANIFESTATION not human salvation was the great purpose of the Eternal Spirit. The salvation of the multitude is incidental to the manifestation, but was not the end proposed. The Eternal Spirit intended to enthrone Himself on the earth, and in so doing to develop a divine family from among men, every one of whom shall be Spirit, because born of the Spirit, and that this family shall be large enough to fill the earth, when perfected, to the entire exclusion of flesh and blood."



This concludes Peter's first epistle, a document expressing the Truth in precept and practice, and illustrating the transforming power of Christ's teaching and example to change and mould a life to the glory of Yahweh.

The Second Epistle of Peter

Setting forth

The True Knowledge And The Sure Hope

As A Motivation of

An Acceptable Life in Christ Jesus

CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

"Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgression, and the sons of Belial their sins!" I have never heard a man yet, thoroughly imbued with the Truth and love of it, cry out against a hearty and uncompromising castigation of error, as bitter and too severe. Where men's faith is weak, and their minds are full of uncertainty, and they are conscious that their own deeds will not bear the light, you will find them full of "charity", and sensitively fearful of the Truth being too plainly spoken. All their sympathies are with the feeling of the corruptors and transgressors of the Word. They don't want their feelings hurt lest it should do harm! The fact is they don't want the Truth too plainly demonstrated, lest it should make them unpopular; or they should be themselves obliged to defend that of which they are not fully assured.

—Dr. J. Thomas.

Introduction

The Second Epistle of Peter

In our introduction to the First Epistle of Peter (p. 93) we suggested that the keys of the Kingdom mentioned by the Lord in his instruction to Peter (Matthew 16) have an application to the two Epistles from his pen. The First brings prominently into view the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21; 3:17-18; 4:1,13), whilst the Second emphasises the glory (2 Pet. 1:4,17; 3:9-13).

The way to glory is through trial and suffering. It is the culmination of a development that is motivated by the "exceeding great and precious promises" revealed through the Truth (2 Pet. 1:4), and which leads the way to "an entrance" into "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (v. 11).

That way, warned Peter, is fraught with danger. But it is a danger that can be successfully countered by the Truth. By its moral corruption can be overcome (Ch. 1), doctrinal corruption can be resisted (Ch. 2), and political corruption ultimately destroyed (Ch. 3).

He predicted the development of a widespread Apostasy:

"There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies" **"There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (2 Pet. 2:1; 3:3).**

INSPIRATION

Few books of the Bible have been more fiercely challenged than the Second Epistle of Peter. For some considerable time, it was a matter of doubt as to whether it would be recognised as inspired, some claiming that the Apostle did not write it. In support of this, they alleged that the early Christian writers did not quote from the Epistle, and evidently did not acknowledge it as coming from the pen of the great Apostle. These attacks were answered and modified, however, and ultimately the Epistle was accepted into the Canon of the Scriptures as inspired of God and written by Peter.

Certainly the internal evidence of the Epistle indicates its genuineness, and the Bible, as a whole, would be poorer without it. One writer (B. C. Caffin) has stated the case for the Epistle in the following terms:

“Another important element in the evidence for the authenticity of this epistle is its own intrinsic power and beauty. We have several Christian writings of the second century; they are precious for many reasons; we should be very sorry to be without any of them. But the value of them all put together is as nothing compared with that of this epistle. They are such books as good men might write now; full of piety and holiness, but not beyond the reach of men But is there any man living, however wise and holy, who could write an epistle like this? Could any of the sub-apostolic Fathers whose writings have come down to us have produced anything to be compared with it? The books of Holy Scripture and human compositions lie in different planes; they do not bear comparison. There is an indescribable something in the Word of God which appeals to the human nature which God created, to the conscience which bears witness of Him — something which tells us that the message comes from God. The second Epistle of Peter possesses that authority, that holy beauty, those notes of inspiration which differentiate the sacred writings from the works of men.”

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO EPISTLES

That Peter's First and Second Epistles were written for different reasons will not be denied. The first was designed to encourage and support believers to endure trials and persecutions from without the Ecclesias. The second was to predict dangers that would arise from within. However, Peter does not limit his Second Epistle to warnings of false teachers to come, but also refers to the Divine glory yet to be manifest in the earth. Indeed, the subject of the coming glory is the dominant theme. Whereas the word “suffering” is found some twenty-one times in the First Epistle, it is not mentioned once in the Second. In it, however, the Apostle reveals that ultimately the glory of Yahweh, as revealed in His Son, and in the Kingdom He will set up on earth, will triumph in spite of the forces of error and the resultant ungodliness that he predicted would arise prior to that consummation.

Whereas the Second Epistle predicted the coming of Apostasy, the Epistle of Jude describes it as already existent. There was a fulfilment of Peter's prophecy in his day as we shall see when we come to study the Epistle.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EPISTLES

No section of Scripture is unimportant, but some parts have greater urgency than others. Both Peter and John wrote in relation to the last days (2 Peter 3:3; Jude 18). They primarily had in mind the last days of Judah's Commonwealth when that guilty nation was overwhelmed in calamity, and the Mosaic age came to an end (as Peter had predicted it would on the Day of Pentecost — Acts 2:20). But they also have an application today. Peter wrote of scoffers arising who would challenge the imminence of the Lord's coming on the

basis that "since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:3-4). The term related to the "fathers" of the Ecclesias, Apostles like Paul and Peter who predicted the overthrow of the Jewish State. Their prophecies of coming apostasy had not been vindicated, and they had passed to their rest. Critics arose who challenged their predictions and warnings, and against such Peter warned. There has been a repetition of such an attitude in these days; for since the pioneers passed to their rest there have arisen those who have challenged their expositions and warnings, on the grounds that the expectations have not been vindicated. Against such there is need to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints".

WHY PETER'S EPISTLES ARE DIFFERENT

Critics claim that the second Epistle of Peter could not have been written by the Apostle since its style is so different from that of the first Epistle.

Of course the style is different! It is different because the subject is different, the reason why the Apostle penned this epistle is different. He warned that a greater danger than Nero's persecution would threaten the brotherhood. A dire peril would manifest itself, namely, the deadly hope of false doctrine, endorsed by the persuasive tongues of false though prominent teachers. Peter's pen moved across the paper, expressing great concern, as he described their character, and predicted the way in which they would wrest the glorious life-giving doctrines of the Truth. He knew how devastating would be the impact of these ideas upon shallow minds. They would not only pervert the Divine revelation, proclaimed by the Apostles, but their pernicious influence would have a deteriorating effect upon the morals of their dupes. Perhaps, as his pen rapidly traversed the paper, something of the impetuosity of his earlier days asserted itself, blended, however, with that experience of age, and true understanding of the needs of others, that time had wrought in him. No longer did blind belligerence dominate him to the exclusion of all else, but rather did he see the antidote to the corrupting influence to which the Truth would be subjected. The antidote is a virile faith developed out of a sound knowledge of the Truth and the virtues of Christ.

Let us yield ourselves to this aim, keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. Having put our hand to the plough, let us not look back. Let us arm ourselves against all weariness and faintness of mind, and keeping our eye on him who fought the battle before us, who endured a greater contradiction of sinners than will ever fall to our lot, let us run with patience the race set before us, remembering

it is a short race at the longest; and that it is a race which, victoriously run, will culminate in a glorious victory:

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

An Analysis

We provide here the telescopic outline of the Epistle as a basis for the microscopic, or verse by verse, study of it. When this outline is grasped and memorised, we are equipped to discern instantly the context in which a particular verse or statement is found, and are thereby enabled to interpret better its true meaning.

As a preparation for a more detailed study, we suggest that the student read through the whole of the Epistle at one sitting, with this outline before him.

In our notes on the first Epistle of Peter, we suggested that the two Epistles answer to the two keys of the kingdom that were delivered by the Lord to the Apostles. The first Key opens the door to God's purpose in setting forth suffering as a means of attaining to the Kingdom (Acts 14:22); the second Key reveals the glory to which ultimately this suffering will lead. Thus, immediately after speaking to Peter about the Keys, the Lord illustrated what he meant by predicting his own impending sufferings (Matth. 16:21), and seven days later introduced three of his Apostles to a theophany of glory when he was transfigured before them (Matth. Ch. 17).

In order to substantiate the above thoughts let us point out that the word “suffering” is mentioned some twenty-one times in the first Epistle, but not once in the second. On the other hand, the second Epistle speaks of the glory seen on the Mount of Transfiguration (Ch. 1:16-17), and of the New Heavens and New Earth that are to replace the present order of things on earth (Ch. 3:13).

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER
THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND THE SURE HOPE

The second of the two keys committed unto Peter, revealing the glory ultimately to be revealed, and showing how this can act as an antidote to the moral, doctrinal, and political corruption of the times.

1. DIVINE REVELATION: THE ANTIDOTE TO MORAL CORRUPTION — Ch. 1

- *The Purpose of the Revelation Vv. 1- 4;
- *The Application of the Revelation Vv. 5-11;
- *The Availability of the Revelation Vv. 12-15;
- *The Authenticity of the Revelation Vv. 16-21;

2. DIVINE REVELATION: THE ANTIDOTE TO DOCTRINAL CORRUPTION — Ch. 2

- *The Certainty of Apostasy Vv. 1- 3;
- *The Certainty of Judgment Vv. 4- 9;
- *The Nature of the Apostasy Vv. 10-16;
- *The Polluting Influence of the Apostasy Vv. 17-22;

3. DIVINE REVELATION: THE ANTIDOTE TO POLITICAL CORRUPTION — Ch. 3

- *The Scoffers' Challenge Vv. 1- 4;
- *The Scoffers' Ignorance Vv. 5- 7;
- *The Scoffers' Judgment Vv. 8-12;
- *The Assurance of Hope Vv. 13-16;
- *The Need of Spiritual Growth Vv. 17-18;

Outline

It is believed that Peter died during the time of persecution which Nero instigated against the Christians from A.D. 64 onwards. This second Epistle, therefore, must have been written between the years A.D. 60 (the approximate date of the first Epistle) and A.D. 64.

It is an Epistle of remembrance: "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (Ch. 3:1). But whilst he re-emphasised certain basic truths, already expressed in the first letter, the message of the second Epistle is essentially different. The first was written to fortify believers in the midst of trial, and to encourage them to seek Divine means for a successful combat. But now new perils emerged, namely, false doctrines and worldly practices, and the second Epistle was designed to lay bare the source and nature of such evils, and reveal the means of successfully combatting them.

Peter thus writes with deep concern, foreseeing far greater and more seductive perils than active persecution. Knowing that his martyrdom was soon to take place (Ch. 1:14) and that this short circular letter was to be his last appeal to the brotherhood, the reader cannot but feel the sadness that must have gripped him, as the Spirit moved him to predict the pernicious influence of false teachers who would arise amid the ecclesia (Ch. 2:1).

The design of the Epistle is to emphasise the urgent need for believers to be thoroughly grounded in *epignosis* or "full-knowledge" that is found in Christ Jesus. This is seen in such statements as: "Be established in the present truth" (Ch. 1:12); "Be mindful of the words spoken by the holy prophets" (Ch. 3:2); "Beware of the error of the wicked" (V. 17); "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord" (V. 18).

Peter emphasises the urgency of this. He shows that true knowledge will have its fruit in right actions; but that false teaching will be followed by moral declension. Truth brings salvation; Error brings condemnation. There is a need to preserve the faith in its purity, for belief itself is a form of righteousness. How often do men reason that "good actions" in themselves are sufficient! Peter sets that aside and shows that there is a need for good doctrine as well as good actions, and that one in the absence of the other is incomplete.

The "full-knowledge" in Christ Jesus, is shown as the antidote to moral, doctrinal, and political corruption. Such knowledge truly sanctifies Yahweh's saints, for by it they shall be changed "from glory to glory", reflecting the attributes of Yahweh and His Son (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18).

CHAPTER 1

Divine Revelation - The Antidote to Moral Corruption

Peter commences his Epistle, by laying down the principle that the Divine revelation is the basis of successful living in Christ. His exhortation recalls the fact that Christianity is radically doctrinal. The doctrine comes first; the life, based upon the doctrine, follows naturally. The life is founded on the message, and not the message on the life. Apostolic preaching was a Divine revelation from God (Heb. 1:1), a logical presentation of fact and doctrine designed to sanctify believers to the glory of Yahweh (John 17:17). This knowledge is the energising dynamics of a spiritual life in Christ, an antidote to the moral corruption of the world in which believers live. Peter stresses a need and a danger. The need is for spiritual growth on an ever-ascending scale (Vv. 4-8); the danger is the possibility of a mere profession of Christianity without practising its principles (Vv. 9-11). He therefore sets before his readers their high calling (Vv. 1-11), and then draws their attention to certain things that they should ever bring to mind (Vv. 12-21).

The Purpose of the Revelation —

Vv. 1-4

The Apostle defines the purpose of the revelation, and the ultimate glory to which we can attain.

VERSE 1

“Simon Peter”—The name given to him when he acknowledged his Lord as the Son of God, as a result of which he received the promise of “the Keys” (Matth. 16:16). Simon Peter, i.e. “hearing rock,” is here used in contrast to the first Epistle, where the apostle introduces himself only as Peter (cp. 1 Pet. 1:1).

Simon is expressive of his admission into the Old Covenant by circumcision; Peter is expressive of his admission into the New Covenant by faith.

“A servant”—Gr. *doulos*, a common bond-slave. Derived from the

verb *deo*, to bind, it describes one who submerges his will in another. We become true servants of Christ when we submerge our will in his. He provides the example. As Yahweh’s servant he declared: “Not my will but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42). And again: “I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7).

“An apostle”—One sent forth with authority. Thus the slave was given a commission, and sent forth under the authority of his Lord.

“Jesus Christ”—Jesus signifies “Yah shall save”; “Christ” is a title meaning “anointed”. The name and the title combine to express the Divine purpose in Christ. The name is expressive of the fact that “God was in Christ reconciling . . .” (2 Cor. 5:19). The title “Christ” relates to the outpouring of the Spirit which enabled him to overcome (Ps. 80:17; Isa. 11:1-2),

and to his anointing as prophet, priest and king (Acts 2:36). The combined name is expressive of the way of salvation, for Yahweh can only be manifested where "self" has been sacrificed; and future elevation (Christing, or anointing) will only follow where God is truly manifested in flesh.

"Have obtained"—This does not mean something won by unaided effort but something obtained by Divine grace. Gr. *lanchano* signifies "to obtain by lot" (Vine), i.e. by Divine inheritance. Though personal effort is necessary, this must be based upon the means that Yahweh has provided.

"Like precious faith"—Though all may not have the same measure of faith, the faith offered through the Word (see Rom. 10:17) can be developed by all, and admits all to common privileges in Christ.

"Through the righteousness of God"—This righteousness was declared in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:25-26). When Jesus died, sin's flesh was condemned in a federal representative of the human race, demonstrating what all must do, at least figuratively if they would please the Father. Paul thus taught that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). But Jesus was also raised from the dead, and the whole process of death, resurrection, and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ demonstrates that God is both righteous and merciful. He is just for Jesus not only died but also rose from the dead. He is merciful for He extends forgiveness of sins to helpless humanity who seek Him through the means provided (see Rom. 4:25). An understanding of these facts generates faith.

"God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"—Note the margin: "our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The Diaglott, Rotherham, Companion Bible, R.V., etc. support the

marginal rendering of the authorised version. This does not prove the theory of the Trinity, however. Scripture clearly shows that Jesus can be called "God" without usurping the authority and status of his Father. Thomas, according to John 20:28, called him "God" because he could see in the risen and glorified Lord, the manifestation of Yahweh. Earlier, the Apostles had pleaded: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8), and Jesus had responded by directing their attention to himself. At that time, they could not understand the import of his words, but when he was glorified they came to fully comprehend the doctrine of God-manifestation as it applied to him (1 Tim. 3:16). Hence Thomas' remarkable salutation. On an earlier occasion, when the Jews were about to stone him because he claimed to be the Son of God, Jesus reminded them that their very law called mortal men "Gods" (the capital initial should be supplied), and, therefore, surely he could claim to be the Son of God without being charged with blasphemy. If mortal men (see Exod. 7:1; 4:16; Ps. 82:6), and angels (Exod. 23:20-21) can be called "God" because they manifest His glory or authoritatively proclaim His word, then surely the Son can claim the title without assuming equality of status with the Father.

Yahweh declared Himself to be the Saviour of His people (Isa. 43:11), but He also revealed that He would save through a servant power (Isa. 49:6; 42:1-7). His servant to that end is the Lord Jesus, concerning whom, Peter declared: "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). If Jesus were *exalted* to be a Prince, it is obvious that he was not "very God of very God" before that time. The Lord Jesus attained unto a unity with the Father that can become the prerogative of all saints (cp. John 17:21).

Jesus himself, implied his subordinate position to that of the Father, when he declared that he lacked a knowledge of certain facts that only the Father possessed (Mark 13:32). Paul likewise taught that the Lord Jesus, even in the future when all authorities and powers shall be subdued to him, shall still be subject unto God, that Yahweh alone might be "all and in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

Peter, in the verse under consideration (2 Pet. 1:1) draws attention to the fact that the redemption of mankind is a joint work of the Father and the Son (see also 2 Cor. 5:19), and that the glory to which man has been called has already been attained by the forerunner, even Jesus Christ. In the glorified Son we see an extension of the glories and virtues of the Father, as there will be a further extension of that same Being in the sons yet to be glorified (Heb. 2:9-11). The whole Divine united family will then reveal the glory of Yahweh (cp. Rom. 5:2; 2 Pet. 1:4), whose name will be "written upon them" (Rev. 3:12). At present, therefore, they are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

VERSE 2

"Grace and peace be multiplied"—**"Grace"** is Divine favor, extended to man by means of the Gospel (cp. Eph. 2:8). **"Peace"** is harmony with God, resulting from knowledge of the Divine purpose, and submission thereto. Jesus extended **"peace"** to his disciples (John 14:27), and through them it extends to us. Such peace is based upon purity of doctrine and practice (John 16:33; Rom. 5:1), and is indicative of fellowship. The Hebrew word for peace, *Shalom*, implies this, for it is derived from a root that signifies "to be at one" (see John 17:21). Divine favor, and the enjoyment of spiritual fellowship and communion can be "multiplied," increased or deepened through the means defined hereafter.

"Through the knowledge"—Gr. *epignosis* "denotes exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition." It is "a strengthened form of *gnosis*, expressing a fuller or a full knowledge, a greater participation by the knower in the object known, thus more powerfully influencing him" (Vine). A believer having such knowledge would fully know the purpose and character of Yahweh, not just certain facets of it (for instance "the goodness AND severity" of God, not just the goodness). Such knowledge will enable him to see Jesus Christ as the Son of David AND the Son of God; not just as the suffering servant, but also as the future King of Israel. *Epignosis* is the basis for acceptable worship, and acceptable works. The significance of this word is expressed in Rom. 10:2 where we read: "I bear them (the Jews) record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." They knew of God, by means of the Law, but their actions did not spring from *epignosis*, they did not appreciate the Divine purpose in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus they could not be recipients of Divine grace and peace which things were abundantly extended to those who qualified, through their fuller or more exact knowledge of the purpose of God in Christ.

Gentile philosophy, like Jewish formalism, could not save. It was a *gnosis*, translated "science," falsely so called (2 Tim: 6:21). It is exact or full knowledge, of the truth in Christ Jesus that is required, and this plea for *epignosis* as against mere *gnosis* is the basic theme of this Epistle. *Epignosis* is not merely "knowing" even a truth, but knowing it in such a way that it influences one's actions and mode of life.

Epignosis is designed to energise us to so live that the Divine favor and peace towards us shall ever increase.

"Of God and of Jesus Christ"—The inclusion of the conjunction *and* shows that, whatever Trinitari-

ans make of V.1. they must acknowledge that in this place the separate personalities of Father and Son are clearly stressed. If Peter intended to teach the doctrine of the Trinity in V.1. as alleged by many, surely consistency would demand that he do so in V.2. The glorious doctrine of God manifestation does away with the incongruities brought about by Trinitarian teaching.

"Our Lord"—This title is significant. Particularly when considered in the light of the Lord's action and teaching as he washed the feet of the Apostles. See John 13:13-17. If Jesus Christ is acknowledged as *Lord*, his will and commands should be obeyed. See Matt. 7:21-29.

VERSE 3

"According as"—R.V. renders "Seeing that..." The latter rendering is better. The phrase does not indicate different measures of power extended to different believers, but rather that the "power" granted is adequate to all requirements.

"Power"—Gr. *dunamis*, and thus "inherent power." The English word "dynamics" is derived therefrom. This power is sealed in the Word of God, and works effectively in us when the Scriptures are properly understood. (Cp. Eph. 1:17-19).

"Hath given unto us all things"—see 1 Cor. 2:9-12.

"That pertain unto life"—True understanding of the Divine purpose will result in a richer, more purposeful life in Christ (1 Tim. 4:8). Paul discovered this, for, by crucifying his own will to serve Christ, he enabled Christ to live in him, so that the new life he lived he lived "by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:20; see also 1 Pet. 1:3-4).

"Godliness"—Gr. *eusebia*, from *eu* signifying "well," and *sebomai*, "to worship," "to be devout," and hence, worship rightly directed. Godliness is not religious piety of a formalised kind, such as the attendance of meetings through

habit, but rather a true reverence that seeks to do the will of the Father. This stems from *epignosis* or full-knowledge.

"Through the knowledge of him"—The word for "knowledge" is again *epignosis* (see note on v.2). In the context of these verses, this signifies an exact or full understanding of the facts concerning God and Jesus Christ. For example, it is not *epignosis* to have a thorough and deep comprehension of the return of Christ and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth, if, at the same time, a person believes the error of Trinitarian doctrine. It is not *epignosis* to know that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and to be fully assured of all the personal needs of salvation, if, at the same time, it is believed that he pre-existed. *Epignosis* is an exact or full understanding of all the facets of Divine revelation, upon which can be further built, a deeper knowledge of the Divine purpose. It is therefore the foundation of a true faith, and, as this knowledge is applied in life, it brings an increase of Divine favor and peace. Peter reveals that the promise of Divine nature is bound up in this Divine knowledge; that it is a sure guide to true worship, or Godliness; that it becomes a reflecting mirror of the glory and virtue of the Lord, and thus the energising power of a believer's life. A believer must permit that knowledge to work through him, so that he reflects the moral qualities that naturally spring from it. In *epignosis* we have one of the key-words of this Epistle, and in its applications as a way of life, there is found the antidote to corrupting influence from both within and without the Ecclesia.

"To glory and virtue"—See margin: "BY glory and virtue." "To" is *dia* with the genitive case, marking the instrument of an action (see Bullingers Lexicon). The R.V. renders: "By his own glory and virtue." The glory of Christ's character (John 1:14), and the glory of the resurrected Lord (Phil. 3:21), of which the Scriptures bear

record, draw us to imitate his virtues which are essentially the Father's (John 5:19; cp. 1 Pet. 2:9 marg.). Paul taught "that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Christ's resurrection to eternal life illustrated his glory and virtue (Rom. 1:4), so that his death and resurrection become as a parable of a believer's spiritual life (dying unto the flesh and living unto God). In this way we are called "by" his glory and virtue and not merely "to" glory and virtue. In short, Christ's experience gives us confidence in God's power to redeem, and inspires us to imitate his actions.

VERSE 4

"Whereby"—Through this means. The offering of Jesus, as a sacrifice without spot and without blemish, confirmed the promises made unto the fathers (Rom. 15:8).

"Are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises" — There are three covenants of promise, all of which are confirmed by the offering and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:8). The covenant in Eden promised eternal life (that which was lost through sin); the Abrahamic covenant promised an eternal inheritance (in contrast to what Abram gave up in leaving Ur); the Davidic covenant promised a Temple and eternal rule (in comparison to the Temple the King desired to build). Each covenant built upon its predecessor. The first promised life; the second an inheritance where it could be lived; the third a glory associated with that time. The promises comprise the Gospel (Gal. 3:8), and form a key that will unlock all sections of the Word.

"Partakers"—A partaker is a sharer, and believers are called to share that same "divine nature" unto which the Lord attained through his resurrection from the dead (1 John 3:2; Phil. 3:21; John 1:12). What Christ is now, we can become.

"Divine nature"—This is immortality, a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:46), made like unto the angels

(Luke 20:36), who are "made spirits" (Heb. 1:7). Notice the six transition-features of the coming resurrection, as outlined in 1 Cor. 15:42-54, all expressive of "divine nature:"

- Sown in corruption—
raised to incorruption;
- Sown in dishonor—
raised to glory;
- Sown in weakness—
raised to power;
- Sown a natural body—
raised to a spirit body;
- Sown an earthly body—
raised to a heavenly body;
- Sown in mortality—
raised to immortality.

These six points (the number of man, or flesh—Rev. 13:18) are endorsed and sealed through the covenant statement:

● "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50).

"Having escaped"—Gr. *apopheugo*, "to flee away from," the idea being, to flee to a city of refuge. Rotherham renders: "Escaping..." as an action as yet in progress, and not completed. Paul taught that the promises of God provide a "strong consolation" for those who "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them" (Heb. 6:18). The analogy is obviously drawn from the provision of the Cities of refuge established in Israel under the Law (Numb. 35:6-34). Nevertheless, though we have the hope, the realisation is yet to come.

"The corruption"—Gr. *phthora*, signifying deterioration either moral or physical. In Romans 8:21 it is used of the fallen state of creation, whilst here it is expressive of the moral evil of the world about us. Both the physical deterioration of creation, and the moral deterioration of the political and social world about us have developed out of unbridled lust (see 2 Tim. 3:1-7).

“That is in the world through lust” — Undue lust was developed in human nature when, at the instigation of the serpent, Eve partook of the forbidden fruit and inducing her husband to do likewise, mortality followed. The consequences were inherited by the posterity of Adam, with the result that the world is full of corruption. It “lieth in wickedness (1 John 5:19), and from such a state, believers are warned to flee. The hope set forth by the “great and precious promises” provides a motivation to seek a higher way of life than that of the flesh. Moreover, the atonement effected in consequence of these promises, provides the means of forgiveness of sins committed, opening the way to life eternal.

The Application of the Revelation —Vv. 5-11

Having laid the foundation of his exposition by drawing attention to the privileged state of believers in Christ, and having shown that it is the full knowledge, or exact understanding of the Divine purpose that provides the “dynamics” of a spiritual life, Peter now appeals to his readers to apply epignosis, so as to assure constant progress in the Christ-life. The faithful adherence to such guidance can result in a complete fulfilment of 1 Pet. 1:13-16.

VERSE 5

“And beside this” — The R.V. renders: “Yea, and for this very cause.” Rotherham: “And for this very reason also.” In order to fully escape the widespread corruption, we must build diligently upon the foundation of faith all that we have seen manifested in Christ.

“Giving all diligence” — Gr. *spoudazo*, “to make haste” as Mark 6:25; 2 Tim. 4:9,21. The knowledge provides the dynamics, but we must see that we are charged with it. The dynamo is efficient, but our contact with it might be faulty. We must learn to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). The R.V. renders: “adding on your part all diligence, in the abundance of

your faith supply virtue.” Thus the dynamo charging us with more and more power, enables us to become more and more the imitators of Christ, reflecting the glory and virtues that we see in him.

“Add to your faith virtue” — The word “add”—Gr. *epichoregeo*—signifies “to furnish abundantly.” It is used to describe superabundance, as when one may liberally pay the cost of lavish entertainments. Here, it suggests that faith must be so abundant and rich as to in itself furnish or supply virtue.

“Virtue”—Greek, *apete*, the opposite of moral corruption. It is used in the Greek *papyri* for a moral condition that springs from Godly energy, and in v.3 of this chapter it is related to the moral excellence of Christ, who manifests the Divine attributes (1 Pet. 2:9). The superabundance of faith will find expression in the imitation of Christ’s moral attributes, so through him, God will be manifest in us.

“To virtue knowledge”—Knowledge here is *gnosis*. A complete basic knowledge (*epignosis*) of the manifestation and purpose of God in Christ will firstly find its expression in faith, and in the superabundance of faith there will be found the manifestation of the virtues of Christ. This, in turn, will result in a hunger for further facets of truth, *gnosis* in general which has been defined as follows: “Primarily a seeking to know, an enquiry, investigation, and denotes in the N.T. knowledge, especially of spiritual truth...” This is the attitude expressed by Paul thus: “If any man thinketh he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:2).

VERSE 6

“And to knowledge temperance” — Gr. *enkrateia* — “self restraint.” Notice that this follows immediately after knowledge. This is an indication that the things learnt must be applied and put into practice. God

teaches—we submit. The R.V. renders: “self control.” As our knowledge of the virtues of Christ increases, so it should prompt us to mortify the flesh (Rom. 8:1-5).

“To temperance patience”—Gr. *hupomone*, “to remain under,” “endurance,” “continuance.” Self control, based upon knowledge of the virtues of Christ has to be practised continually, not just spasmodically. This quality of endurance develops, and is proved, under trial (James 1:3,12; 1 Pet. 2:20; Rom. 5:3; Rev. 3:10).

“To patience godliness”—See comment on V.3 in relation to this word. Here is a reminder that self-control, and endurance in the same, must spring from that essential desire to please God, not from the motive to impress fellow-man.

VERSE 7

“To godliness brotherly kindness”—Any believer engaged in practising and applying Peter’s progressive steps towards Christ-likeness should naturally develop brotherly kindness. He will become aware of his own shortcomings and weaknesses and will learn to “esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3). The word in Gr. is *phileo*. *Phileo* relates to that natural liking one for the other, developed by mutual interests or outlook on life. (See notes on 1 Peter 1:22.)

“Charity”—Gr. *agape*, the Divine love that aims to provide the greatest good for the other, even at personal cost, and self-sacrifice. This word is only found in Scripture, and apparently was unknown to normal Greek vocabulary (see notes on 1 Pet. 1:22). The manifestation of such love is the very apex of a life in Christ. *Agape*, says Paul, is “the bond of perfectness” or real maturity (Col. 3:14. See Matt. 5:43-48). Only when we have learned to fully comprehend the abundant grace that Yahweh extends to us from day to day, in spite of all our shortcomings, will we be able to

understand the meaning of this term, and learn to apply it to others. God would have us imitate the love He has manifested towards us by extending a similar love to others. He “commends” this attitude to our attention (Rom. 5:8). But do not let us mistake such “love” for the sickly sentimentality that passes current among men for “love.” Paul’s greatest chapter on the implications of *agape* is 1 Corinthians 13, but to those same believers, he also wrote: “The more I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Cor. 12:15). They completely misunderstood the true import of the word. The love that we experience from God, and the love that we profess to have for Him, should generate in us a desire to extend to others the same experience that we have had, and to manifest towards them the same Divine attribute that springs not from fleshly “feeling,” but from *epignosis*.

VERSE 8

“If these things be in you and abound”—The Greek here implies actual possession, and so the Diaglott renders it: “These things being in you and abounding.” Peter is teaching that these virtues must become part of one’s individual character, so that they will become his own, and when this happens, they will “abound,” or increase and multiply, for there can be no standing still in Christ. A true believer will advance from glory to glory (cp. 2 Cor. 3:18, 4:6).

“They make you that ye shall neither be”—Peter has already described the Word of God as the seed of Yahweh designed to produce fruit in those in whom it is implanted (1 Pet. 1:23-25). His expressions in these verses show that care should be exercised that there should be proper growth.

“Barren”—The word in the Greek signifies “idle” or “inactive” as the margin renders it. The same word is rendered “idle” in 1 Tim. 5:13, and is indicative of a lazy person who refuses to work. Peter is exhorting us that where the virtues, stemming from faith, abound, they will not permit one to be idle

towards the *epignosis* or exact knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that he has received, but rather, by constantly looking into the reflective mirror of the Word, will be drawn thereby to imitate the virtues that are revealed more and more perfectly as he gazes into it. There is, therefore, such a thing as *epignosis* or exact-knowledge, and a development, or increase, of it. One who has attained unto the virtues already enumerated will not cease his study of the word, will not become idle in it, but will move towards a greater understanding of that fullness of knowledge that is found in Christ Jesus.

“Unfruitful in the knowledge”—

The R.V. renders this phrase, “unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The preposition *eis* signifies motion toward or unto an object. Where the qualities of vv.5-7 exist, a person will not become idle or unfruitful towards the exact-knowledge by which he is being drawn, as though he has all-knowledge and all-virtue, but rather will be active and fruitful, constantly adding to his understanding and his application of these virtues, moving ever onwards towards the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom are “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), and in whom “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). Thus does one, “increase in the *epignosis* of God” (Col. 1:10), and proceeds to “follow Paul as he also followed Christ.” “I follow after,” he wrote to the Philippians, “if that I may apprehend (to lay hold of as to possess as one’s own) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:9-14). *Epignosis*, exact-knowledge, will provide us with an understanding of Christ which will lead us to desire to increase in understanding, and constantly advance in the imitation of the virtues that such developing knowledge will reveal.

“Of our Lord Jesus Christ” — This title of the Lord was proclaimed by Peter during the course of his address at Pentecost: “Let all the house of Israel

know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). In our approach to the Father through the Son, it is appropriate to use the titles of the Lord as expressive of his status. It is also helpful to bear in mind what they signify. The name “Jesus” proclaims Yahweh’s purpose to save; “Lord” expresses his exaltation and authority; “Christ” proclaims that he was anointed of Yahweh to the position he holds.

VERSE 9

“He that lacketh these things is blind” — Gr. *tuphlos*, literally “smoky, misty, darkened.” (Cp. Rev. 3:17, where same word occurs.) His vision is clouded, he is shortsighted and cannot see the grand objective before him, nor the purpose of the knowledge of God. He wonders why it is necessary to study the Bible, and begins to philosophise from the viewpoint of the flesh. Thus he cannot see afar off, and “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18).

“Hath forgotten”—Where there is no conscious striving to develop “the new man,” where the word is laid on one side and never considered, a person soon forgets the privileged status that he has enjoyed in Christ. He forgets that he was “purged from his old sins” through baptism, and quickly slips back into the ways of the world, the moral and spiritual corruption that surrounds him on every side.

VERSE 10

“Wherefore the rather”—In view of the prevailing corruption that characterises the world about us (V.4), let us “give diligence” to make our calling sure.

“Give diligence” — i.e. “make haste” (see notes V.5).

“Your calling”—Gr. *klesin*, “invitation.” This invitation is found in the promises of God (V.4).

“And election”—The word signifies “selection.” (See 1 Thess. 1:4) God has selected those in Christ through the Gospel invitation (see John 6:44; Acts 15:14).

“Sure” — Though we are now called, and have embraced Christ in baptism, there is still uncertainty as to whether we shall find a place in the Kingdom of God. Abraham was justified by faith first, and afterwards by works (James 2:21-26). Both are necessary to make “sure” our inheritance in the Kingdom.

“If ye do these things”—These things cannot be done unless *epignosis* has become the dynamics of our spiritual life. Only an exact knowledge of the sufferings and victory of Jesus Christ, and a conviction that the power that worked so effectually in Christ will also work in us through the Word, can transform us to become “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves” (James 1:22).

VERSE 11

“An entrance” — Gr. *eisodos*, compounded of *eis* (see note on V.8), and *hodos*, “way,” thus signifying “a way into.” That way is found through following the Good Shepherd (John 14:6), and is described by Paul as “a new and living way” provided by Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:19-20).

What is this way? The words in Hebrews 10:20 are literally rendered: “a newly slain and yet living way,” relating to the sacrificial death and resurrection of the Lord. His death indicated what we must do (see Gal. 5:24); and his resurrection points to the newness of life in which we should walk (Rom. 6:1-4). If we follow along that way, it will lead to an inheritance into the glory of the Kingdom by the bestowal of Divine nature.

“Shall be ministered” — Gr. *epichoregeo*, “to furnish abundantly.” This same word is rendered “add” in V.5. Thus Peter teaches: if we furnish abundantly—so will God! The R.V. renders: “For this shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance. . .” If we do our best to develop the virtues enumerated above, God will richly respond according to the measure that we have laboured (Cp. Luke 19:12-19).

“Into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” — The Kingdom that Christ will establish on earth shall endure to all eternity though divided into various epochs of time. Christ, in company with the glorious elect will reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20:6), at which time the Kingdom will be delivered up unto the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Therefore, whilst the Kingdom shall have “no end” (Luke 1:33), it shall go through various epochs and stages to the final glory.

The Availability of the Revelation — Vv. 12-15

Having outlined the importance of a full or exact knowledge of the things of Jesus Christ, and emphasised the need to apply it, Peter now expresses his anxious desire that his readers may ever have access to such and therefore expresses his determination to make it available to them.

VERSE 12

“I will not be negligent”—R.V. renders: “I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things.” The need has been stressed (Vv. 3-11), and Peter, as a good shepherd of the flock, is ready to provide for it.

“To put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them” — In view of the importance of the divine revelation, Peter extended himself to record it on paper, so that his readers might constantly have recourse to the written word. Mankind is liable to forget the spoken word, and there is no natural law compelling one to seek divine truth. When the Word is neglected its influence is not felt. Peter realised that though his readers might then be established in the truth, there was need for them to be continuously absorbing it. He wrote his epistles that believers might always have the word to guide them.

“Be established” — Gr. *sterizo*, from *sterix*, “a prop.” The truth is designed to act as a prop, establishing us by its principles and precepts. Jesus told Peter: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). This change

in Peter took place when he attained unto a full understanding in regard to the purpose and power of Yahweh. The word "strengthen" in Lk. 22:32 is the same as "established." Thus Peter was fulfilling now the request of the Lord, and by his instruction, strengthening his brethren, as a prop may strengthen a fence.

"In the present truth" — Peter assumed that his readers were soundly based on the truth, but he also realised that there was need to keep them so. His epistle is designed to provide a means of always keeping such matters in remembrance.

VERSE 13

"Yea, I think it meet" — Peter believed that it was fitting for him as an apostle and shepherd of the flock to provide this written instruction. He felt this need even more so as the close of his life drew near.

"As I am in this tabernacle" — The word "tabernacle" signifies "a tent," that is, a temporary dwelling of short duration. That is how the Apostles looked upon life, whilst, at the same time, they set their spiritual gaze upon the permanent glory set before them (2 Cor. 4:18-5:1).

"To stir you up by putting you in remembrance" — These words are repeated from v. 12, expressing the urgency the Apostle felt. As the close of life draws near, a true shepherd realises the need to arouse the minds of others to a diligent performance of what is required.

VERSE 14

"Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle" — R.V. renders: "Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly." Peter knew that he was to die soon; and tradition has it that he was put to death during the persecution of Nero. As Nero died in A.D. 68, and as this Epistle was probably written some time after A.D. 60, only a short time was left before Peter's course would be completed.

"Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me" — Peter could not forget the touching interview he had had with the Lord, recorded in John 21; he had already referred to it in 1 Peter 5:2. Previous to that time he had boasted of his great love for the Lord, claiming it to be greater than that of the other disciples; but then, when the Lord enquired of him "Lovest thou me more than these?" Peter, recalling the tragic circumstances of his threefold denial, could but humbly reply: "Thou knowest that I love thee." But the word for "love" which Peter used was different to that used by Christ. Christ had used the word *agapao* signifying a Divine, sacrificial love; Peter had answered with the word *phileo* indicating the lesser love of personal affection; for he doubtless felt unworthy of the greater love. Three times the Lord asked a similar question with slight, but highly significant variations, to receive the same reply. On the third occasion, however, he, too, used the word *phileo*, and indicated by his rejoinder to Peter's answer, the direction in which that personal feeling of affection should be manifested. But recognising, in the humility of Peter, that he had indeed been converted, the Lord went on to prophesy the way in which the Apostle would attain unto the greater love, and would ultimately seal a dedicated life of service in a death that would glorify God (John 21:18-19). It is to this prediction that Peter now makes reference, for he realised that the time was at hand.

VERSE 15

"I will endeavour that ye may be able to have these things always in remembrance" — Peter expresses his intention to arrange to have some permanent record of the Divine revelation relating to Christ for the benefit of his readers, so that even after his death they could refer to it. It is strongly suggested that Mark wrote his Gospel at the instigation of Peter who con-

verted him (1 Pet. 5:13), as it is also suggested that Luke wrote his at the instigation of his travelling companion and mentor, the Apostle Paul. But Peter is anxious, not merely that these things should be recorded in a book, but rather that they should be ever in mind. "always in remembrance." It is significant that Peter, in introducing the incident of the Transfiguration, as he does, uses two words that are likewise applied to it: "tabernacle" and "decease" (Luke 9:31). On the Mount, Peter had desired to make three tabernacles: for Moses, Elijah and the Lord, that he might retain the glory that he had witnessed; and then he heard Moses and Elijah speaking of the "decease" (or exodus) that Christ would accomplish at Jerusalem. This decease is not merely death, but the way of escape for sinning humanity that was accomplished through the death of the Lord. It was his exodus, and that of his followers, from the state of mortality to which they are heir, to the glory of the Age to come.

The Authenticity of the Revelation — Vv. 16-21

Peter now desires to impress his readers with the absolute reliability of the Revelation, so that they may study and absorb it with every confidence. He presents, first of all, his own personal testimony, and then draws attention to the veracity of the prophetic Scriptures.

VERSE 16

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables"—Not like the pagan fables of gods whom no one saw and who had no real substance; nor the empty formalism of Judaism which led away from the power of exact knowledge.

"The power"—*Dunamis*. See note v.3.

"Coming" — Greek, *parousia*, from *para*, with, and *ousia*, being. The word does not necessarily signify "coming" in the sense of ar-

iving, but, rather, presence. In Phil. 2:12 it is translated "presence," where it is set in contrast to Paul's *apousia* or absence. Of course, if one is absent from a place, he must arrive there before his presence will be known, so that sometimes, the word has the sense of arriving and being present. The "coming," concerning which Peter wrote, was the presence of the Lord in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, and not his arrival from some other sphere.

But *parousia* also denotes presence in an official capacity. Moulton & Milligan, joint authors of the book, *Vocabulary Of The Greek New Testament* write: "What, however, more especially concerns us in connection with the N.T. usage of *parousia* is the quasi-technical force of the word from Ptolemaic times onwards to denote the 'visit' of a King, Emperor, or other person in authority; the official character of the 'visit' being further emphasised by the taxes or payments that were exacted to make preparations for it." Papyri are cited to show that Christians were conversant with this use of the word, so that the word signified Christ's presence as a King. Hence Peter declared: "we were eyewitnesses of his majesty".

"Were eyewitnesses"—Peter is referring to the transfiguration of the Lord as recorded in Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9:28.

"His majesty"—Greek *megaleiotes*, signifying splendor, magnificence. It is translated "magnificence" in Acts 19:27, and "mighty power" in Luke 9:43, which incident followed immediately after the Transfiguration. In the Greek papyri writings, the word is frequently used as a ceremonial title. Jesus told his disciples that some of them would "see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). The word translated "kingdom" can signify "royal majesty," and is so rendered by the Diaglott. The three selected Apostles saw Christ's royal majesty on the mountain when he was transfigured before them in company with the glorified Moses and Elijah, and they heard the Divine Voice proclaiming Yahweh's approbation of His Son.

They heard him discoursing with the other two of the "decease" (lit. "exodus") he would accomplish in Jerusalem, by which was meant, not merely his death, but his resurrection also, and the work of redemption that would be accomplished thereby.

VERSE 17

"He received from the Father honor and glory"—The whole transaction on the Mount: the glory encompassing the Lord, the representative figures of Moses and Elijah portraying the Law and the Prophets (and perhaps the dead and living saints gathered to him at his coming), the sounding forth of the Divine approbation, and the awe-stricken, fearful, wondering Apostles, was all a picture of the future majesty, glory and coming of the Lord Jesus in power. It was for Peter a personal, tremendous, eye-witness confirmation of all Christ is and will be. The "honor" relates to the approving Voice of Yahweh which was then heard, and the "glory" to the majesty that pervaded Christ's person.

"A voice from the excellent glory"—Greek *Megaloprepes*, signifying "magnificent, majestic, that which is befitting a great man." From *mezas*, "great," and *prepo*, "fitting, or becoming." The glory, therefore, was one of magnificence, befitting the occasion and the person. The bright cloud that overshadowed the mountain (Mark 9:7) was like the Shekinah glory which shone above the Mercy Seat, and out of which the Voice of Yahweh was occasionally heard.

"This is My beloved Son" — See Matt. 3:17; 17:5. The *Diaglott*, following the Vatican mss. renders "This is My Son, the Beloved". This connects the Lord with those prophecies of the greater David (the Beloved) who is to come. See Ezek. 34:24. The word *beloved* signifies one who is the subject of the *agape* love of God. The declaration is made three times; first proclaiming Jesus as Prophet (Matt. 3:17); next as Priest (Matt. 17:5); finally as King (Psalm 2:7).

VERSE 18

"This voice we heard"—So there is no room for doubt; the Apostles had heard and seen for themselves and therefore testified with the assurance of a first-hand witness.

"Which came from heaven" — The occasion is recorded in Matt. 17:5.

"The holy mount" — The Mount of Transfiguration was probably Mount Hermon. It is called "holy" because it was then set aside for Divine use.

VERSE 19

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy"—The Greek word *bebaios* signifies "confirmed." The *Diaglott* renders it as "more confirmed." The word is translated "confirmed" in 1 Cor. 1:6; Heb. 2:3; Mk. 16:20, and "established" in 2 Cor. 1:21; Col. 2:7. The R.V. renders: "We have the word of prophecy made more sure." The word of prophecy, incorporating the promises of God, was "confirmed" by the offering of the Lord Jesus which placed the seal of certainty upon what had been promised or predicted (Rom. 15:8). Prophecy had declared that Yahweh would provide a Saviour in whom He would delight (Isa. 42:1), and the fulfilment of this had been confirmed by the Voice heard on the Mount, as well as by resurrection of the Lord. By these means the word of prophecy had thorough confirmation, and can be accepted with the greatest confidence in its veracity.

"Ye do well that ye take heed" —They should heed the Word of Prophecy as the Apostles were compelled to hearken to the Voice on the Mount. As that Voice created a feeling of awe and wonderment in them, so should the Word of prophecy in those who heed it.

"In your hearts"—This is where that Word should find a lodgment, and where it should be heeded. It should be taken in and pondered, and should have its influence both on thought (within) as well as action (without).

"As unto," etc.—According to the Diaglott and the Companion Bible the words, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise," should be in parenthesis. We would then read: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed in your hearts—the balance of the verse being parenthetical. By thus reading (and it seems the most natural way so to do), Peter declares that we are awaiting the time when the day star shall arise (i.e. We are awaiting Christ's coming and not that we are awaiting the arising of the day star in our hearts.) It is the Word that should be in our hearts, whilst our spiritual vision should be on the look-out for the arising of the morning star.

"A light that shineth"—The word "light" is *luchnos*, and it signifies a portable hand lamp that is conveyed to different places. The allusion is to pilgrims on a dark and little known road, surrounded by obscurities, dangers, mysteries in the gloom that enshrouds them, but cheered and led on by the portable lamp that shows the way (cf. v. 11) during the night-time. That lamp, is the Word of Prophecy.

"A dark place"—The R.V. margin renders this as "squalid place." The word in the Greek is *auchmeros*, from *auchmos*, and signifies a drought produced by excessive heat (Vine). Old Testament prophecy speaks of a time of spiritual drought (Amos 8:11), and New Testament prophecy tells of the time when that drought shall cease for ever (Rev. 7:16). A drought caused by excessive heat would bring about a dry and dusty condition, that would aggravate the difficulties of the way. The figure suggested here is that of a dusty difficult track which one is traversing at night surrounded by unseen dangers. The track is illuminated by the portable hand lamp, but the weary, thirsty, fearful traveller anxiously awaits the coming of the dawn that will herald the

light of day.

"Until the day dawn"—Until the Sun of righteousness appears, to destroy the forces of darkness (Mal. 4:1-2. Isa. 60:1-2).

"The day star"—Greek, *Phosphoros*, signifying the Light-bearer, or the Light-bringer, and relating to the Lord Jesus, who is described as the Morning Star in Rev. 22:16. The morning star in the natural heavens, is the last star to remain in the sky before the full brilliance of the Sun is seen, and it therefore heralds the dawning of a new day. The appearance of the Lord Jesus to his elect will do just that as far as the new era is concerned. When that Light-bearer comes, there will be no longer any need for the "portable lamp" (Rev. 22:5), the word of prophecy, for the fulness of Divine light will completely destroy all darkness and render it unnecessary (Isa. 60:1-2). The word of prophecy will be fulfilled in the coming of the new day, so that to that time, the eyes of all the faithful turn (cp. No. 24:17).

VERSE 20

"Knowing this first" — Peter emphasised the matters he brought to their attention as being of primary importance; principles that should not be overlooked.

"No prophecy is of any private interpretation" — The church of Rome has used these words of Peter to claim that all interpretation of Scripture should be in accordance with the official pronouncement of the church as authorised by its leaders, But that is not Peter's meaning. The word "interpretation" can be better rendered "unloosing." Weymouth translates the phrase as "prophets' own prompting." Macknight renders it: "prophets' own invention." Brother Roberts: "private origination." Peter is teaching, therefore, that the word of Prophecy is Divinely inspired, and not the result of the prophets' own thoughts or prompting. In his first Epistle he declared that it was the "Spirit

of Christ" in them which was responsible for their predictions, and that they themselves had to seek into the meaning of the very words they uttered (1 Pet. 1:11-12). See also 1 Cor. 2:9-16. 2 Tim. 3:16.

VERSE 21

"Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man"—The margin renders this "came not at any time" by the will of man.

"Holy men of God"—The word "holy" signifies set apart for special use. In Ch. 3:2, Peter describes these men as "holy prophets" in contrast to the "false prophets" that were sometimes manifest among the people (Ch. 2:1). The Holy Spirit moved these men to utter the words they did (2 Sam. 23:2. Neh. 9:30. Luke 1:70. Acts 1:16. 3:18. Heb. 1:1. James 5:10), and when the impulse was upon them, they could not restrain the words they were induced to speak (Num. 22:38. Jer. 20:9).

"Were moved"—They were borne along or impelled by the Holy Spirit, and therefore did not speak according to their own wills. Yahweh declared: "I have spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes,

by the ministry of the prophets" (Hos. 12:10). But Micah spake of a time when this would cease, when Yahweh would no longer speak through the prophets, and "night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; the *sun shall go down over the prophets*, and the day shall be dark over them" (Mic. 3:6). That came to pass, during the long period of darkness, between Malachi and Matthew, when the open vision was no longer seen and the Voice of Yahweh was stilled. Then, with the appearance of John Baptist and the Lord Jesus, the Voice of Yahweh was again heard; the light was again seen, for as Zacharias declared: "The dayspring from on high hath visited us" (Luke 1:78). The early Ecclesias had their own schools of the prophets that ministered unto them (Eph. 4:11. 1 Cor. 14:3), but with the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, the sun again went down upon the prophets, and will remain thus, until the greatest of them all appears again as the glorious Light-bearer, the Morning Star and Sun of righteousness.

To that time we must look in hope.

CHAPTER 2

Divine Revelation - The Antidote to Doctrinal Corruption

Having set before his readers their high calling (Ch. 1:1-11), and drawn their attention to the importance of the "exact knowledge" they should ever bring to mind (Ch. 1:12-21), Peter now warns them of an apostasy from within which would challenge the very "epignosis" to which he had made reference. This apostasy would have the inevitable effect of reversing the influence of "exact knowledge", so that instead of revealing in those who embraced it the virtues of which he has been writing, it would lead to complete moral depravity, that would result in swift destruction of all forms of godliness. All this would stem from false teachers who would arise from among the people. In this chapter, therefore, he warns against the enemy within, as in his first Epistle he had warned against the enemy without. He draws upon examples from Israel's history to show how seductive and destructive such influences would be, and clearly shows that such challenges are far more difficult to counter than are trials and persecutions from without. This chapter should be compared with the Epistle of Jude, for Peter predicted what Jude saw developing.

The Certainty of Apostasy — Vv. 1-3

To be forewarned is to be fore-armed. That is the purpose of Peter's prophetic chapter speaking of an apostasy against the faith that would arise. By this information, his readers were apprised of problems that would surely arise, and encouraged to make due preparations for a trial of faith that would challenge the Truth more than the active persecution of the brutal Nero.

VERSE 1

"But there were false prophets also among the people" — Peter introduces the conjunction *But* as a note of contrast with the concluding statements of the previous chapter. Therein he had emphasised the importance of prophecy, stating that it had been given by divine

revelation. Now he warns that in the past there had been those who had claimed to speak by the inspiration of God, but were false prophets (e.g. Jer. 29), leading the people astray.

"There shall be false teachers among you"—A warning note such as this would surely cause his readers to look inwardly, lest they themselves were adversely affected by wrong principles or precepts. Paul also warned of false teachers that would arise from among the very communities that were then paying him the greatest respect. "Of your own selves," he told the Ephesian elders, "shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch..." (Acts 20:29. See also 1 Tim. 4:1-3. 2 Tim. 3:5. 4:1-4). The history of the Truth reveals that constant vigi-

lance is necessary if it is to be preserved in its doctrinal purity.

"Who privily shall bring in"—The Greek *pareisago* signifies "to bring in alongside." In the Greek papyri it is used of enemies within a movement secretly introducing enemies from without. The word "privily" suggests stealth. Peter therefore taught that these false teachers would gradually insinuate themselves in the Ecclesias, first teaching much that is true, and only slowly revealing the false ideas that would prove them to be traitors to the cause. Openly they would espouse the principles of Christ, but inwardly they would have mental reservations regarding certain doctrines that would develop into deadly error as time went on. An enemy who openly opposes truth is no real danger to the cause, for he will unite an Ecclesia against him; but the enemy within, who secretly and silently works like leaven against the Truth is one who will divide and break up an Ecclesia. Such an enemy, therefore, is to be feared as of the greatest danger to the healthy wellbeing of an Ecclesia.

"Damnable heresies"—The R.V. renders this as "destructive heresies," but destructive of what? The context shows, of the way of life in Christ. Paul taught that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33), or false doctrine has its effect upon the Christ way of life. For example, if we do not believe that Christ is coming, we will not make preparations to meet him; if we do not believe that baptism is essential, we will not submit to the act. Truth is designed to change us for the Kingdom, and essential doctrine is that form of teaching that has some impact upon our living. The heresies (or sects) to which Peter makes reference would be destructive of the way of life in Christ. The word in the Greek is *apoleia*, and signifies "loss of wellbeing, deterioration," so that what Peter is saying (and what he enlarges upon later in the chapter) is that these heresies (or sects) would be destructive of

the wellbeing of the Ecclesia and would lead to the moral deterioration of its members.

"Denying the Lord that bought them"—The very terms of this statement indicate that the false doctrine had relation to the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. Jude, who uses the same form of words (see v.4), relates the error to the doctrine of God manifestation which is connected with the atonement. Peter is evidently referring to the erroneous views that some would introduce relating to the person and sacrifice of Christ (see 2 John 7). The doctrine of substitution, which early became widespread throughout the Ecclesias, defeats the doctrine of personal sacrifice. If Jesus died instead of us, then there is no need for us to die; but Paul taught contrary to that (see Gal. 5:24). He taught that there is a need to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and to replace them with the attributes of Christ. Paul was opposed by some who misinterpreted the liberty of the Gospel as being licence, and set out to please themselves. They proclaimed the doctrine of "doing evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8). Having been delivered through Christ from the condemnation of the Law, they imagined that they were a law unto themselves, and that all restrictions for them had ceased. Thus they "denied (the right) of the Lord (or Master—R.V.) that bought them." Obsessed with the theory that "grace" would provide a cover for all sin, they gave themselves over to unstinted gratification of the flesh. Of these, Paul wrote, "their damnation is just." The true doctrine of the Atonement, not only reveals the mercy of God in forgiving sins, but His justness in demanding that sins be forsaken. These errorists, to whom Peter makes reference, denied that the Lord had any claim on them at all, forgetting that "he had bought them" (1 Cor. 6:20), and that as his slaves, they should perform his will. They were like slaves rebelling against their master.

"Bring upon themselves swift destruction"—The word "destruction," in the Greek, is the same as that translated "damnable" in this same verse. The false doctrines taught by these false teachers would be rapidly followed by deterioration of moral conduct destructive of every principle of righteousness in Christ Jesus. They would, therefore, swiftly bring upon themselves the moral deterioration resulting from their false teaching.

VERSE 2

"Many shall follow"—How sad it must have been for the Apostle to pen this statement. Were all his labors, and those of his fellow-apostles, to prove abortive? Were their efforts to be without lasting effect? Was their preaching a waste of time? If all Apostolic effort was aimed at merely founding Ecclesias, creating a personal following, or establishing a permanent movement, then it and all their endurance under trial and persecution would have been in vain; for the very ecclesias they established were soon to cease, and the "many" who then embraced the Truth were soon to be swayed therefrom by false teachers who would arise. The history of Israel pointed the lesson, and indicated that even as apostasy swept the nation, even as there had been "false prophets among the people," who challenged the sure word of prophecy spoken by men "moved by the holy spirit" (1 Pet. 1:21), so a repetition would follow the establishing of Gentile Ecclesias. Peter and his fellow-apostles, however, labored not for the present, but the future; not to build up personal prestige among men, or to create a permanent movement, but to win individuals for the Kingdom yet to be established. In this, their efforts will be crowned with success through those comparatively few who heed their message (see 1 Thess. 2:19). Meanwhile, Peter told his readers that "many" would be deflected from the Truth, and his prediction is a warning not to be adversely influenced by un-

godly majorities, nor deferred by widespread defections.

"Their pernicious ways" — The margin renders this: "their lascivious ways," indicating that the espousal of false doctrine would be followed by wrong practice. There is a close connection between doctrine and practice, for good doctrine should have its complete manifestation in a changed way of life.

"The way of truth shall be evil spoken of"—These last three words are a translation of the Greek *blasphemeo*. The truth would be blasphemed through the evil practices of these errorists. Does not the divided and effete Christendom of today cause the Truth itself to be brought into disrepute by some who cannot discriminate between truth and error? How many have been turned out of the way of righteousness because of the distracting and contradictory doctrines of a Christendom astray from the Bible! The very inconsistencies of so-called Christians have brought the Bible itself into disrepute.

VERSE 3

"Through covetousness" — Covetousness is an unhealthy desire for material gain, or for present power and prestige. The so-called successors of Peter have followed the "covetous practices" to which he makes reference. The wealth lavished upon the so-called Peter's Cathedral in Rome is a case in point, and is condemned by the Apostle whose name has wrongly been applied to it.

"With feigned words"—The word in the Greek is *plastos* from *plasso*, "to mould" (similar to our word, plastic). Sycophants with silvery voice have ever sought to mould people to their own will and evil practices. We need to be on our guard against those who seek the good opinion of their fellows in time of controversy, and who hesitate to clearly state the Spirit's teaching, come what may. True is the Bible proverb: "Open rebuke

is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. 27:6). The sad end of Judas emphasises the truth of the latter. It is the Word that should mould us (2 Cor. 4:7), and not the voice of its expositors. Let us listen to them, but appeal to it.

"Make merchandise of you"—They serve religion because there is material gain, or personal prestige, to be obtained thereby. They are spiritual Canaanites (the word in the Hebrew signifies a trader) to be excluded from the Temple of Yahweh in the Age to come (Zech. 14:21), as the Lord drove out the money changers 1900 years ago. They are the predecessors of those whom the Apocalypse declares would trade in the "bodies and souls of men" (Rev. 18:13—mg). They are like the Romish clergy who have valued the forgiveness of sin at a price; or like the so-called Protestants who assess religion on a cash basis, and see its glory in splendid edifices, or in a large, affluent following.

"Whose judgment lingereth not"—Peter declares that Divine judgment thunders forth against such even now, and does not necessarily await the Judgment Seat. Past epochs of history demonstrate this. Israel was overthrown "through lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6), the lightstands of the early Ecclesias were removed because they did not "hearken to what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias" (Rev. 2, 3), and contemporary history demonstrates how the "wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6). Individuals, if they are responsible to the Judgment Seat of Christ, will be brought before it notwithstanding what they may have experienced in this life; but Divine judgment can be experienced by nations and movements now, irrespective as to personal judgment in the future. Thus Christ's warning message of judgment on the Ecclesias of Asia if they refused to repent was fulfilled; but judgment awaits those individuals who were responsible for

the conditions that then arose.

"Their damnation slumbereth not"—See notes on v.4. Their moral deterioration is made manifest very rapidly.

The Certainty of Judgment — Vv. 4-9

The Apostle advances three notable cases of Divine judgment of the past, all of which show how God punishes evil men but ultimately delivers the righteous. Peter's words comprise a warning, to those who might be led astray by wrong teaching, but encouragement for those who continue faithful.

VERSE 4

"The angels that sinned"—The term "angels" does not relate exclusively to heavenly beings, but also refers to mortal men set in authority in the Ecclesias (see Rev. 2:1, 8, 18, etc.), or appointed to a specific work. The word is translated "messenger" in Matt. 11:10. Mk. 1:2. Luke 7:24, 27. 9:52. Jas. 2:25, and obviously relates to mortal men. Peter is drawing attention to a well-known incident of Divine judgment, in which God spared not those who had been placed in authority. This could, and most likely does, relate to the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram recorded in Num. 16. Moved by personal pride, and discontented with their lot, these men who had been set high in authority, affected other "famous princes of the assembly" (the Hebrew word for Ecclesia), and accused Moses and Aaron of "taking too much" upon them. Yahweh vindicated His chosen leader and high-priest however, and punished the rebellious in unique fashion: "the earth opened her mouth" and "swallowed up" all the rebels and those that appertained unto them, and then closed itself over them. It was a manifestation of Divine judgment that vindicated the Divine authority. And yet there was careful discrimination in punishment, for though the families of most of the rebels suffered with

their fathers, the children of Korah were saved, to ultimately rise to prominence in the line of Kohath and to occupy positions of importance in the service of Yahweh. Samuel the prophet, and Heman the singer, were among the honored descendants of Korah the rebel (1 Chron. 6:33-37). Some of the Psalms were dedicated to the sons of Korah (Pss. 42, 44-49, 84, 85, etc.), for his descendants were organised as singers in the Temple (1 Chron. 15:17). Others were made porters at its gates (1 Chron. 9:19, 26:19), and bakers for the sanctuary (1 Chron. 9:31-32). Thus, whereas the father was held in dishonor, the sons rose to fame. Evidently the family of Korah refused to follow their father in his rebellion (see Num. 26:11), and Yahweh, who is both merciful and just, delivered them out of the judgment that involved the disobedient. This well-known incident in Israel's history points the lesson Peter is emphasising: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. 2:9).

Peter's first example, therefore, shows some of the pernicious effects that can stem from fleshly pride and ambition, whilst it also shows that God is merciful in judgment.

"Cast them down to hell"—The word "hell" is the Greek word *tartaroo*. From this is derived the Greek word *tartarus*, which the Greeks understood as a subterranean place of darkness where individuals were held pending judgment. In the case of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the earth opened to swallow up both them and those who appertained unto them (Num. 16:29-32). In this way they were consigned to *tartarus*, or the pit formed by the opening of the earth, and there buried awaiting the Judgment day.

"Chains of darkness"—The R.V. renders this as "pits" in accordance with the oldest manuscripts, instead

of "chains" or "cords" as the A.V. The word *seiros* signifies an underground granary, which certainly answers to the judgment described in Numbers 16:33.

"Reserved unto judgment" —

These rebellious princes in Israel, who despised the positions of responsibility granted them, and denied the right of Moses to exercise authority over them, will yet be brought forth from their graves and arraigned before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

VERSE 5

"Spared not the old world"—

This next example warns against the evils of unbelief, such as develops out of pride. It therefore naturally follows the first example given though it is chronologically out of sequence. The sons of God of the antediluvian world completely destroyed the barrier of separateness that God had established between them and the sons of Cain, and imitated the example of their ungodly contemporaries, joining with them in ways that were forbidden (Gen. 6:1). This led to complete apostasy, so that the way of righteousness was corrupted. Meanwhile widespread evil and violence swept mankind (Gen. 6) until God would tolerate the growing wickedness no longer, and overwhelmed that civilisation by a disastrous flood.

"Saved Noah"—His faithfulness contrasted with the lack of faith of the sons of God contemporary with him. In his salvation the principle is established that the Judge of all the earth will do right. See Peter's comments in 1st Epistle 3:20, and notes thereon.

"The eighth person"—Enoch was the seventh from Adam (Jude 14), and Noah is here styled "the eighth." In fact, he was not the eighth generation from Adam, but the tenth. Why is he styled the eighth here? The R.V. renders it: "Noah with seven others," which expresses a fact, but not what Peter wrote. It is claimed, however, that the idiom of classical

Greek sometimes requires that such an expression be so rendered. But did Peter write in classical Greek? It has been suggested otherwise. There is a way of understanding this passage as it stands in its literal form (see Diaglott), and that is by discerning the spiritual significance of the number eight. As "five" stands for grace, and "seven" stands for completion, so "eight" stands for spirituality. Circumcision took place on the eighth day, and was the token of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17). It spake of the denial, or cutting off of flesh, that God may be honored. In that sense, Noah was truly an "eighth" person, for his family alone repudiated the flesh, at that time to serve God. His preaching brought plainly home to the people what was required of them, and what would happen if they refused the message of God; and because the world rejected his message it was politically, socially and ecclesiastically circumcised, or cut off. Noah and his family were saved because they were circumcised in heart (Rom. 2:29. Col. 2:11).

"A preacher of righteousness"—Hebrews 11:7 declares that he saved his house, condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. He was thus like Abraham, who "believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." Noah's justification, or righteousness, was by faith, and it was this method of salvation that he preached to the people, and particularly to his fellow "sons of God" whose eyes had been blinded to realities through their mad pursuit of material wellbeing. Noah preached, but few heeded, and fewer still applied the principles he stressed, so that finally, the flood of which he warned, swept to destruction an unheeding world. Yet many of those who were destroyed had possessed the same privileged standing in the sight of God as had Noah. Possibly millions of the sons of God perished in that flood, a grim warning for today (Matt. 24: 37-42).

"Bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" — In antediluvian times, the moral world deteriorated to a completely ungodly state. Even the "sons of God" were found in that condition. Only Noah and his family remained separate and righteous. So God overwhelmed "the world of the ungodly" with a Flood. We can expect a repetition of those conditions, for Christ warned that "as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26). He spoke of "days" plural, for A.D. 70 was a "Day of the Lord" as will also be his second advent. It will be noted, from Luke 17:27-28, that the things against which Christ warned are activities that are legitimate in themselves, such as eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting and building. Where the Sons of God failed was in the order of their priorities. They gave greater attention to those things than to the Truth, and so were classed among "the ungodly". Christ warned that at the time of his coming a similar condition of things will prevail. We need to heed his warning, and take steps to imitate faithful Noah and his family as the "Day of the Lord" approaches.

VERSE 6

"Sodom and Gomorrha"—These cities are noted for gross immorality, and such an utterly depraved way of life as broke every law of restraint (Gen. 13:13). This led to the most vile sexual extremes and perversions (Rom. 1:27), which are sadly becoming characteristic of these times, so that even the sin to which Sodom has given its name is now becoming more commonly and openly practiced, and legally condoned in many parts of the world; even by some religious groups. Thus, today, on a scale never known to history — with greed, brutality, beastliness, and criminal instincts in the ascendancy, the history of Sodom is being repeated, and the world is heading towards a terrible crisis. Sodom's sin was not merely immorality, but also their attitude towards it (Isa. 3:9); for immorality was openly practised in the city without any shame or attempt to

hide it. The people openly supported the wicked in opposition to the righteous (Jer. 23:14), even as the world does today. The sin of Sodom was basically fleshly pride induced by "fulness of bread and abundance of idleness" (Ezek. 16:49). This is all typical of modern conditions, and should constitute a warning to those who would try and live Godly lives in an evil environment. Such can take comfort from the words of Peter: "The Lord knoweth . . ."

"Into ashes condemned them with an overthrow"—Water destroyed civilisation in the days of Noah, and fire in the days of Lot. The destruction of these two cities was so remarkable as to make evident that it was divine judgment and punishment of the people's conduct.

"Making them an ensample"—The destruction of Sodom is referred to about twenty times in Scripture in this way; indicating the significance of the example. We noted above, that if it is accepted that "the angels that sinned" refer to the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, then Peter has not listed his examples in their chronological order, but rather to show the development of iniquity. Pride and ambition dominated the companions of Korah in their opposition to Moses, and they opposed their God-appointed leader, rather than God's open word. The antediluvians, however, had descended a step further, for they were impatient of the Divine revelation itself. The third example draws attention to a people completely hardened in sin, whose blindness of heart to God and His ways found expression in the most vile conduct. Peter's examples in sequence, therefore, illustrate that fleshly pride and ambition can lead to rejection of God's word, which, in turn, will result in moral depravity.

"Unto those that after should live ungodly"—The moral decline in the case of the examples thus cited, together with the judgment that was poured out upon them, constitute warnings to those whom Peter predicted would turn from

the Truth.

VERSE 7

"Delivered just Lot"—God is not only just, but merciful. This is shown in every one of the cases of punishment on the wicked cited by Peter, for in each case, the righteous were saved out of the destruction. Even Lot who had deserted Abraham was saved, and saved because, in spite of his defection, he had been justified by subsequent conduct. There is great encouragement in that, as Peter himself might have found, as he considered his own denial of the Lord, but subsequent righteous conduct. Abraham had prayed for the righteous in Sodom on the grounds that the righteous Judge of all the earth would not "slay the righteous with the wicked" (Gen. 18:23-33). What constitutes a "righteous" person? Abraham himself provides an answer, for he "believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). Lot was "just" or "righteous," not in leaving Abraham, but in retaining his belief in God, and his sense of true spiritual values in spite of the evil environment into which his own folly had brought him. Because Lot believed, or showed faith in God, he was justified. Genesis 19:16 states, "Yahweh being merciful unto him, they (the angels) brought him forth, and set him without the city." The word "just" signifies one observant of the right rules of conduct. Lot was just in that way, and the impending crisis on the city brought vividly to his mind, his own folly in having become involved in such a place.

"Vexed"—Greek, *kataponeo*, "to exhaust with labor, afflict with evil." Lot became worn out trying to preserve his spiritual integrity, and that of his family, from the evil conditions that surrounded them. He viewed with horror the moral depravity of the people, and strove to warn them of the folly of their ways. Unfortunately for him, and probably contributing to the vexation he experienced, his children had contracted alliances

that led to marriage with the Sodomites, and his anxious efforts to help and guide them into paths of righteousness (see Gen. 19:14), doubtless played their part in wearing him out. All this could have been avoided if he had remained with Abraham.

"The filthy conversation of the wicked"—The Diaglott renders this: "The lewd conduct of the lawless," for the word "conversation" signifies "conduct." The depraved moral conditions of Sodom are described in Genesis 19, and were such as to greatly disturb Lot. He doubtless feared for his family, the members of which were becoming more and more involved with the inhabitants of the city.

VERSE 8

"For that righteous man" — See comments v. 7. Lot was righteous inasmuch as he did not himself descend to the moral declension of his contemporaries, and was saved through the intervention of Abraham (Gen. 19:29). But his action in taking his family and associates into the environment of wicked Sodom is not thereby justified. A righteous man is one who strives to live correctly, and whose sins are forgiven; and in that sense the term can apply to Lot.

"Dwelling among them" — To "dwell" is to set up permanent abode, and this Lot did in Sodom. His status thus contrasted to that of Abraham who remained "a stranger and a pilgrim in the land" (Heb. 11). The six steps in the decline of Lot leading to this end are clearly defined in the Genesis narrative: 1—Strife between his herdsmen and those of Abraham (Gen. 13:7); 2—Envy for the lush plains of Jordan (v. 10); 3—A choice that meant deserting Abraham (v. 11); 4—Drawing nigh to the wicked cities (vv. 12-13); 5—Removing into the city itself (Gen. 14:12); 6—Sitting in the gate as a citizen, perhaps a ruler (Gen. 19:1). Drawn into this ungodly environment, and remaining therein in spite of the vexation he experienced, the inevitable end was tragedv.

"In seeing and hearing" — Having moved into the evil environment of Sodom, Lot was tormented by the gross conduct of the people, and their depraved conversation. He was deeply troubled by what he saw as well as what he heard. There is a repetition of Sodomitic times today, and through the medium of television the gross conduct and depraved conversation of the modern abandoned world are brought into the homes of those who indulge in it. Saints need to beware of these influences and put them far from them.

"Vexed his soul from day to day" — In this verse, the word "vexed" is different from that of v. 7. There it signifies to become worn out with labor; here, however, the word is *basanizo*, and means to "torment, to torture." Lot was tormented, day after day, as he observed the unlawful deeds of the Sodomites, and doubtless blamed himself for taking his family into such an environment. The words are in the active tense, implying that he tormented himself, probably meditating upon his own culpability in the selfish choice he made in leaving Abram.

"With their unlawful deeds" — In their depraved conduct, the people of Sodom broke every law of restraint whether of God or man. So also do men of the world today. Practices are permitted which were once treated as criminal, whereas insistence upon God's ways is set aside as repressive. The world is hastening on to its destructive judgment.

VERSE 9

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" —The salvation granted the children of Korah, faithful Noah, and righteous Lot exhibit the principle that God is both just and merciful. In the case of the first, Yahweh made careful discrimination; in the case of the second, his faith saved him (Heb. 11:7); in the case of the third, the prayers of Abraham blended with his own acceptance of God's way, to obtain for him mercy. There is a vital contrast between the examples of Noah and Lot, however, inasmuch as

the former saved his house as well (Heb 11:7), whereas Lot's wife and part of his family perished in the destruction that rained down upon Sodom. Peter has very carefully selected his examples, and there is surely in this an exhortation to avoid the evil environment which the world offers, recognising that though we may be able to resist it, those dependent upon us for guidance may not be able to do so.

The word "temptations," means both to test and to tempt. It is used in both ways in Scripture, and the context here suggests that both ways are meant. The Lord can deliver the Godly out of both trials and temptations if they draw from Him the strength that is available (Phil. 4:13. 1 Cor. 10:13). Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13), and so taught them to recognise how frail is the flesh, how easily it succumbs to evil, and how dependent it is upon the help of God if one is to reveal those qualities in which God finds pleasure.

"To reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment"—See Rom. 2:6-16.

The Nature Of The Apostasy— Vv. 10-16.

Wrong doctrine would lead to wrong living, resulting in greater condemnation and judgment.

VERSE 10

"Chiefly"—The idea is "more especially." Peter has written of punishment to be meted out in the day of judgment, and now shows that there will be gradations of such. Where wrong doctrine has been followed by wrong living, the greater punishment will be experienced (Luke 12:47-48).

"That walk after the flesh"—See Ch. 3:3. Jude 16. Gal. 5:16. They who walk after the flesh will reap what alone the flesh can provide—corruption. See Gal. 6:7-8.

"The lust of uncleanness"—The

word used by Peter (*miasmos*) is not the usual one used for "uncleanness," but is a word signifying "defile," "pollute," "stain," etc. The verb is used of ceremonial defilement as under the Law (John 18:28), and is found in the Septuagint in such places as Lev. 22:5, 2. Num. 19: 13, etc. To "walk after the flesh," is to gratify its lusts, and this will bring moral pollution, even as to touch a leper under the Law brought ceremonial defilement.

"They despise government" — They please themselves in walking after the flesh, and they repudiate all forms of restriction. The word rendered government is *kurios*, and signifies "lordship," the implication being that the false teachers referred to would manifest a contempt for all forms of discipline as imposed by those set above them, whether it be the Lord Jesus himself, or his qualified apostles.

"Presumptuous" — A further characteristic of these "false teachers." They would be bold, daring, headstrong.

"Self-willed"—They would be self sufficient, and governed only by the opinions of self.

"They speak evil"—Here the word is *blasphemeo* as in v. 2.

"Dignities"—The word in the Greek is *doxa*, and relates to that which should command respect and praise, especially teaching. These false teachers, therefore, would not only follow the flesh and please themselves in what they did, but they would blaspheme the teaching of the truth (see v. 12).

VERSE 11

"Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might"—See notes on Jude 9. Despite the fact that angels have great power and authority, and might well condemn the adversaries of the truth for their words and actions, they do not bring a railing accusation against them, leaving it to the Judge to do what is right. On the other hand, the false teachers

would indulge in violent words and actions of condemnation and blasphemy in a most unseemly manner. They would govern by the tongue, as illustrated in Psalm 12:3-4. How we need to beware the fire of the tongue (see James 3:6-8)!

"Bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord" — The Greek signifies, "*bring not blasphemous or reproachful condemnation*". The angels referred to avoided all scurrilous and violent language; simply stating facts as they were. The reference is to the record of Zech. 3:2 which is expounded at length in our comments on Jude 9.

VERSE 12

"As natural brute beasts"—The Greek word (*aloga*) signifies "irrational, without reason," and thus men moved only by instinct or fleshly lusts. The "false teachers" would be fierce and unrelenting as savage beasts, and would indulge the flesh in the most degrading manner (see v. 22). The R.V. renders: "born mere animals."

"Made to be taken and destroyed" — The Diaglott renders: "made for capture and slaughter." That is all that these false teachers are worth! They cannot be trained or tamed, for they are like "brute beasts" which either must be killed or will kill.

"Speak evil of the things they understand not" — They would speak evil of the Gospel, of the *epignosis*, which is the only antidote to moral and doctrinal corruption, and which should really command respect and praise, as indicated in v. 10.

"Shall utterly perish in their own corruption"—They shall perish because they remain "in" this state, and will not leave it despite all the appeal to knowledge and reason.

VERSE 13

"Shall receive the reward of unrighteousness"—The traitor Judas received the "reward of unrighteousness," (Acts 1:18), and these false teachers would follow in his

steps. "Woe unto the wicked," declared Isaiah (Ch. 3:11), "it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Paul taught, "the wages of sin is death." As the wicked act, so they shall receive; whereas grace or Divine favor will add to the reward of the righteous. Note the constant exhortation of the Spirit—Rom. 2:6-9. Phil. 3:19. 2 Tim. 4:14. Heb. 2:2-3. Jude 12.

"They count it pleasure to riot"—The Greek word (*truphe*—riot) signifies soft, effeminate, luxurious living. Peter implies that these false teachers would not work for a living, either for the Truth or otherwise, but would live luxuriously off the money of those who would be led astray by their false doctrine, as they "made merchandise," or gain of them (v. 3).

"In the day time"—They would "riot" shamelessly, though all might see them; they would be completely indifferent to public opinion of them.

"Spots and blemishes"—The design of the Lord Jesus is the development of an Ecclesia "without spot" or blemish (Eph. 5:27). To that end, he died on the stake, thus ensuring the forgiveness of sins for his bride. By baptism into him, members of that bride put on a garment that is spotless (Gal. 3:27), but it is then their responsibility to keep it unspotted by avoiding sin, or when it is committed, recognising it and seeking forgiveness of it (Rev. 3:4). Peter was anxious that those who read his epistle "may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14), having avoided the pollutions of the flesh (2 Pet. 2:10). As such they would reflect the attributes of the unspotted lamb (1 Pet. 1:19). In contrast, however, these false teachers would be as spots and blemishes in the ecclesia (see also Jude 23).

"Sporting themselves"—The R.V. has "revelling in their deceivings," but the best texts instead of *apatais* ("deceivings") have *agapais*, "love feasts" as in Jude 12. What

was a "love feast"? Reference is made to these "love feasts" in 1 Cor. 11:17-22, where Paul rebukes the brethren for the way in which they ate the "Lord's supper." The "Lord's supper" is to be distinguished from the communion of bread and wine, for it was "after supper" (Luke 22:20) that this was celebrated. For Jews, supper was the chief meal of the day, and when the Lord met with his disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem, they first partook of this main meal, and then afterwards, the communion of bread and wine, expressing the symbols of his Passover.

From this fact, arose the custom in Ecclesias for brethren to meet together to do likewise. Firstly, they had a communal supper together, bringing their own provisions for that purpose, and then, afterwards, they celebrated the Lord's death by the Ecclesial meeting and the partaking of bread and wine. These communal suppers became known as *agapais* or "love feasts" from *agape* the Greek word for "love." But in the gatherings in Corinth these feasts had degenerated into unseemly orgies. The wealthy were bringing lavish provisions, and flaunting them before the meagre food of the poor; there was manifested a discrimination of classes so that the very principle of a "love feast" was forgotten. And all this was leading to such division in the Ecclesia that Paul warned strongly against the practice, advising the brethren to eat and drink at home (1 Cor. 11:22), and limit the eating at the gatherings of the brethren to the tokens of the death of Jesus: the bread and wine.

In flagrant rejection of the Apostolic injunction, the false teachers, referred to by Peter, would encourage the continuance of these orgies, and themselves would take the lead in "revellings" at such meetings.

"While they feast with you"—The word for "feast" signifies to feast sumptuously, a practice against which Paul warns in 1

Cor. 11:21. To the Philippian brethren he wrote of some whom he described as the "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). Peter's false teachers, were of that class.

VERSE 14

"Having eyes full of adultery"—The margin has: "having eyes full of an adulteress," indicating that these false teachers would not only be noted for gluttony, but also sexual depravity. The language of Peter recalls that of Christ in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:28), and presents a vivid picture of a man so depraved that he cannot see a woman without having lascivious thoughts towards her. The great Apostasy is itself an adulteress (Rev. 17:5), and the spiritual vision of its teachers is "full" of her, their great objective being to serve her. The history of the church, particularly that of Rome, reveals that many of its leaders have been guilty of gross immorality. Many of the popes had illegitimate children, and the Church of England came into existence through the desire of King Henry VIII for divorce!

"Cannot cease from sin"—They are completely "unrestrained" (see Diaglott) in their sin. Contrast with 1 Pet. 4:1: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

"Beguiling unstable souls"—The smug profession of Christianity that these false teachers would assume, and the fine words in which they would express their meaningless platitudes, would act as a cloak for their evil actions and pernicious influence, and would beguile "unstable souls." They would propound the principle, "Do as I say, not as I do," presenting it as an expression of humility and charity, whereas in fact it would denote that the speaker intended to do as he pleased, whilst demanding that his hearers act differently. This was not Paul's method; he exhorted the brethren to follow

him as he followed Christ, and wrote: "watch those who are thus walking, as you have us for a pattern" (Phil. 3:17). This is the high standard demanded of the truth, but denied by these false teachers.

"An heart exercised with covetous practices"—Covetousness is the desire to have more, and the Greek word here used is always used in a bad sense, expressing the idea of evil, selfish desires. This is the third vice laid to the charge of these false teachers. They would be "trained in covetousness," their hearts would be "exercised" in these practices. The expression Peter uses likens them to athletes exercising in a gymnasium, training that they might devise ways to gain more and more. Their lives would be devoted to material advantage at the expense of the Truth, and all their efforts would be bent to that end. It is shocking to read the expressions used by the Apostle to describe the character of the teachers that would come into existence from within the Ecclesias, but they are no worse than those used by Paul when warning the elders of Ephesus that "of their own selves" would such men arise (Acts 20:30). They serve to remind us that the Truth will be preserved in its purity only by the exercise of constant vigilance on the part of all members; we need to be on our guard against any seductive false doctrine that might be innocently broached, but which could develop into serious apostasy if not stemmed in time.

"Cursed children"—The Diaglott renders this, "children of a curse." The "curse" is pronounced in Matt. 18:6. 25:41, and relates to the destiny of those who lead others from the Truth. As such, they are not only "children of a curse," but also "the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). The phrase indicates that they are members of a family of cursed ones.

VERSE 15

"Forsaken the right way"—The

word means "straight" way in contrast to a crooked way that would lead to a wrong destination. Paul told Elymas the sorcerer that he did not "cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord" (Acts 13:10). The ways of the Lord are straight, but Elymas tried to make them crooked. The word occurs again in the call of John Baptist: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt. 3:3). To accomplish this, the people were called upon to remove any obstacle that would hinder the Lord proceeding straight forward. Then, along that straight path, they had to follow the Lord, for he is "the way, the truth, and the life," and no man can come unto the Father, but by him (John 14:6). It was from this straight path that these false teachers would diverge.

"And are gone astray"—The Diaglott renders this as "wandered". Having diverted from the right path, and farther they proceed, the wider they wander from the way of truth.

"The way of Balaam"—Brother Thomas in *Eureka* vol. i, gives the meaning of Balaam as "Waster of the people." Balaam allowed the prospect of riches and honor to blind him to his responsibility to proclaim the Truth as Yahweh desired, and he therefore compromised it for the sake of material gain (Num. 22:37). Both here, in Jude 11, and in Rev. 2:14 he types those who have compromised with the world, and use their influence to induce others to do likewise.

Balaam found it impossible to alter the words of Yahweh in relation to Israel, but devised a means whereby the Israelites were brought under a curse. He seduced them from their separateness by inducing them to mix with the Moabitish women, and from this defection from the right way, it was not long before they were worshipping their pagan gods (Num. 31:16). Foolish Israelites desired to demonstrate their "broadmindedness" to the extent of showing that they could mix with the Gentile world without being adversely affected thereby; but the result

was disastrous to their spiritual integrity and tragic to the nation (Num. 25).

Balaam is thus used as a type of those false teachers who would lead ecclesias astray. The Ecclesia is described as a "chaste virgin unto Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2) whose spiritual virginity must be preserved. To embrace wrong doctrine, or to mix with the world in the way suggested by Peter, is to commit spiritual fornication which shall surely lead to death. Brother Thomas comments: "The manifestation of these false teachers created a crisis in the history of the faith. It had come to this, either they must be put down, or the doctrine of Christ would be suppressed. This alternative would certainly have resulted, if God had not reserved to Himself a remnant who refused to bow the knee to Baal. This remnant was Antipas, and therefore "against all" the Nicolaitanes, Balaams, and Jezebels, false teachers, who had crept in unawares, corrupting and handling the Word of God deceitfully, that they might make it less offensive to the Jews and idolaters, and so make the profession of Christianity more popular, and consequently less dangerous to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the world" (*Eureka*).

"The son of Bosor" — This is given as *Beor* in Num. 22:5. *Beor* signifies to burn or consume, and can relate to the lusts that consume such as Balaam.

"Who loved the wages of unrighteousness" — The R.V. renders this: "The hire of wrongdoing." This is same as the "reward of unrighteousness" to which reference has already been made in v.13, for which see notes.

VERSE 16

"But was rebuked for his iniquity" — Peter's comment suggests that Yahweh employed the extraordinary means of causing the dumb animal to speak, to impress the false prophet with the enormity of his conduct. Balaam was so blatant in his determination to earn his hire that outstanding means were used to re-

buke him, the purpose being to warn the people of Israel against following in his way.

"The dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet" — The ass, though an unclean animal, is identified with Israel. It was the only animal whose firstborn was redeemable, and, significantly, such could be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb (Exod. 13:13). It was used as a symbol of rank in Israel (Jud. 5:10. 10:4. 12:14. 1 Kings 1:33, 38), and is set forth as a contrast to the horse, the symbol of Egyptian pride and power (Josh. 11:6. Ps. 33:17). The humble ass or mule was despised by Egyptians, but proved an excellent animal for patient labor in the field or for transport. Its Hebrew name means "hot," and relates to the high-spirited nature of the animal; but the Greek name used by Peter signifies "that which is beneath the yoke," and thus speaks of an animal disciplined and guided. In the case of Balaam, the normally dumb animal spake with man's voice to rebuke the madness of the prophet. In the same way, humble brethren and sisters, normally not vocal, can raise a voice of protest against false teachers who may arise with headstrong determination to propound their ideas in contradiction to the teachings of the Spirit.

The Polluting Influence of the Apostasy — Vv. 17-22

Having warned of the vices of the false teachers who would arise, Peter now describes the unprofitableness of their teaching, and reveals how pernicious would be their influence. They would promise much but grant nothing; they would offer liberty but would be themselves the slaves of licence; they would claim to be cleansed, but would be found wallowing in mire. Therefore, they were to be strictly avoided.

VERSE 17

"These are wells without water" — See Jude 12. Like the mirage in

the desert they promise refreshment but in reality they disappoint the expectation. Jeremiah speaks of the disappointment and sorrow that such teachers cause: "They sent their little ones to the waters; they found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads" (Jer. 14:3). How like false doctrine this is! It has all the promise of refreshment but it does not benefit in the slightest. It is couched in glowing phrases and platitudes that sound fine, but in practical value it is without substance. How different is the truth in Christ! From this is received that refreshing water that fully satisfies and, which is "as a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Doctrine, to be effective, must be expressed in concrete terms of plain meaning, that have a practical impact upon one's way of life.

"Clouds that are carried with a tempest"—The R.V. renders this as "mists" reading, with the most authentic mss. *homichle* instead of *nephele*. The false teachers are like the damp mists that blot out visibility without providing rain, and which are swept along by the tempest into the "blackness of darkness" (R.V.) for ever. This is the "outer darkness" into which the rejected will be driven at Christ's coming, there to end their existence in death (Matt. 8:12). These false teachers would blot out the light of the sun (Mal. 4:2) without providing the refreshment that comes from rain (cp. Deut. 32:2) and their end would be perdition.

VERSE 18

"They speak great swelling words of vanity"—These false teachers are known by their bombastic speech, which tickling the fancy, and exciting the flesh, only pander to it. How like the false teachers of every age. Their stock in trade is mere platitudes expressed in such a way as though impressing a truth of great profundity and wisdom.

"They allure through the lusts of the flesh, etc."—These false teachers evidently taught a doctrine of liberty which was in reality licence. Peter's words, combined with those of Jude (see v.4), suggest that they set forth a dangerous doctrine of non-restraint. They did this by a perversion of the doctrine of grace. Accepting the truth that Christ delivers from the curse of the law, they became contemptuous of all restrictions. As the extreme opponents of Judaism, they set forth the principle of committing sin "that grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1), and therefore, in a perverted concept of truth they "did evil that good might come" (Rom. 3:8). They were "liberal" in their outlook, and as with some forms of modern philosophy, they taught that it was dangerous to restrict the natural inclinations of the flesh. They, therefore, allured through these very lusts, and by a teaching that permitted the free expression of such wantonness, they seduced the fleshly-minded to follow them. The Truth provides a balanced view of doctrine and practice, in contrast to all such extremes, avoiding the asceticism of some (Col. 2:20-23), the strict, narrow concept of formalised religion set forth by the Judaisers, as well as the extreme licence of these teachers.

"Clean escaped"—This reading is derived from the word *ontos*, "certainly," whereas the best mss have *obligos*, "scarcely". Notice the marginal reading. The R.V. renders "just escaping". The false teachers worked on new converts who had newly escaped, or were just escaping, from the "corruption in the world." These new converts were an easy mark for such false teachers, for they would not fully appreciate the extent to which the flesh must be crucified with its affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24), and therefore would be more easily drawn aside by the impressive orations, and flesh-pleasing philosophy of these false teachers. How important for those in Ecclesial authority, not merely to supervise the teaching of the Truth to those

outside, but to also give attention to their after-care when they have embraced Christ, that they may be thoroughly stabilised in true doctrine.

VERSE 19

"They promise them liberty"—How can slaves promise liberty! And these false teachers were slaves to their wrong ideas and evil desires. They grasped eagerly hold of the Apostolic doctrine of grace which offers liberty from the curse of the law, and proceeded to pervert it into mere licence. They fell into the very error against which Paul warns in Gal. 5:13: "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." Whilst Paul vigorously countered the teaching of the Judaisers, he recognised an equal danger in those who would go to the other extreme, and use the liberty from the law as licence to please themselves. James likewise taught: "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being... a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). Some speak of the doctrine of grace as though obedience to law is not required, forgetting that there is such a thing as the "law of Christ" (cp. 1 Cor. 9:21).

"They are the servants of corruption"—Pandering to the flesh, the flesh took hold of them, and made them the slaves of corruption. How could such offer liberty!

"Of whom a man is overcome"—The Greek word *hettaomai* signifies to be made inferior. Peter is warning the brethren that an attempt would be made to dominate them by these false teachers. They would be made to feel that they were inferior to them, in order to bring them into bondage to their so-called superior knowledge. From such false teachers arose the clergy who today dominate the laity and bring them into bondage by the same means. Thus oratory, devoid of truth, fleshly philosophy, and personal prestige are all means

used to enslave men to false teaching. There is as great a need to beware of these means of enticement today as there was then.

VERSE 20

"The pollutions of the world"—The Greek word *miasma* signifies "defilements," and is so rendered by the R.V. in this place. For the significance of the word, see the note on the word "uncleanness" in v. 10. Peter is drawing attention to the defiling influences of the world, from which believers are cleansed "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26-27. John 15:3. 1 Pet 1:22). This brings them into contact with the Christ altar (Heb. 13:10), for as the altar sanctified, or made holy, that offered upon it (Exod. 29:37), so Christ is the sanctifier of his brethren (Heb. 2:11), and they, as "living sacrifices," are offered to God through him (Rom. 12:2). It is important to recognise that the world's influence is defiling, and to avoid contact with it as much as possible (John 17:15); for to become "again entangled and overcome" of it will mean rejection at the Judgment Seat of Christ. "Overcome" is the same word as in v. 19, and literally signifies, "to be brought under." The pollutions, or defilements, of the world can completely dominate and enslave an individual!

"Through the knowledge"—Greek, *epignosis*, complete or exact knowledge (as Ch. 1:2). Peter again emphasises that this is the energising power designed to keep believers pure from the defilements of the world, whether in teaching or practice. The Lord prayed on behalf of believers: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." *Epignosis* is the means that God has devised for the sanctification of saints.

"They are again entangled therein and overcome"—The word rendered *entangled*, from which is derived our word *implicated*, means to *interweave*; then to *involve in*, to *entangle*. It means here that they became so implicated in vices as to be like animals that are en-

tangled in nets from which they cannot extricate themselves.

"The latter end is worse" — The latter end of a renegade is far worse for two reasons: he becomes hardened in sin, and condemnation awaits him. It is far more difficult to reclaim one who has fallen away from the Truth, than to convince one who has lived in ignorance of it. The Lord Jesus made that point abundantly clear in his parable of the cleansed man (Matt. 12:43-45). He taught that a merely negative approach to evil will not produce righteousness. Error must not only be repudiated, but truth must be affirmed; sin must not only be repressed, but righteousness must be practised. This is done, first by filling the mind with the knowledge of the truth, and then by striving to practise the way of life that this will reveal. Unless this is done, a person will again become hopelessly "entangled and overcome" by the very things from which he formerly attempted to escape. Then his latter end will be "worse than the beginning," for, as Peter hints in the next verse, he must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to reap the fruit of his folly (Gal. 6:7-8). Paul declared: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." (2 Cor. 5:10-11. Heb. 2:3, 10:29). We cannot trifle with the things of Yahweh.

VERSE 21

"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness"—Knowledge is the ground of responsibility, not baptism; and those who have known the way of righteousness, and have refused to submit thereto, or have wandered therefrom, will be brought to judgment at the resurrection (see Luke 12:47. 13:28. James 4:17. John 3:19. 9:41. 12:48. 15:22. Acts 17:30). Paul urged that fact upon the notice of Felix. Felix had "more perfect knowledge of that way" (Acts 24:22), and therefore must have realised what was necessary for him to do. But he resisted the demands of the

Gospel, causing Paul to "reason to him of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come" (v. 25), to such good effect, that Felix trembled. He must have recognised that he was subject to the coming judgment, even though he was not baptised, for doubtless Paul urged upon him the responsibility that knowledge brings. Paul reasons this matter out in Romans 2, and warns that judgment shall fall upon those who "obey not the truth," that is, those who knowingly reject it. For such, as well as for those who have submitted to baptism but who have been again "entangled and overcome" of the world, it would have been better "not to have known the way of righteousness . . ."

"Than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" — The knowledge they had embraced made them amenable to the Judgment Seat at the coming of the Lord, and their fate there will be sad indeed. To turn from "the holy commandment" will involve them in a greater condemnation and punishment: "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries" (see Heb. 10:26-29).

VERSE 22

"It is happened to them according to the true proverb" — The proverb is cited from Proverbs 26:11, and Peter describes it as "the true proverb" not because other proverbs are not true, but because this one is self-evident, being true to nature. Both dogs and swine are known for the characteristics described here; but the significance of the figure is deepened by the fact that under the Law these animals were considered unclean (Lev. 11:7. Deut. 14:8. Ex. 22:31), and were used therein to designate unenlightened Gentiles (Phil. 3:2), who gratify the flesh in every way. As dog and swine, by natural impulse, engage in practices which seem disgusting to us, so it is natural for the flesh to act in a way that seems disgusting to the spiritually

enlightened mind. We must not allow the flesh to dominate our thinking, therefore, for all that it can do is to present us with three cogent reasons to reject the counsel of God: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The "emotions of the flesh" (Rom. 7:5), if undisciplined, will urge us to figuratively imitate the action of the dog or sow as described by Peter. It is "only natural" for these animals to act as they do, though it is not pretty to see. This is true also of sin. How often is sin excused on the ground that it is "only natural" to act that way. Let us remember, that when we embraced Christ, we elected to crucify the flesh, or to subordinate its lusts to his will, even at the cost of self-denial. Having become washed from the

pollutions of the world, we must learn to mould our lives in accordance with the spirit-word, and not be overcome by the emotions of the flesh. How difficult it is to submit to the discipline of the *epignosis*, or exact-knowledge of the Word! How natural it is to be as the dog or sow! Self-control is necessary to subordinate the lusts of the flesh to the will of God, and careful vigilance that we may avoid the pitfalls into which false teachers with seductive theories would lead us. Personal investigation of the Word, fortified by prayer, and strengthened by constant contemplation of Christ's wonderful example, is the antidote to the doctrinal corruption, with its resultant wrong thinking and inconsistent actions, that has ever plagued Ecclesial life from the beginning.

OUR FRIENDS

If our friends faithfully and intelligently execute their mission, they will be placed in opposition to all the world—they will find themselves in the position of the Spirit's witnessing prophets, standing in the Court of the Gentiles and bearing testimony against the "God of the earth" (Rev. 11: 4); with all the power, learning, and influence of the Great Harlot, her State daughters, and dissenting abominations arrayed against them; and besides all this, the heartlessness and cowardice and treachery of professed neutrals and friends.

—J. Thomas.

CHAPTER 3

Divine Revelation - The Antidote to Political Corruption

The third great danger against which Peter warned was that of the mocking voice of those who would decry the teaching of "the fathers" (the pioneers of the Ecclesias) regarding impending Divine intervention, and who would point, with seeming logic, to the apparently uninterrupted course of human history. In Peter's day, sceptics scoffed at the concept that Jerusalem and the Jewish State would be overthrown by Divine judgment; today they mock at the testimony of latter-day prophecy, and of the possibility that the contemporary world of Gentilism, with all its pomp and power and apparent glory will shortly be destroyed in similar fashion. Man is so governed by laws of time, that any seeming delay is soon interpreted by him as defeat, so that for him the distant vision of glory soon fades. He does not recognise, or understand, the infinity of the Creator, that He is from eternity to eternity, and that to Him a "thousand years is as a day, and a day as a thousand years." Thus sceptics scoff, and so-called men of science point to the unchanging laws of nature. What is the man of faith to do? He must allow neither sarcasm nor science to move him, but recall that as God has intervened in the past, so He will in the future, in accordance with His word. His spiritual vision must take in the "new heavens and new earth in which will dwell righteousness," and he must reach forward to it as the great objective of life to be gained. In this last section of his epistle, in these the closing words that we hear from our once impetuous, but always loving brother, Peter's warm love for his brethren overflows, and four times in the compass of this short chapter he addresses them as his "beloved".

The Scoffers' Challenge—Vv. 1-4

There were scoffers in the days when Jerusalem fell; there are scoffers today. They mock at those who choose to live in accordance with Divine precepts and in faith of the future. Such is yet another sign of the times, demonstrating that these are, indeed, the "last times."

VERSE 1

"This second epistle"—By this statement, Peter draws attention to his first epistle in which he made reference to the dangers that were converging upon the Brotherhood from without. His present theme relates mainly to dangers from within.

"Beloved" — See note 1 Pet. 2:11.

"I stir up your pure minds" — In his first Epistle, he reminded them that they had "purified their souls in obeying the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22), now he emphasises the need for such minds to be stirred up constantly. The word "pure" is rendered "sincere" in the R.V. and has been thus translated in Phil. 1:10 in the A.V. The Greek word is *eilikrines*—that which is tested by sunlight. When the bright clear light of the sun is brought to bear upon any object, every flaw is instantly revealed. This also happens when the light of Truth shines into the mind, for, immediately, motives are revealed for what they are, thoughts are made manifest in their true context, the innermost promptings of a person's ambition are shown up in their true character, and he begins to know himself as he is known of God.

"By way of remembrance" — Peter has already drawn upon the lessons of the past to impress them with the needs of the present (2 Pet. 1:16, 19, 21. 2:1, 5, 6, 7, 15) and he continues to do so in this chapter. It is important to carefully consider the examples he advances by referring to the context of the Old Testament Scriptures, enriched by his own warning message. By so doing, his readers will be put upon their guard against similar pitfalls that may face them.

VERSE 2

"That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets" — Peter has already emphasised the importance of prophecy, and exhorted that it should be heeded (2 Pet. 1:21). Old Testament prophecy predicted the overthrow of the Jewish State which came to pass in A.D. 70 (e.g. Mic. 3:12), and Peter would have his readers earnestly study such predictions that they might be forewarned and forearmed in regard to events about to take place. The predictions of Old Testament prophecy are supplemented by the commandments, warnings and prophecies of the Apostles. By giving close attention to all that was laid down, Peter's readers would be alerted as to the future. To be "mindful" signifies not

only to remember, but also to take care. Whereas the Apostle's first readers lived at the time of the end of Judah's Commonwealth, we live at the time of the end of Gentile administration. His exhortation is worthy of application by us in these times. Close study of the prophecies, plus careful heed to the commandments of the Apostles will safeguard our future. It will not only bring to mind things that are to happen, but also induce a care to apply the principles of conduct laid down thereby. As the signs indicate that the coming of the Lord is at hand, wisdom dictates that the Scriptures be more closely searched to ascertain that which the future will reveal.

"And of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour"—Rotherham renders: "The commandment of our Lord and Saviour, by the Apostles." The R.V. renders: "The commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles." What specific commandment of the Lord is Peter referring to? Doubtless that recorded in Matthew 24:36-51, where Christ draws attention to the lesson of Noah and the Flood, in the light of the coming of the Son of Man; for this is the very theme that Peter now takes up. The commandment is to "watch therefore" (Matth. 24:42), to keep awake, to be ready, to take care, to exercise faith and wisdom, and to make due preparation for the impending event. The words of Peter should be considered in conjunction with those of the Lord, and in the light of the current world and ecclesial trends.

VERSE 3

"Knowing this first" — The manifestation of scoffers "in the last days" was considered by Peter as among the first and most important prophecies to be heeded, a prediction which demanded special regard. His words of emphasis are similar to those of Paul: "*This know also*, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1). It is significant and ominous that both Paul and Peter predicted the conditions which were developing within the Ecclesias. Though their words had application primarily to the events leading to A.D. 70, they also

do today. Hence the greatest care needs to be adopted by those who have embraced the Truth that they do not do so in vain.

"There shall come" — Peter predicted the coming of these scoffers, whereas Jude claimed that they were in evidence, having "crept in unawares" (v. 4). In warning of them, Jude referred to the prophecies of the Apostles as being fulfilled in their manifestation (Jude 17-18). This establishes the time sequence of the two epistles. Whereas Peter wrote before A.D. 70, Jude wrote after A.D. 70. In a very short period of time the deterioration within Ecclesias, warned of by Peter, had come to pass.

"Scoffers" — In Jude 18, the same Greek word is rendered *mockers*. The word denotes those who *deride, reproach, or ridicule with contempt*. Peter warned that the time would come when some would deride with contempt the teaching concerning the imminence of the Lord's coming. Scoffers of the truth have always existed, but in this verse Peter predicted the manifestation of a certain definite class within Ecclesias that would arise after the death of most of the Apostles. This class would hold peculiar opinions, urging plausible objections against the fulfilment of the predictions concerning the end of the age, or the manifestation of the Lord in judgment, and ridiculing the Apostolic appeals of urgent warning. Later texts of the Greek provide a play upon words: *"Mockers shall come with mockery, walking"* etc. (See *Vincent Word Studies*).

"In the last days" — The "last days" is a term that relates not merely to our times, but also to those days immediately preceding the destruction of the Jewish State in A.D.70, when the Mosaic age came to its end. Those days are described as "the last days" and "the end of the world" in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 1:2; 9:26), for the writer was at pains to impress upon Jewish believers, that the Judaism in which they may have gloried was soon to "vanish away." But those times were also typical of the present. As guilty Judea neared its end, the conditions within the nation became similar to those manifested throughout the Gentile world to-

day. Moral standards were relaxed. Headstrong leaders initiated a policy of unrestrained seeking for personal prestige and political power, which was disastrous for the nation. The Ecclesias found themselves in a worldly environment of unrestrained power-politics and pleasure-and-profit seeking, which exercised a most evil influence on their members (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Politically, the times were noted for growing national unrest and discord, whilst the rumblings of an international crisis finally erupted in the terrible Roman invasion that climaxed in the siege of Jerusalem. The destruction of the Temple and the city, and the dismemberment of the Jewish state, soon followed. The siege of Jerusalem presented a remarkable foreshadowing of the last days of the Gentile times, for even as Yahweh's armies (the Romans, see Deut. 28:49; Matt. 22:7) were thundering at the gates of the city, discord, civil war, violence and immorality swept the people within. How like the present "time of the end," soon to reach its climax! When Christ returns, and gathers his elect to himself, the nations will be left to their own resources, and, as the prophets clearly show, will be involved in "a time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1), unaware of the fact that their conqueror is at the gates (Rev. 16:15-17).

"Walking after their own lusts" — The uninhibited exercise of greed, pleasure and lust is characteristic of these days, as it was of the days prior to the overthrow of Jerusalem. The foreshadowing is seen in the conditions contemporary with the days of Noah. Then, God's way was corrupted by those who should have known better (Gen. 6:1, 12), the earth was filled with violence (v. 13), there was a ruthless seeking for power on the part of military and religious "giants" (v. 4), and among all classes, the imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was evil continually (v. 5). The world was found "walking after its lusts,"

and contemptuous of any form of restraint. This attitude was reflected by the sons of God, who, likewise, were unheeding of the signs, indifferent to their personal responsibilities, and determined to follow their own desires come what may. Noah found that his preaching was drowned by the mocking voices of those who did not want to hear, or heed, his warning exhortation of individual responsibility and impending judgment, and who refuted the possibility that God would soon move against the people of that age to vindicate His holy name. Such attitude was also manifested just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and likewise characterises the prevailing attitude of many today.

VERSE 4

"Where is the promise of his coming?" — The mocking voice of the sceptic questioning the coming of the Lord has been heard throughout the centuries, particularly when attempts have been made to warn of prevailing evils, and the inevitability of Divine judgment. But contempt and disbelief can be expressed by action as well as by word. Where there is a carefree affiliation with the world on the part of nominal believers (and Peter's words apply to such) there can be no true conviction in the Lord's imminent return, no matter what such may profess to believe! They may not openly deny the written word as a point of doctrine, but they do so effectively by their actions. Does not that attitude effectively postulate the question: "Where is the promise of his coming?"

The Apostles had taught that God would soon pour out His judgment upon the guilty nation of Judea through His Son to whom He had given "all power both in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18. 1 Pet. 3:22), but this was being challenged by Peter's contemporaries. In this they repeated the attitude of the contemporaries of the prophets who likewise challenged their mes-

sage. Thus scoffers contemptuously and sarcastically swept Isaiah's warning to one side, saying: "Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it!" (Isa. 5:19). Jeremiah's message was belittled, causing him to say: "They have belied Yahweh, and said, It is not He; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine" (Jer. 5:12). Ezekiel was told: "Behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off" (Ezek. 12:22, 27). In the days of Amos, some scoffed by action rather than by word, manifesting a pretended, but not a genuine, longing for the things of God, causing the prophet to warn: "Woe unto you that desire the day of Yahweh! To what end is it for you? The day of Yahweh is darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18). Both then and now, some scoffed at the warning message, and others refused to heed! Why should that be so? Because of what Solomon observed: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc. 8:11). The test of seeming delay is fatal to many! Man has persistently misinterpreted the long-suffering of God as failure on His part to fulfil His predicted purpose. The tragedy of Peter's comment, however, is that his warning words were directed to those within the ecclesias, and not to the world at large.

"His coming" — As Brother Thomas clearly shows in *The Last Days of Judah's Commonwealth*, there is a sense in which this term is applicable to the judgment of A.D.70. In a parable, Jesus described the Romans as Yahweh's armies who would destroy His son's murderers and burn up their city (Matt. 22:7). In another parable, he declared that "the Lord of the vineyard" (Yahweh) will "destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others" (Luke

20:16), and the comment is added that the Pharisees recognised that "he had spoken this parable against them" (v. 19). These parables were fulfilled in A.D.70 when the Romans marched against Jerusalem. The destruction of the city, therefore, though accomplished by the Roman legions, was nevertheless a matter of Divine judgment, and it is described by Jesus as "the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:27). In this place (Matt. Ch. 24), the Lord made mention of two "comings," one that would take place in the days of the Apostles (see vv. 20, 23, 25, 26, and note the pronouns "ye" and "you"), and the other at the end of the Gentile times (v. 30). The former is merely described as "the coming of the Son of man" (v. 27), and relates to the exercise of his authority and power in judgment upon Judea and Jerusalem through the Roman legions. It was not a personal coming, but a manifestation of his power against his enemies. The latter is described as "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30), and relates to the future coming of the Lord, and his apocalypse to the world, in the company of his glorified saints.

The word "coming" in both verses is the Greek word *parousia* which signifies "presence" and not the act of coming from one place to another. The presence of the Lord was thus felt in the judgments that were poured out upon Jerusalem in A.D.70, and will be seen in the future age as he moves north towards that city in company with his elect.

The Apostles recognised that this first "coming" would bring to an end the Jewish state, and that is why they described that significant epoch of Divine judgment as "the end" (Heb. 1:2; 9:26; 1 Pet. 4:7). Thus James, writing to Jewish believers who were then being persecuted by their Judaistic contemporaries, called upon them to exercise patience, because judgment would soon be poured out upon

Judea, and would bring them relief from the persecution they were receiving from the Jews. He wrote: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." And again: "For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Ch. 5:7-8). James was referring to the same "coming" as did Jesus in Matt. 24:27, and not to that return described in Acts 1:11, when the Apostles were told that he "would come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Many suggest that the N.T. writers were mistaken when speaking of the nearness of "the time of the end," or the imminence of "the Lord's coming." But that is not so! Paul stressed forcibly that the time of the visible reign of Christ on earth in power and great glory was not then at hand (2 Thess. 2:2). Significantly, he called upon his brethren not to mistake anything he may have said or written to be otherwise, suggesting that he may possibly have discoursed with them concerning the impending judgment upon Jerusalem, and perhaps described it as the presence of the Lord in judgment, in such a fashion as caused some to misinterpret his words as relating to the visible second coming of Christ.

Rome was used as the medium of Divine judgment on Judea, in much the same way as Assyria had been used earlier against Israel (Isa. 10:5, 15-16), and as the work of the former was supervised by Christ (Matt. 24:22), it can properly be described as a manifestation of his presence (see Diaglott translation) in judgment, enabling all those references to "the end" and to the "coming of the Lord" that the Apostles and James declared were then "at hand" to relate to the fall of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:14).

For the additional significance of the word *parousia* as relating to the presence of one in authority, see our comment on 2 Pet. 1:16.

"For since the fathers fell asleep" — By "the fathers," Peter

means the pioneers of the Ecclesias. He was writing some thirty years after the ascension of the Lord, and the first generation of believers was rapidly passing away. The "fathers," including the Apostles, had spoken of the approaching end of Judah's Commonwealth, and of the presence (or *parousia*) of the Lord in judgment on that guilty nation; but the unexpected delay encouraged the nagging suggestion of doubt on the part of some who saw no sign of the fulfilment of these predictions. Soon the forthright expositions taught by their pioneers which clearly laid down the line of demarcation between the ecclesia and the world, were discounted by those who sought an excuse to indulge in the ways of the flesh. How like today!

"All things continue as they were from the beginning" — When expectation is not soon fulfilled, doubts arise; for, "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." The Ecclesias of Peter's day, had experienced no sudden catastrophes, no unusual calamities, no concrete indications of widesweeping Divine judgment. There had been the normal rumblings of trouble and crises, of course, but nothing that was out of the normal experience of life. No, the world was proceeding on its normal course; the laws of nature were working with their unchanging uniformity; nothing had changed since the Ecclesias had been established, and therefore the early zeal of many believers became blunted by the monotonous routine of life. Gradually their first enthusiasm cooled off. Their one-time keenness now seemed a little ridiculous in view of the apparent failure of certain predictions. They believed that the fathers had made a mistake in suggesting the early destruction of the Jewish State, and that their warnings of impending calamities upon the world and its friends were exaggerated.

"The beginning of the creation" — This phrase occurs in Mark 13:19, and is there applied to the Mosaic Order. The Greek word is *Ktisis*. It is rendered

"building" in Heb. 9:11, and there, also relates to the Mosaic Order. The verb *ktizo* signifies the founding of a place, city, or colony. Therefore, the term in the verse before us, could denote the commencement of the Mosaic Order, as in Mark 13:19. The Scoffers could hardly say with any regard to credibility that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the physical creation", for they knew that the Flood overwhelmed the world in Noah's day. But they could claim that since the founding of the Mosaic System there had been no major upheaval. And this would be introductory to v. 5, where Peter declares that they were willingly ignorant that the very system of things in the beginning, which was sustained by the Word of God, was overthrown by the Flood.

The Scoffers' Wilful Ignorance — V. 5-7

In an attempt to evade responsibility towards God, scoffers refuse to accept the evidence of the past which clearly reveals the occurrence of Divine judgment. Rejecting also the testimony of prophecy (Ch. 1) which shows that world history is shaped in accordance with the Divine will, they overlook the purpose of God in creation. Peter warned that one of the evils of the last days would be the ignoring of the work and purpose of God as Creator, and it is most significant that the theory of evolution today challenges the Truth along those very lines. By many, the clear declaration of Scripture is rejected in favor of this hypothesis, a theory that has never been proved, and never will be.

VERSE 5

"For this they willingly are ignorant of" — The R.V. renders: "They wilfully forget." The Greek word *lanthano* signifies to "escape notice," thus: "this escapes them." Scoffers overlook the fact that things have not always proceeded as they do now; that at one time the mighty acts of creation took place, and yet, the very God Who created, extended His hand to destroy by Flood what He had earlier established. Scoffers wilfully forget

this because they want to escape the responsibility that such knowledge brings, for, surely, the proof that God exists is the proof that He has a claim upon His creation, and should be worshipped by men in the way He has appointed. The modern world deplores the widespread juvenile delinquency that is in evidence today, but does not recognise that this stems from a lack of respect by adults towards the One Who is Supreme. Let respect be shown by elders towards God, and let such respect pervade a home, and soon juvenile delinquency will be brought under control.

"By the word of God the heavens were of old" — Scoffers overlook the fact that creation was by Divine fiat, for they do not respect God's Word that proclaims it. But the same Word that brought creation into being, also proclaims coming judgment on such disbelievers. In the case of creation, God spake, and it was done (Ps. 33:6). It was done because His word of command is instantly obeyed by the angels of His power (Ps. 103:19-22; 104:24-30), so that all the stupendous acts of creation are but demonstrations of the power of His word, and show that it is adequate to accomplish what He has purposed and proclaimed (Isa. 55:11). Notice how frequently the statement is made in regard to creation: "And God said . . ." (see Gen. 1).

"Standing out of water and in water"—This rather difficult statement is a comment upon the record in Genesis. In the R.V., it is rendered: "They wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God." A footnote gives an alternative rendering, *through* for "amidst," for the Greek preposition *dia* is normally rendered "through." The *Companion Bible* renders "standing" as *consisting*, but the Greek work *sunistemi* literally means "to bring together," or compacted. To state that the earth was brought together, or compacted out of water by the

word of God, is to give expression to the teaching of Genesis Ch. 1. The globe is first described as "the face of the deep," the "face of the waters" (v. 2), but by the command, or fiat of God, the earth was brought together and raised up "out of the waters" (vv. 9-10), as Peter teaches. This could have been by volcanic eruption that raised the surface of the earth at some places, and deepened it at others, so that the general effect was to compact the earth, and thus cause it to rise above the waters. Whatever means were used, the earth, as well as the firmament above (vv. 7-8) were both brought into existence by the word of God, and that being the case, they stand as figures of the political systems that were similarly brought into existence by His word in the past (see Psalm 102:25-26), and will be caused to exist in a more perfect state in the future (2 Pet. 3:13).

Peter not only says that the earth was compacted or "brought together" out of the water, but also teaches that it exists as a planet of life (for that is the subject of his discourse though it might not be specifically stated) "through water." Thus it not only came "out of" *ek* the water, but water is essential to its continued existence. The earth requires water to provide the means of life, so that it can be correctly said that the earth exists (as a planet of life) "through water." This is true also of God's purpose in spiritual creation. Without the refreshing doctrine of life that "drops as the rain" (Deut. 32:2), there would be no spiritual life in mankind. But the same Word can destroy as well as make alive, and this fact was exhibited by the Flood, for the very element out of which the earth arose, and which sustains it in life, also destroyed it in the end!

VERSE 6

"Whereby" — This word is in the plural (See Diaglott Greek text), and signifies "by which

things." What things has Peter in mind? Those already referred to: the Word of God, the heavens, the earth, and the water. All were used to bring about the great calamity that overthrew the world in the days of Noah. The Word of God declared the decree; the "fountains of the deep" were broken up probably by volcanic eruption; great tidal waves swept the earth; and torrential rain poured down from the cloud-encased heavens (Gen. 7:11-12). By these things the "world" that then was, was brought to an end.

"The world that then was"—The Greek word for "earth" is *ge*, but here the word is *kosmos*, signifying "order" or "arrangement," such as the political order of a state, or the religious arrangements of a movement. In the context established by Peter, it obviously relates to the political, social and religious order that was existent upon the earth prior to the flood. These were all swept away by the Flood. The antediluvian *kosmos* was made up of the political heavens and earth, or, system of rulers and ruled which was broken up by the terrible catastrophe. These were reformed again "out of the sea of nations" (Isa. 57:20), when the Israelitish "heavens and earth" came into existence (Deut. 32:1; Isa. 1:2; Hag. 2:6). The Psalmist describes these in Psalm 102:25-28 where he also predicts their removal at an appointed time. The key to the interpretation of these verses is supplied by Paul, for in Hebrews 1:10-11 he contrasts "the order of things" of Psalm 102 with the everlasting kingdom that is to be set up by Christ in its stead (v. 8). He treats Hag. 2:6 in the same way for in Hebrews 12:26-28 he quotes these words to prove that the Jewish *kosmos*, its heaven and its earth, or its rulers and its ruled, were to be shaken out of place, to give way to the ultimate establishment of a "kingdom that cannot be moved." That is likewise Peter's theme, though meanwhile he is treating with the order of things established on earth

which was destroyed by the Flood. His treatise leads to an appeal to his readers not to become entangled with a system soon to be destroyed. His exhortation, therefore, has an application today.

"Being overflowed with water" — Water is incidental to the globe, and is essential to life. But in Noah's day, this very element which is basic for one's existence, was used by God as the means of destruction. It types baptism which figuratively puts to death the old way of life, whilst introducing the way to newness of life. The word used by Peter is *katakluzo*. It expresses the violence with which the world was overthrown. It is from a root signifying *to billow* or *dash over* as by the surging sea. The word suggests the anger of God's judgment upon a Godless age. Baptism also figuratively violently puts to death the old man of the flesh.

"Perished" — The antediluvian order came to a complete end at the Flood, destroyed by the very element that had once sustained it. God can grant life and take it away. The Gospel is a savor of life or of death, according as we treat it (2 Cor. 2:16). A contemplation of this theme will cause us to exclaim: "Behold the goodness and severity of God . . ." (Rom. 11:22).

VERSE 7

"The heavens and the earth" — Peter has in mind the order of things of the Jewish Commonwealth. Many interpret his words as though he predicted the destruction of the physical heavens and earth, but what purpose would that accomplish? Do they not reflect to the glory of their Creator (Ps. 19:1). It is man that needs to be transformed, not the physical earth. In fact, Scripture plainly teaches that the physical earth will not be destroyed (Eccl. 1:4; Ps. 148:6; Isa. 45:18). God promised Noah that the earth will never again be cursed to the same extent as it was at the Flood (Gen. 8:21; 9:12). He declared that such sites as Mt. Zion shall "never be moved" (Ps. 125:1). There is no scope, there-

fore, for the future destruction of the literal heavens and earth in Peter's teaching, and no reason why Yahweh should do this, seeing that His declared intention is to fill the earth with His glory. (Num. 14:21).

"Which are now" — The Jewish State then still in existence.

"By the same word"—Peter refers his readers to the "sure word of prophecy" (Ch. 1:19), that word of Yahweh which brought the Israel "heavens and earth" into existence, but which also predicted their destruction by fire! He seems to be referring particularly to Deuteronomy Ch. 32, a chapter that records a song of Moses, which warned the people of the consequences of sin and rebellion, and which was designed to "testify against them as a witness" (Deut. 31:21). This song addresses the nation as the "heavens and earth" (Deut. 32:1), but warns the people that persistent wickedness would result in "a fire" being "kindled in Mine anger," which would "consume the earth," and set on fire "the foundation of the mountains" (Vv. 21-22). This, of course, is the language of symbol, and is very similar to that used by Peter. It seems as though Peter was drawing the attention of Jewish believers to this national "witness" that is recorded in the Law against the nation, and which threatened the people with the fire of destruction should they prove to be disobedient.

"Are kept in store" — The Greek signifies *Are treasured up*; that is, for future use.

"Reserved unto fire" — The mode of destroying the *Kosmos*, or existing order of things in the time of Noah was by water; but the political heavens and earth in the days of Peter (the *Kosmos* of those times) were held in reserve to be purged by fire.

"The day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men"—The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was a day of judgment and perdition (destruction) of ungodly men, as Peter had warned in his Pentecostal address (Acts 2:19, 20, 40).

The Inevitability of Judgment—Vv. 8-12

Delay is a matter of relativity. To man, the passage of time seems interminable because he is finite, but God is not bounded by time, though in His treatment of men He uses time. Those who depend upon delay might find their calculations upset by the inevitability of Divine action. There is a purpose in this seeming delay; it provides opportunity for repentance on the part of those who heed the Divine will; thus it expresses Yahweh's great mercy.

VERSE 8

"But beloved" — Peter addresses his readers by a term that expresses their state. They are those who have experienced the *agape* love of Yahweh (John 3:16). They occupy a special, privileged status in His sight.

"Be not ignorant"—Do not overlook this fact, as the scoffers do in regard to the fact of Creation and Flood.

"One day is with the Lord as a thousand years."—This is a quotation from Psalm 90:4; and therefore is placed in a setting that emphasises the full extent of man's finite existence. His days are limited (V.10) and therefore he should bend his mind to the contemplation of that which can provide him with Divine mercy (V.14) and future eternity (V.16-17). Time is only a relative term to Yahweh Who is from everlasting to everlasting. The progress of the years means nothing to Him who is above and beyond all measurements of time. His age does not advance, nor His experience increase with the passing of time. Nations may come and go, measured off by epochs and ages (Acts 17:24), but He continues from eternity to eternity. He only hath undervalued immortality, a nature Divine and indestructible, yet to be revealed in His saints (1 Tim. 6:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:4).

VERSE 9

"The Lord is not slack concern-

ing his promise" — Habakkuk had imagined that Yahweh was slack in exercising His authority against the wicked who seemed to go on their iniquitous way unhindered by Divine restraint, but he was told that the vision was for "an appointed time" (Hab. 2:3), and at the decreed period Yahweh would act. In Peter's day, the millennial day of a "thousand years" was nearing its end, for approximately that period of time had passed since David had ascended the throne to inaugurate the imperfect millenium which is nevertheless a type of the perfect millenium of the future (Rev. 20:4). This will be a "day" of a thousand years, during which the Sun of Righteousness will shine continuously, without going down (Mal. 4:2).

"As some men count slackness" — When men, after a considerable lapse of time, fail to fulfil their engagements, others infer that it is because they have changed their plans, forgotten their promises, or lack the ability to perform what they intended to do. That is not the case with Yahweh. He does not change the irrevocable promises He has made to His servants; nor does He forget them, or lack the ability to fulfil them. The important reason why He bears with humanity in spite of its wickedness is expressed in this verse and in v. 15.

"But is longsuffering to usward" — Vine's Dictionary defines the word "longsuffering." Gr. *makrothumeo* as "that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish." It therefore signifies the "holding back of anger." This Yahweh does despite the wickedness of man, in order that those who desire to serve Him may have opportunity to escape (see 1 Pet. 2:9). Isaiah declared: "Therefore will Yahweh wait, that He may be gracious unto you." (Isa. 30:18). The seeming "delay" (for there is no real delay) in the execution of His purpose indicates that there are yet others who may be attracted to the word of salvation.

"Not willing that any should perish" — The anxious feeling of

Yahweh for the salvation of His people is expressed in the beautiful words of the prophet: "In all their affliction He was afflicted..." (Isa. 63:8-9). His careful attention that not one righteous one should perish is illustrated by the parable of the wheat and the tares. The householder is represented as giving instruction that care must be exercised "lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matt. 13:29). It is more important to save the righteous than to condemn the wicked. The R.V. renders "willing" as "wishing." It is God's desire that all may be saved, not His inexorable will that they shall be. He has provided adequately for all needs (John 3:16), but few avail themselves of this offer.

"But all should come to repentance" — See 1 Tim. 2:4. The Greek word *metanoia* signifies "a change of mind." It is derived from *meta*, "after" and *nous*, "mind," and hence suggests the idea of afterthought. The mind is often used in Scripture for the seat of moral reflection, so that "repentance," as used in Scripture, suggests not pain of mind but change of mind. A true repentance is expressed in a change of both mind and purpose. See the marginal note on Heb. 12:17. Esau is said to have sought repentance with bitter tears, but this does not mean that he was swamped with regret for the hatred he had shown towards Jacob, but rather that he sought to change the mind of his father Isaac in relation to the blessing that the latter had bestowed upon Jacob. In fact, Esau's heart was filled with murderous thoughts against his brother.

VERSE 10

"The day of the Lord will come" — In his Pentecostal address, Peter had drawn attention to the coming of the "Day of the Lord," and had equated it with the judgment of destruction that would be poured out upon the Jewish heavens and earth (Acts 2:19-20). The whole polity would be convulsed in blood,

fire, and vapor of smoke. The political authority would be plunged into darkness by the overthrow of the State, and the religious ordinances would come to an end in blood by the overthrow of the Temple, and the slaughter of its priests. All came to pass in A.D. 70, an epoch termed "the end of the world" (i.e. the age) in Hebrews 9:26. In his initial public address, Peter drew attention to the imminence of this national judgment, exhorting his Jewish audience to "save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40); now at the end of his public ministry, he reverts to his original theme again.

"As a thief in the night"—The words "in the night" are omitted in the best texts. The day will come as a thief: suddenly and unexpectedly.

"The heavens shall pass away"—The political authority of the Jewish state will be destroyed (See note Vv. 6-7).

"With a great noise"—The word in Greek signifies the whizzing of a cloud of arrows, the rushing of mighty wings, the roaring of flames of fire, and therefore points to the destruction of Jerusalem by war.

"The elements shall melt"—The same word is used by Paul to describe the fundamental teaching of Gentile and Jewish religious principles (Col. 2:8,20; Gal. 4:3), and therefore, in the context of the verse, relates to the political and religious foundations of society, all of which were dissolved by the fierce fires of A.D. 70.

"With fervent heat"—The Greek word *καυσος* was a medical term used to describe a burning fever. It is an apt term to describe the fever of madness which seized the people of Jerusalem at the height of the siege; literally and figuratively Jerusalem was destroyed by fire.

"The earth also"—Figuratively, the earth relates to the people, the

ruled, when found in national organisation (cp. Isa. 1:2,10).

"The works that are therein"—The word "works," Gr. *ergon* is used of deeds or labor, as in Galatians 5:19. There it points to the unprofitable labors or deeds of men, energised by formalised religion or political expediency.

"Shall be burnt up"—The Jewish State was completely dissolved by the fire of Rome. What remained after A.D. 70 was finally destroyed by Hadrian in A.D. 135, when the legions ruthlessly put down the second Jewish revolt. The same complete destruction of Gentile heavens and earth will take place at the future advent of the Lord.

VERSE 11

"Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved"—Peter warns that the Jewish "order," or *kosmos* would disintegrate, but the original "matter" or elements would remain in their separated state, ready to be reformed into the "new heavens and earth" of V.13, at the time appointed.

"What manner of persons ought ye to be"—Some put a question mark after these words, and provide the answer in the following statement: "In all holy conversation and godliness, looking for . . ." The Diaglott places the question mark at the end of the verse, so that the following verse provides the answer. The term "holy conversation" means "separate behaviour;" whilst "godliness" relates to true worship seen in daily living and not merely in religious exercises (see note on Ch. 1:3).

VERSE 12

"Looking for"—The word in the Greek means "awaiting," "expecting." Jewish believers of those days could await the day of destruction of the city of Jerusalem as a day of relief from the persecutions they were suffering at the hands of nationalist Jews. But they could also look beyond those times to the great consummation of their hope: the establishment of the new heav-

ens and new earth in which will dwell righteousness.

"Hasting"—The R.V. renders this as "earnestly desiring" the "day of God." The faithful of that age could earnestly desire the day of God of A.D. 70 realising that it would bring a measure of relief to their sufferings, but they could also look beyond it to a greater Day that is yet future, and for which we all should long.

"The coming of the day of God" — The word "coming" is *parousia*, and signifies the presence of such a day in manifestation of power. Joel prayed for it to come (Joel 3:11), and so also did John (Rev. 22:20). That day will not only witness the end of Gentile power, but also "crowns of righteousness" bestowed on all those who "love Christ's appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). It is styled "the day of God" because He will then be manifested in His saints in power and glory (2 Thess. 1:10), and all the arrogance, pride and folly of man shall be humbled (Isa. 2:10-12). True saints, therefore, do not dread the coming of that day. They look forward to it as the day of their physical redemption, and wait in joyous anticipation for its coming. They look "not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen (except by the eye of faith) are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

"Wherein the heavens being on fire"—The repetition of this statement in this verse suggests that the Apostle now passes on to the future when the Gentile heavens and earth will be destroyed, as were the Jewish some 1900 years ago. His prophecy is doubtless drawn from the Lord's Olivet prophecy in which Christ, also, swiftly passed from the judgment of A.D. 70 to that of the future (e.g. Luke 21:24, 25), for the destruction of the Jewish State then was typical of the impending destruction of Gentile power now. Christ shall "put down all rule, authority, and power" (1 Cor. 15:24). Figuratively, a "door will be opened into heaven" (Rev. 4:1), and the glorified followers of the Lord will ascend there to eject

its rulers, and to replace them by Yahweh's righteous authority (Eph. 6:12). It is significant that the present tense is used "being on fire," in accordance with the Greek tense of V. 11: "these things are being dissolved." Peter's readers of the first century, with the aid of the prophetic Scriptures, could see signs that indicated the destruction of the Jewish state if they cared to watch for them; and we, today, by the same means, can see signs of the impending destruction of Gentile power. This adds weight to Peter's exhortation.

"Shall be dissolved" — The political heavens shall be so consumed by fire as to entirely disintegrate. It is significant that the seventh vial shall be poured out into the air, or aerial (Rev. 16:17), that is, into the very area of governments and rulers, with the result that the present systems of things will be done away.

"The elements shall melt with fervent heat" — The same complete destruction of the elements of Jewish society — as took place in A.D. 70, — both religious and secular shall be experienced by Gentile institutions in the coming Day of God.

The Assurance of Hope — Vv. 13-16

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Peter's words of exhortation could well have been derived from Isa. 33:13-15: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with the burnings of the age? He that walketh righteously, . . ." In all the confusion of war and destruction, and the pouring out of terrible judgment, the faithful can have quiet assurance that He who saved Noah from the Flood, and Lot from the burning of Sodom, will likewise deliver them from the holocaust of the last days.

VERSE 13

"Nevertheless we" — "We," in contrast to the world that lies in a state of ignorance and hopelessness.

"According to His promise"—There are a number of promises in the O.T. relating to this time. In Heb. 12:26, Paul cites the words of Haggai 2:6 to prove that the Israelitish "heavens and earth" shall be reformed to remain eternally, whilst the Gentile heavens and earth shall be removed.

"Look for"—Faith enables believers to penetrate the veil that hides the future from unbelievers, and like Moses on Nebo, view the promise afar off (Heb. 11:1,13). Peter made reference to the benefits of Yahweh's promises (2 Pet. 1:4), and Paul taught that they were confirmed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:8).

"New heavens and new earth"—These terms relate to a new form of government and a new political order on earth under the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter is quoting from the prophecy of Isaiah 65:17-19. Similar references are found in Isa. 66:22 and Isa. 16:5.

"Wherein dwelleth righteousness"—Christ's reign will establish this (Ps. 72:2-3; Isa. 26:9; 32:17). There shall be "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men." (Isa. 60:20; Rev. 21:27; Ezek. 43:7; Isa. 9:6-7). Righteousness shall "dwell" therein, that is, have permanent abode.

VERSE 14

"Wherefore, beloved"—Peter uses this term repeatedly in this chapter, as though as to emphasise the privileged status of those to whom he wrote. See vv. 1,8,15,17.

"Seeing ye look for such things"—See note on V. 12. Peter suggests that there should be an awaiting expectation for the coming of these "new heavens and earth."

"Be diligent"—A stirring phrase, used twice in the first part of the epistle. Gr. *spoudaza*—"hasten to do," "exert yourself," "manifest zeal." In which way? The answer has already been supplied! (See Ch. 1:5 and 10). Thus, with great maturity of mind, Peter, the shepherd, guides his flock to positive thinking. Imploring them to follow the pattern of Christ with all dili-

gence, he can assure them of peace with God. There must be that warm state of eager anticipation which shall spur us on to "hasten to do" those things pleasing to God.

"That ye may be found of him"—This statement implies the return of Christ to this earth, and the resurrection that shall then take place (1 Pet. 4:17).

"In peace"—To be found of Him "in peace," is to be at one with him in thought and action (cp. John 14:27).

"Without spot, and blameless"—See notes on Chapter 2:13. To be "without spot" is to keep our figurative garments clean (Rev. 3:4); to be found "blameless" is to have obtained forgiveness for those sins we may have committed. The ideal is found in the Lord Jesus, as a "lamb without spot or blemish" (1 Pet. 1:19).

VERSE 15

"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation"—Do not see in the supposed "delay" a reason to believe that the warnings of the "fathers" were out of place, and so indulge in the lusts of the flesh (V. 3), but conclude that God's longsuffering is a proof that He desires men to be saved, and use the time as an opportunity to ensure your own personal salvation.

"Even as our beloved brother Paul has written unto you"—It is a wonderful indication of the humility of our "beloved brother Peter," to find him writing of Paul in this way, for among the very epistles to which he directs his readers is the one in which Paul castigates Peter for hypocrisy, and declares that in Antioch he "withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11-13). Peter accepted the rebuke in such a humble spirit, that he could write of Paul in terms of the greatest endearment. Jealousy and rivalry are purged from his character, as he directs his readers to Paul's epistles. How different from the man who boasted, "Though all these betray thee, yet will not I!" Cannot

we follow this great man in such transformation of character. As he saw Christ transfigured before his very eyes on the Mount, so we see Peter transfigured by the influence of his Lord, and manifesting the glory that came from him.

Peter was writing to communities among whom Paul also had labored (1 Pet. 1:1). They had apparently received some of Paul's epistles. Peter now confirmed, what Paul wrote earlier in regard to the long suffering of God (see Eph. 2:3-5; Col. 1:21; 1 Tim. 2:3-4. Part of the last passage is reproduced in 2 Pet. 3:9).

However, Peter's epistles were directed specifically to Jewish believers; and the statement of this verse implies that Paul had written an Epistle to such. We believe *The Epistle To The Hebrews* to have been penned by Paul, and is the Epistle to which Peter makes specific reference.

"The wisdom given him"—In these words Peter expresses his belief in the inspiration of Paul's epistles, and places him among the prophets of Chapter 1:20.

VERSE 16

"As also in all his epistles"—This statement implies that Peter's reference in the previous verse is to one particular Epistle: that *To The Hebrews*.

"Speaking in them of these things"—Paul warned of moral corruption (2 Tim. 3:1-9), doctrinal corruption (2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; Acts 20:28), and of political corruption ending in Divine judgment (2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2:1-12).

"Things hard to be understood"—There is a need to carefully study and analyse Scripture that the true meaning may be grasped. Paul himself exhorted Timothy that he should "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), for sound doctrine leads to sound thinking, and that in turn produces sound actions (see 1 Tim. 4:15-16).

"They that are unlearned"—The Diaglott renders: "The uninstructed." A person who neglects the study of the Word of God is an easy mark for false teachers. Peter

has already made that point in Ch. 2:18 (see notes), and it is a matter upon which Paul constantly commented in his epistles (1 Cor. 14:20; Heb. 5:13-14). Sound understanding will enable one to detect false doctrine, and so stem the flood of false thinking and actions that come in its train (cp. 1 Tim. 1:19-20).

"And unstable"—An unstable person is one who vacillates in a time of crisis. Such a person is a weakening influence all around. He is weak in himself, for he cannot make up his mind as to what he should believe or what he should do; and he is a cause of weakness in others, who are discouraged by his attitude. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble," declares Prov. 25:19, "is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint" — he causes pain and lets you down! Both the unlearned and the unstable are dangerous elements in an Ecclesia. Because of their ignorance or their weakness, they wrest the Scriptures to the destruction of themselves, and the danger of others. True shepherds of a flock will attempt to educate and consolidate members before they are faced by any crisis.

"Wrest the scriptures to their destruction"—The Greek word for "wrest" is *strebloō*, and it means "to twist with a windlass so as to distort," or "to torture." Peter warns against a class of persons who twist or distort scripture, so that it is made to teach something quite out of its context. This was the class that stood in judgment upon the Ecclesial "fathers", the pioneers of the movement, and who by their own philosophising, rejected the warning of the elders in regard to an impending crisis. They had a superficial knowledge, and were held in honor by their dupes, but as blind leaders of the blind they were all brought to destruction together.

Peter's Last Words—Aim for Spiritual Growth — Vv. 17-18

With the glorious hope of an entrance into the Kingdom set plainly before them, there is a need for Christ's followers to aim to

grow in the things of God. Those of Peter's time were shortly to be tested from within, and therefore it was urgent that they should effectively use the means available to them to successfully combat the seductive influences which would seek to draw them away from their true allegiance. That need is still with us today.

VERSE 17

"Ye therefore, beloved" — Once again Peter reminds his readers of their privileged status.

"Seeing ye know these things before"—The Diaglott renders: "Being forewarned." If a person is wise, when he is forewarned, he will make due preparation to meet the challenge.

"Beware lest ye"—There is none so spiritually strong that he need never to "beware." Peter, himself, is a good example of that; and Paul also exhorted "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

"Being led away"—The Greek word *sunapago* signifies to be *taken off together*, that is through being in close association or companionship with the "wicked" or "lawless". Peter's exhortation, therefore, is to avoid such. The NIV renders "Be on your guard so that you may not be *carried* away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position".

"The error of the wicked"—The Diaglott renders: "The deceit of the lawless." The lawless are those who are contemptuous of God's word, and who rationalise themselves out of heeding it. The very false teachers who would arise in the ecclesias would lead ultimately to the manifestation of the lawless one, the Roman apostasy, to which Paul makes reference in 2 Thess. 2:8.

"Fall from your own steadfastness" — Two words are of importance in this statement: "fall" and "steadfastness". The former is from the Greek *ekpipto* and denotes to *drop away, be driven out of one's course*, and, figuratively, to *become inefficient*. The latter comes from a

root signifying a *setting firmly, a support, fixedness*. The "error of the lawless", if embraced by believers, will remove the prop of truth so essential to maintaining uprightness of conduct. For the evil of false doctrine is not merely that it endorses error, but that the error influences conduct. "Be not deceived," wrote Paul, "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). In other words, to fall from the firm and settled principles of the Truth can have such an influence upon character as to jeopardise one's eternal salvation. This warning in the negative is followed in the next verse by an exhortation in the positive: to "grow in grace".

VERSE 18

"But grow"—There is ever need for growth, for in spiritual matters we must either progress or retrogress: there is no standing still. Growth is dependent on good soil, or a cultivated mind towards God's word; congenial atmosphere, or good ecclesial associations; fructifying rain, or showers of Divine truth (Deut. 32:1; Hos. 14:5; Isa. 55:10-11); and the warming, beneficent influence of the Sun (Mal. 4:2; Eph. 5:8-9), or the influence of Christ. Yahweh has provided the means for spiritual growth in His word (Eph. 4:11-17), and we but have to apply them for it to follow. Then will be revealed the "fruits of the spirit" word (Gal. 5:22-23), and the Divine favor will be manifested towards us.

"In grace" — Grace is God's favour, manifested in its greatest form in the work of redemption. We "grow in grace" when we develop in the Truth, and rejoice in the benefits that accrue from it. The effects of the Truth are as susceptible to cultivation and growth as any other form of education. It is feeble in its beginnings, like seed in the soil, and care must be exercised in its development. Moreover, like natural growth it is dependent upon the blessing of Yahweh. The study and meditation of the Word are necessary to grow in grace. God's grace in its beginning is manifested in justification, and in its consummation in physical regeneration. Compare 1 Pet. 1:10 with 1 Pet. 1:13.

"In the knowledge of our Lord

and Saviour—To grow in understanding of Jesus Christ, is to have a more intimate comprehension of his character and his ways. This will act as an incentive in our strivings. To make Christ "real" we must study the Gospels; and the more we meditate upon his ways as they are unfolded to us, the more we will be induced to "follow him." It was the impact of Christ's example and presence that wrought in Peter that great change in his character. He now passes on to us the secret of the transformation of his life (Acts 4:13).

Jesus Christ will be our Saviour if we make him our Lord. To do that we must heed his teaching, and obey his commands. We recognise him as our Lord when we place ourselves in subordination to his will.

"To him be glory"—See Paul's similar conclusion in his *Epistle To Timothy* (2 Tim. 4:18). It is with the desire that honour and glory should be paid to the Redeemer that Peter likewise closes his Epistle. Who among true believers would not have a similar desire? As the world rapidly moves towards the Noahic phase of the time of the end, we pray and wait for the coming of the Lord who will bring to consummation the grand purpose of Yahweh. Then there will be revealed "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men". Even so, come Lord Jesus.

"Both now and for ever"—The latter portion of this statement is literally, "a day of an age." The Diaglott renders it: "the day of the age," and Rotherham similarly does so. What day is this? The one that Peter refers to in vv. 8, 12, and which he describes as "the day of God," the day that shall "last for a thousand years." Glory is ascribed to Jesus Christ even now for what he has accomplished on the behalf of the saints; but how much greater will be the glory that he will receive when the wonderful day of consummation arrives, and the glorious company of the redeemed, together with a transformed world, will pay homage to him who was perfected through obedience. Commencing from Jerusalem the seat of power,

anthems of praise will ascend to Yahweh which will spread around the world, until the whole earth will be encircled by song (Rev. 5:9-14). Among the songs sung will be the Halleluyah chorus, for "he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth" (Rev. 19:2). This "whore," throughout the ages, has revealed the full enormity of moral, doctrinal and political corruption against which Peter warns; but in that day, Peter himself will assist in destroying her. How great will be the Halleluyahs when the world comes to understand the *epignosis* of Christ in the purity of its moral, doctrinal and political teaching as it shall be revealed in "the day of the age!"

The concluding word, "Amen," is omitted in the best texts, so that Peter concludes his epistle with his mind centred upon the glory yet to be revealed. May Yahweh grant us to be associated with him in that day, when we hope to sing with him of the glory of "our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." We conclude with some beautifully expressive words from the pen of Brother John Thomas as contained in *Eureka* vol. iii, p.389:

"Never will such an extraordinary choir have delighted so magnificent and dignified an assembly on the earth before. The birth of David's son was celebrated by the acclamation of a multitude of the heavenly host praising the Deity, and saying, "Glory to the Deity in the highest, over the earth peace and good will towards men." Glorious, however, as this announcement was, the listeners to it were only a few simple shepherds; but in the approaching musical festival on Mount Zion, the performers will be not less than 144,000, immortals; who, like the Imperial President of the Festival, were once dead, but then are living for the aeons; while the listening and delighted audience, marshalled and convened by the King of glory, themselves illustrious and immortal, number "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" (Ch. 5:

11). *How gratified they will be in beholding the Royal Child, whose birth they celebrated over eighteen centuries before, enthroned by the Eternal Power, according to the words of Gabriel, in his father David's seat; and instead of a vile clamour for his crucifixion, in the very place where he was condemn-*

ed and put to death, songs of thanksgiving and praise, ascending in immortal strains to the Deity, from the innumerable multitude of the redeemed."

May we witness the glorious scene, and participate in the anthems of praise. Amen!

THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND

We, who today have become candidates for the Kingdom of God, are also witnesses for His Truth in these closing days of the Gentiles. Feeling the power of the Truth as a moral impulse — not a sentimental sensation — and conscious of our association with the Divine Mind, we are possessed with an overpowering sense of the goodness of God; also with the sobering conviction that the messengers must in all things be consistent with his Message.

INDIVIDUALLY, then, let us strive to be not only saints (separated ones), but worthy followers of the Lord Jesus: "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

ECCLESIAIALLY, let that "perfecting of the Saints" so persistently emphasised in all the Epistles, have priority even over propaganda work; seeking to maintain the high standard set before us in the Word.

Let us not be influenced unduly by present results or appearances, remembering that now is the day of small things. The incentive to "hold fast" arises from the relation it bears to the glorious issue, "God all and in all."

—C.H.L.

The Warning of 2nd Peter



Regarding False Prophets

False prophets will arise—2:1.
They will secretly introduce destructive heresies—2:2.
They will obtain a large following—2:2.
They will pander to flesh, repudiate discipline—2:10.
They will be presumptuous, self-willed, blasphemous—2:10.
They will be shameless, given to pleasure, self-deceived—2:13.
They will pander to sex, beguiling unstable souls—2:14.
They will introduce worldly seductions, like Balaam—2:15.
They will fail in their expectations—2:17.
They will depend upon empty oratory—2:18.
They will condone moral laxity—2:18.
They will introduce libertinism—2:19.
They will scoff at the teaching of the pioneers—3:3-4.
They will throw doubts upon the doctrine of creation—3:4-5.
They will cause gross spiritual declension—2:22.
They will receive Divine condemnation—2:21.

Characteristics of a Saint

He embraces the common faith—1:1.
He seeks Divine grace and peace—1:2.
He shows progress in spiritual development—1:5-7.
He is called to Divine glory and virtue—1:3.
He is active in Bible study—1:8.
He is fruitful in the application of the Word—1:8.
He is clear-sighted in spiritual matters—1:9.
He ever bears his privileged status in mind—1:9.
He manifests diligence in relation to his call—1:10.

He bears Christ's title of "beloved"—3:1.
He manifests holy living—3:11.
He reveals a true, practical worship—3:11.
He earnestly desires Christ's coming—3:12.
He looks for the New Order of righteousness—3:13.
He lives at peace with God—3:14.
He seeks a pure, unblemished way of life—3:14.
He is not deterred by imaginary "delay" at Christ's coming—3:15.
He does not wrest the Scriptures—3:16.
He heeds the warnings of Scripture—3:17.
He manifests constant growth in spiritual attributes—3:18.

The Purpose of Exact Knowledge (epignosis)

It reveals grace and peace—1:2.
It provides the dynamics of spirituality—1:3.
It shows the way to true worship—1:3.
It creates an incentive to right living—1:3.
It makes a reality of the precious promises—1:4.
It energises unto diligence in the things of God—1:10.
It is designed as a foundation for Divine nature—1:4.
It will enable one to avoid the world's moral corruption—1:4.
It will enable one to avoid doctrinal error—2:20.
Its power is seen in physical creation—3:5.
It sustained the Israelitish order—3:7.
It must not be wrested, otherwise it will lead to destruction—3:16.
Its need is repudiated by false teachers—2:2.
It is necessary to grow in its teaching and understanding—3:18.

Peter predicted the coming of Apostasy; Jude had the unfortunate task of reporting the fulfilment of his words.

Peter's Exhortation

Yahweh has given His promise of new heavens and a new earth to be established after the fiery judgments of which Peter speaks; but, to human appearance they have been long delayed, and this gives occasion for the scoffer. Peter supplies two reasons for this apparent delay. Firstly, time must not be measured by human standards, for one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. What seems to short-lived man a long time is not long for God. Secondly, God is longsuffering, which some men misinterpret as slackness. He provides opportunity for man to come to repentance and so to eternal life. God is angry with sin but He does not want the sinner to perish but to repent and live; and the Gospel has been preached for nearly two thousand years for this purpose. That few are saved is because few will listen and obey; the same response resulted in the days of Noah when not one outside his own family found a place in the Ark through responding to his warning.

The fiery judgments which will destroy this present evil world in order to replace it by new heavens and a new earth are the theme of many prophecies in both the Old and New Testaments. If we hope to find a place therein, we ought to be holy in our behaviour now. That is Peter's exhortation. Christ taught that believers ought to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness". Wickedness will find no place in these new heavens and earth, and none who is rebellious will be admitted to share its honours with the Lord Jesus. If we "look for such things" we must be diligent. Notice this exhortation near the end of the Epistle, and compare it with the one near the beginning: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add" Those who find a place in Christ's kingdom will be engaged in striving to be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight, when he comes. This second Epistle shows its readers what they ought to be, and it is for them to use all diligence to make themselves that. There is a future, sure and certain for such, although few believe in it. Meanwhile, the "longsuffering of God" which "waited in the days of Noah", also "waits" today. That so-called "delay" (for it is not really such, there is a "set time" for Christ's coming, "a day and an hour" appointed — Mark 13:32) is our period of opportunity "to make our calling and election sure". Therefore we close our consideration of these two Epistles of Peter with the exhortation with which he concludes them:

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led astray with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

The Epistles of John

Setting forth the Principle of

The Test of True Love

In the Ecclesia (1st John)

In the Home (2nd John)

By Individuals (3rd John)

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Character Sketch

John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the younger brother of James. His name signifies *Yahweh Has Been Gracious*, which is an appropriate name for the one of whom it is recorded that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20).

He was a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, the son of Godly parents. His father, Zebedee was a fisherman, owning his own vessels, and prosperous enough to hire servants. From Luke 5:10, it seems as though he was in partnership with Peter and Andrew.

The family seemed to have been on a high social standing, for it was on terms of intimacy with the high priest (John 18:16), and owned property, not only in Galilee, but also, apparently, in Judea (John 19:27).

Although Zebedee was not called to follow the Lord himself, he did not restrain his sons from doing so (Matt. 4:21-22). He remained home, probably to manage the business in their absence, encouraging them in the spiritual activities upon which they had entered. In that, he was doubtless influenced by the zeal of Salome his wife, who ministered to the Lord of their substance, sometimes, with other women, accompanying him in his travels (Luke 8:2-3; Matt. 20:20; 27:56). From Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; John 19:25, it appears that Salome, the mother of John, was sister to Mary, the mother of the Lord; in which case, John was first cousin to Jesus.

John was called to become a "fisher of men" whilst he was plying his trade at the nets (Matt. 4:19). He rose to eminence among the Apostles, being one of the select triumvirate, Christ's inner council of three, who were given special privileges, and were permitted to view special manifestations of power and glory. Thus with Peter and James, the other two, John was selected to view the resurrection of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37), the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1), to hear the Olivet prophecy (Mark 13:3), and to be with the Lord in the intimacy of the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33).

John had the tremendous privilege of being called "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). He was treated with greater familiarity by Christ than were the other Apostles. He sat next to him at the Last Supper, reclining with his head lovingly resting on the Lord (John 13:23-25), and in that position whispered to him a request for him to reveal who it was who would betray him. He was later entrusted with the care of the Lord's mother (John 19:26); and took her unto his own home, probably somewhere adjacent to Jerusalem. At that moment of sadness, apart from the Lord himself, Mary received

greater consideration from her nephew than she did from her own sons and daughters.

John wrote the Gospel, the three epistles bearing his name, and on being banished to Patmos, received the final vision of glory known as the Revelation.

His contact with Christ produced in him a great change of character, moulding him into a loving and considerate shepherd of the flock, whose anxious care was for its welfare.

He was evidently a man of tremendous natural energy, and because of this, and his outspoken zeal, he received the title of Son of Boanerges, or of Thunder (Mark 3:17). His intolerance, and the fierce, possessive jealousy that he showed for the Lord whom he loved so dearly, reached its apex on the occasion when Jesus was slighted by the Samaritans. He deeply resented this, and in his excess of zeal, he called upon the Lord to command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them (Luke 9:54). He also, at that stage, manifested overweening ambition, and with James, selfishly sought special privileges of personal glory greater than the other Apostles, for which he was rebuked (Mark 10:35-37). But with all this, he was a man of deep affection, and he manifested an intense love and loyalty for the Lord (John 13:23), and a natural sympathy for others.

Qualities of John's character were revealed at the trial of Jesus. He showed himself to be thoughtful, for he came to the aid of Peter, who, not having access to the high priest's court, remained outside until John used his influence to obtain entrance for him (John 18:15-16). He manifested strength of character, and independence of action, for whereas Peter, at that stage, was somewhat in doubt of the Lord, and being ashamed at the possibility of being classed among his disciples, remained to mingle among the soldiers, John boldly "went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest" where he could see into the Audience Chamber, without regard to the opinion of others. He was the first of the Apostles to believe Mary Magdalene's account of the empty tomb (John 20:2), though, at that stage, he did not understand its full significance (John 20:7-8).

His natural exuberance, and perhaps the greater physical energy of his more youthful years, enabled him to out-distance Peter as they ran together to the sepulchre of the Lord (John 20:3-5), and his loving thoughtfulness was shown by the deference he paid the older man, in that he respectfully stood aside to allow him to enter first (John 20:6-8).

The early failings and virtues of John's character were tempered or improved by his contact with Christ, as gradually the divine example and teaching of the Master took possession

of his heart. This is reflected in his writings. The high spiritual style manifested therein, the lofty themes to which he addressed himself, reveal his mental maturity and his personal spiritual development. He never forgot the example of gentle patience manifested by the Lord towards the disciples, but learned to reflect it in his own dealings with his brethren. One particular incident stands out clearly in his Epistles. It concerns the defection of Judas. Once he had left the company in the upper room, the Lord had addressed the remaining disciples in a term of endearment: "Little children . . ." (John 13:33). It is an expression used nowhere else in the Gospel accounts, but here,* but it is one that John constantly used in his epistle (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). Moreover John used it at a time when the spirit of Judas had again been manifested within the brotherhood, for he wrote; "They went out from us, but they were not of us . . ." (1 John 2:19).

In his epistles, it is obvious that the Son of Thunder now recognised the greater need of quietly developing love in his brethren, than that of vindicating self. The early ambition to succeed in spite of the other Apostles, is replaced by a desire to help others to share God and Christ with himself, through that fellowship that exists by walking in the way of divine Light, Love and Life.

Thus the influence of Christ mellowed and perfected the character of John. He lost that self-asserting vigor, and short-sighted aggressiveness that once characterised him. His writings exhibit him as a gentle, patient man of great strength of will, of tremendous energy, and of abounding humility.

This latter quality is revealed in both his Gospel and the Epistles. In the former, he refers to "the disciple whom Jesus loved," but does not name him, though the evidence is conclusive that John is the one referred to. In his Epistles, he does not assert the authority of his Apostleship, as Paul was forced to do, under different circumstances. Yet though he was humble, he was not weak. His early vigor remained, and was expressed through forthright language and action, but now it was disciplined and controlled. He thus warned Diotrephes who "loved the pre-eminence," that when they met he would have cause to regret his unrighteous deeds, and his prating, malicious tongue (3 John 9). But with great understanding and insight as to what Jesus required, he reserved his strictures and actions for those deserving of the thunder he was still capable of uttering.

HIS WORK IN EPHESUS

Tradition records that after the ascension of the Lord,

* "Children" in John 21:5 is a different word, and is used by John in 1st Epist. 2:18.

when the apostles made a division of the areas for preaching among themselves, Asia fell to the share of John. It is also claimed that he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem until the death of Mary.

He then proceeded to Asia and applied himself to the propagation of the truth, preaching it where it had not yet been known, and confirming it where it had already been planted. He was involved in the persecution instituted by Domitian, and tradition says that he was taken bound to Rome, and there condemned to be baptised in a cauldron of boiling oil (see *Eureka* vol. i, p.156). Tradition alleges that he was drawn out alive, but the Emperor, by no means impressed with the miracle, banished him to the island of Patmos. There he preached to the inhabitants, and ultimately received the wonderful vision of the future contained in the Revelation. Though Domitian may have thought that by thus banishing this notable Christian he would rid the world of his influence, in fact, his influence was increased. In the Revelation, he describes himself as "your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, being in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

It is said that upon the death of Domitian, and the succession of Nerva, John was released, and returned to Asia, establishing his headquarters at Ephesus, because the people of that city had recently martyred Timothy. John was the sole remaining Apostle, and labored to complete the work that had been set them by the Lord Jesus. According to Eusebius, he died at the beginning of Trajan's reign, in his ninety-eighth year, and was buried near Ephesus.

But John's work has not yet been completed. In the Revelation, he was given the assurance that he must yet, in the future, "prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev. 10:11). He will yet rise from the dead to personally play a part in the final consummation of the great prophecy that was given through him.

It is significant that the Bible closes with a prayer and a benediction from this man whom Jesus loved: "Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

To John's gracious words and prayer, let us also add our "Amen" — so be it!

Introduction

WHEN AND WHY JOHN WROTE

The general opinion is that the first Epistle of John was written about A.D.90, and that the succeeding epistles were written some time after that.

At that time, John would have been the only surviving apostle, and would have been a great age. The tone of the epistle is in keeping with this, for it is paternal both in the endearing expressions he used as well as the authority with which he wrote.

It was written to correct serious error that was developing among the Ecclesias. John does not name the error, but the general opinion is that it was incipient Gnosticism. The full development of this heresy was not in evidence until about the second century, but in its earlier forms it had been manifested before John, and is referred to by Paul to Timothy when he warned him to be on his guard against the "oppositions of science (*gnosis*) falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

DANGER FROM WITHIN

The theory of Gnosticism threatened the Ecclesia from within, and constituted a more seductive and dangerous doctrine than persecution from without. John wrote to counter the influence of a so-called "higher form" of "knowledge" that challenged the foundations of faith. The peril came not from men who were out to destroy the Truth, but from those who thought that they were improving it, and whose aim was to make it intellectually respectable.

It is significant that there is a tendency to the same end today, which likewise threatens to destroy the foundations of faith, and against which we must be on our guard.

A further aspect also emerges that makes the comparison even closer. By the time John wrote (towards the end of his life), many members of Ecclesias were second or even third generation believers, and this is also so today in regard to the latter-day revival of the Truth. Then, as now, the pioneering spirit was being set aside, and more and more time was being given to mere speculating and philosophising upon truth.

Jesus had warned of this. He predicted: "The love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). By John's time, as today, the first thrill of the early establishment of Ecclesias had faded, and, in many instances, the early flame of zeal had dimmed to a flicker. Tradition has it that John ministered at Ephesus, and Christ warned this very Ecclesia: "I have somewhat against thee

because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4).

Therefore, whilst John constantly reminded the brethren of their obligations in the sphere of divine love, he also manifested a stern, unyielding attitude towards those who would undermine the faith with their theories. In describing them, he used appellations such as "liars," "seducers," "false prophets," "deceivers," "antichrists," and so forth, writing thus in the abundance of his love, in order to help the sheep who, as a good shepherd, he "knew by name" (3 John 14).

WHAT WAS GNOSTICISM?

The Greek word *Gnosis* signifies "knowledge," and the Gnostics claimed to be "knowing ones." However, the form of knowledge they embraced, did not constitute a greater understanding of the Bible. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states:

"Among the majority of the followers of the movement 'Gnosis' was understood not as meaning 'knowledge' or 'understanding,' in our sense of the word, but 'revelation.' These little Gnostic sects and groups all lived in the conviction that they possessed a secret and mysterious knowledge, in no way accessible to those outside, and not based on reflection, on scientific inquiry and proof, but on revelation. It was derived directly from the times of primitive Christianity; from the Saviour himself and his disciples and friends, with whom they claimed to be connected by a secret tradition, or else from later prophets, of whom many sects boasted."

Granted this definition, John's opening words challenged the basic ideas of the sect:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . ." (1 John 1:1-3).

In view of the Gnostic claim to have gained certain knowledge from specially endowed "prophets," John's warning is significant:

"Many false prophets are gone out into the world" (Ch. 4:1).

Gnosticism has been defined by A. Plummer in the following terms:

"Gnosticism, although it often had much in common with Ebionism and Judaism, was not, like these, the open enemy of Christianity. It professed to give its approval and patronage to the gospel. The gospel was very good as far as it went; but the Gnostics had 'a more excellent way.' They understood the gospel better than the apostles themselves. It was a mistake to suppose that the historical facts and moral precepts of the Scriptures were to be taken literally. It was a still greater mistake to suppose that the Scriptures contained all that was necessary for man's spiritual well-being. There was a higher knowledge, a more profound gnosis; and this the Gnostic would attain to and impart. Illumined by this, men would see that everything else was comparatively of unimportance. The philosopher whose mind was enlightened by this esoteric knowledge need not trouble himself much about his conduct. He was steeped in light. Good actions could not seriously detract from it. Indeed, there were many things commonly

regarded as bad, which the true Gnostic would not shun, but seek, as a means of enlarging his experience."

The upshot of all this was the emergence of three basic errors.

1. Righteousness was of no account in comparison with intellectual illumination.

2. Scripture was of no account in comparison with a higher knowledge which partly transmuted and partly superseded it.

3. The work of atonement was lessened in significance, for there was no real evil in sin.

The Gnostic claimed that all matter was evil. This resulted in two theories.

1. If the human body is utterly evil, it must be subdued and chastened to the utmost, that the spirit may be freed from the burden of so vile an instrument (see Col. 2:18-21).

2. If the human body is utterly evil, it is a matter of indifference what it does; and so worthless an instrument may be made to commit any act from which the real man might derive additional experience and knowledge.

John countered these ideas, in the epistles before us. He wrote of how he had "handled" the "Word of life"; he warned of the evil effect of the error that claimed that Jesus had not "come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2); he exhorted the need of manifesting Divine qualities in the bodies we now possess, for true sonship of God is only predicated on such action.

AN APPENDIX TO THE GOSPEL

Though no name is appended to the Epistles, there is no doubting the style of writing and the theme of exposition. The Epistles, and particularly the first, are closely linked with the Gospel. Consider such expressions as the following:

"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

Many other similar expressions and statements occur (cp. John 21:24 with 1 John 3:2, 14; John 17:3 with 1 John 5:20; John 1:1 with 1 John 1:1), but perhaps the most significant, is John's constant use of the term, "little children" (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). This occurs in a most tender connection in the Gospel, for it was used by Christ after Judas had left the upper room, and the Lord, seemingly with relief, turned to the remaining Apostles, and addressed them as "little children" (John 13:33). It is the only time the expression is used outside of the epistles of John and it seems as though John used it, because similar circumstances had developed in the ecclesias. As Jesus had used the term after Judas had left the company, so John used it for those who remained after others had left. He

reminded his readers:

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19).

These errorists were like Judas, and followed the example of the traitor.

In writing of the love of God, of the relationship of believers one to another and to the Father, and of the influence of truth upon their lives, John was not merely combatting the error of Gnosticism, but also expounding upon the words of the Lord Jesus in the upper room, and immediately afterwards. The intercessory prayer of the Lord (John 17), which emphasises the divine name (v.6), the relationship of believers to the Father (v. 11), and the manifestation of Divine love (v. 26) is constantly brought to view in the Epistle, as are other features of the Gospel.

These, of course, will become obvious as we treat with the Epistle verse by verse.

JOHN'S STYLE OF EXPRESSION

John combines a simple, direct style of language, with great profundity of thought. There is no doubt as to the meaning of his words, and yet the ideas presented thereby are susceptible of deep analysis.

He is not afraid of repetition. To emphasise his point he will repeat it, and almost in the same words. He therefore shows that he recognises that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

The lofty principles set forth by God in His revelation require constant repetition before they are grasped; and as John gives himself specifically to emphasising the doctrine of God manifestation in flesh, he saw the need for constant recapitulation.

As one writer has stated:

“His repetitions do not weary us, and they do leave their impression. The rhythm of his simple sentences charms the ear, fixes itself in the memory, and sooner or later finds its way home to the heart.”

He adopts a style that is similar to Hebrew poetry which does not depend upon rhyme or rhythm, but expresses the poetry of ideas, setting forth its principles in a form of parallelism. There are various forms of this including the complete and contrastive. In the former successive lines add or emphasise the thought originally expressed; in the latter, the words and ideas are contrasted. Note the effect produced by the repetition of “love” and “world,” and their contrast one with the other in

such sentences as these:

*“Love not the world,
Neither the things that are in the world.
If any man love the world,
The love of the Father is not in him.”*

Consider the same effect produced by setting “the last hour” and “antichrist” in relation one with the other:

*“Little children, it is the last hour;
And as ye heard that antichrist cometh,
Even now have there arisen many antichrists;
Whereby we know that it is the last hour.”*

This is similar to the introverted form of Hebrew poetry that is so common in the Old Testament, in which the first line corresponds with the last, and so on moving towards the centre. Read those lines above in that order, and notice how the ideas are emphasised.

It is obvious that John was deeply moved by the spirit of the Psalms and Prophets where this style of language is so constantly used.

Finally, it is necessary to notice how John speaks with authority. He dictates a message, and expects it to be received without question. He is the shepherd speaking to the sheep whom he knows by name (3 John 14); he is the elder writing to the children, and instructing them in matters of belief and practise; he is the last of the Apostles, speaking authoritatively as from Christ.

As the sheep of this age, the “little children” of the present, the earnest followers of Christ who listen to the voice of his Apostles, we need to heed the warning words of John as he would guide us in matters that affect our eternal destiny. For did not Jesus say:

“Neither pray I for these (Apostles) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as Thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21).

It was to that end that John penned his epistles, and we should heed his message.

Analysis of John's First Epistle

There are several methods by which the Bible can be studied. We can consider its use of words, topics, themes, characters, and so forth. There are also the telescopic and microscopic methods. The former takes the overall view of a section of the Bible; the latter examines it verse by verse. Both systems of study are recommended to fully understand matters of Divine revelation.

When the telescopic outline of a book of the Bible has been set out, the reader is able to instantly discern the context of a particular verse or statement, and is thereby better equipped to comprehend its meaning.

We herewith first apply ourselves to that form of study, before treating with John's Epistles verse by verse.

WHY THREE EPISTLES?

The hand of Inspiration is not only apparent in the words of Scripture, but also in the very setting in which the various books of the Bible are placed. The Epistles of Paul, for example, are in proper sequence of thought, though not in chronological order (see *Notes On Romans* — Introduction). The poetical books of the Old Testament reveal the same principle. It is significant that the Old Testament ends with the words: "With a curse," and that the New Testament records the birth of him who was to bear the curse away.

There is design in this; it is not mere coincidence.

Can we discover a design in the three epistles of John?

We believe that there is one, and for that reason, the very intimate and personal epistles written to "the elect lady," and "the well beloved Gaius," have been retained in the canon of Scripture.

Here is our suggestion:

- 1 John — The Truth and the Ecclesia.
- 2 John — The Truth and the Home.
- 3 John — The Truth and the Individual.

The first epistle urges the Ecclesia to oppose error in its midst; the second epistle shows that the home should be closed against errorists; the third epistle reveals how individuals should resist those who set themselves up against Apostolic authority.

THE FOUR SEVENS

In his first Epistle, John reveals seven tests whereby true discipleship is manifested; seven reasons for writing as he did; seven characteristics of a true believer; and seven contrasts be-

tween the truth and error.

He prefaces the seven tests of true discipleship with the words: "If we say . . ." or "he that saith . . ." (see I John 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9; 4:20). He emphasises that mere profession of discipleship is not enough, for it creates a hypocrite, and not a true follower of Jesus. He summarises the seven tests in the following manner:

1. **False fellowship — not honest with others** (Ch. 1:6).
2. **False sanctity — not honest with oneself** (Ch. 1:8).
3. **False righteousness — not honest with Christ** (Ch. 1:10).
4. **False allegiance — not honest with God** (Ch. 2:4).
5. **False association — not honest with the world** (Ch. 2:6).
6. **False understanding — not honest with one's brethren** (Ch. 2:9).
7. **False love — not honest with anybody** (Ch. 4:20).

The seven reasons for writing can be listed thus:

1. **To declare things that he has seen** (Ch. 1:3).
2. **To increase their joy** (Ch. 1:4).
3. **To assist them to avoid sin** (Ch. 2:1).
4. **To remind them of their privileges** (Ch. 2:13-17).
5. **To warn them against false doctrine** (Ch. 2:21-24).
6. **To warn them against false teachers** (Ch. 2:26).
7. **To show their true relationship to life** (Ch. 5:13).

He outlines seven characteristics of a true believer:

1. **He practises righteousness** (Ch. 2:29).
2. **He avoids sin** (Ch. 3:9).
3. **He manifests love** (Ch. 4:7).
4. **He believes on Christ** (Ch. 5:1).
5. **He loves God** (Ch. 5:1).
6. **He overcomes the world** (Ch. 5:4).
7. **He remains consistent** (Ch. 5:18).

Finally, John sets forth seven contrasts:

1. **Light versus darkness** (Ch. 1:5-2:11).
2. **The Father versus the world** (Ch. 2:12-17).
3. **Christ versus antichrist** (Ch. 2:18-28).
4. **Right versus wrong** (Ch. 2:29-3:24).
5. **Truth versus error** (Ch. 4:1-6).
6. **Love versus hypocrisy** (Ch. 4:7-21).
7. **The God-begotten versus the fleshly** (Ch. 5:1-21).

The teaching of the Epistle is expressed in clear, distinct language, plainly setting forth the challenge of truth, and the uncompromising demands of a true love of God.

THE EPISTLE AS AN APPENDIX TO THE GOSPEL

John indicates that his Epistle is supplementary to the Gospel which the believers already had received (Ch. 2:12-14; 5:13). Throughout his epistle, words and phrases identical with those found in the Gospel, constantly occur. The following list indicates how complete is this connection, though it is by no means exhaustive. The reader is recommended to study this matter further, with the aid of a Concordance. Much personal benefit will result, and a deeper appreciation of the Apostle's arguments, both in the Gospel and Epistles, will be obtained. All references quoted are from John's Gospel.

CHAPTER ONE

- V. 1 "Beginning" - 1:1, 2.
 "Heard" - 8:47.
 "Seen" - 1:14.
 "Handled" - 20:27.
 "Word of life" - 5:26.
 V. 2 "The life" - 14:6.
 "Bear witness" - 15:27; 21:24.
 "Eternal life" - 17:3.
 "With the Father" - 1:2, 18.
 V. 3 "That which" - 17:25.
 "Fellowship" - 14:20-23.
 "Declare we" - 17:20.
 V. 4 "Joy" - 17:13.
 V. 5 "Light" - 1:5, 8, 9; 8:12.
 "Darkness" - 3:19-21.
 V. 6 "Walk in darkness" - 3:19-21; 11:10; 12:35, 46.
 "Lie" - 8:44-45.
 "Do not" - 3:20-21.
 V. 7 "Walk in light" - 12:35.
 "Fellowship" - 12:36.
 "Blood of Jesus" - 1:29.
 V. 8 "Deceive ourselves" - 7:47.
 V. 9 "Faithful and just" - 8:46.
 "Cleanse us" - 1:29.
 V. 10 "A liar" - 8:55.
 "Word not in us" - 5:38.

CHAPTER TWO

- V. 1 "Little children" - 13:33.
 "Ye sin not" - 5:14.
 "An advocate" - 14:16.
 "With the Father" - 5:17; 16:10; 20:17.
 "The righteous" - 8:46.
 V. 2 "Whole world" - 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 11:51-52.

- V. 3 "Know him" - 17:3.
 "Keep his commandments" - 14:15, 21; 15:10.
 V. 4 "Liar" - 8:44, 55.
 V. 5 "Keepeth his word" - 14:23.
 "Love perfected" - 17:23.
 "In him" - 6:56; 15:5.
 V. 6 "Abideth" - 15:4.
 "Walk" - 8:12; 13:15.
 V. 7 "Commandment" - 15:12.
 V. 8 "New commandment" - 13:34.
 "Darkness past" - 12:46.
 "True light" - 1:9; 8:12; 12:35.
 V. 9 "In darkness" - 3:20; 9:41.
 V. 10 "Light" - 12:46.
 "Loveth his brother" - 13:35.
 "Occasion of stumbling" - 11:9-10.
 V. 11 "Walketh in darkness" - 12:35.
 "Blinded their eyes" - 12:40.
 V. 12 "Little children" - 13:33.
 "Sins forgiven" - 13:10.
 V. 13 "Ye have known him" - 8:19; 14:7; 17:3.
 "From the beginning" - 1:1.
 "Known the Father" - 8:54-55.
 V. 14 "The word abideth" - 5:38; 8:31; 15:7.
 "Overcome the wicked one" - 17:15.
 V. 15 "Love not" - 7:7.
 "If any love the world" - 16:8.

- V. 16 "The world . . . not of the Father" - 17:15-16.
 V. 17 "The world passeth" - 12:31.
 "Abideth forever" - 4:14; 6:58; 10:28-30.
 V. 18 "Little Children" - 21:5.
 "Last time" - 12:31-32; 10:16.
 V. 19 "They went out" - 13:30.
 V. 20 "Uncion" - 14:16-17.
 "Ye know" - 14:26.
 V. 21 "Know the Truth" - 8:32.
 V. 22 "Liar" - 8:44.
 "Father and Son" - 17:3.
 V. 23 "Denieth the Son" - 5:23; 8:19; 15:23-24.
 V. 24 "Abide" - Jn. 15:7.
 "Continue in the Son and the Father" - 14:23.
 V. 25 "Eternal life" - 5:39; 6:27, 47, 54, 65; 10:28; 12:50; 17:2-3.
 V. 26 "Seduce" - 16:1-3.
 V. 27 "Anointing" - 14:16-17.
 "Any man teach" - 6:45.
 "Truth" - Jn. 6:63; 8:32.
 "Abide in him" - 15:4.
 V. 28 "Little children" - 13:33.
 "Abide in him" - 14:2.
 "When he shall appear" - 14:3.
 "Confidence" - 17:22.
 V. 29 "Righteous" - 17:25.
 "Born of him" - 1:13; 3:3-5.

CHAPTER THREE

- V. 1** "What manner of love" - 3:16.
"Sons of God" - 1:12.
"The world" - 15:18-19; 16:3; 17:25.
- V. 2** "Sons of God" - 1:12.
"We shall see him" - 17:24.
- V. 3** "Purifieth himself" - 17:19.
- V. 4** "Committeth sin" - 8:34.
- V. 5** "Manifested to take away sins" - 1:29, 31.
"No sin" - 8:46.
- V. 6** "Abideth" - 15:4-7.
"Sinneth not" - 8:34-35.
- V. 7** "Little children" - 13:33.
"Doeth righteousness" - 8:39.
- V. 8** "Of the devil" - 8:44.
- V. 9** "Born of God" - 1:13; 8:42.
- V. 10** "Children of God and of the devil" - 8:33-47.
- V. 11** "The message" - 13:34-35; 15:12.
- V. 12** "Cain, of the wicked one" - 8:44.
- V. 13** "Marvel not" - 15:18-19; 16:2, 33; 17:14.
- V. 14** "From death to life" - 5:24.
"Because" - 13:35; 15:12, 17.
- V. 15** "Murderer" - 8:44.
"Eternal life abiding in him" - 4:14.
- V. 16** "Perceive we the love" - 3:16; 10:15; 15:13.
"And we" - 13:34; 15:12-13.
- V. 17** "And seeth his brother have need" - 13:35.
- V. 18** "Little children" - 13:33.
"In deed and in truth" - 13:34.
- V. 19** "Of the truth" - 18:37.
- V. 20** "If our heart condemn" - 8:9.
"God is greater" - 10:29-30.
"Knoweth all things" - 2:24-25; 21:17.
- V. 21.**
- V. 22** "Whatsoever we ask" - 14:13; 15:7; 16:23-29.
"Because we keep" - 15:10.
"And do" - 9:31.

- V. 23** "Ye should believe" - 6:29; 14:1; 17:3.
"Love one another" - 13:34; 15:12.
- V. 24** "Keepeth his commandments" - 14:15, 21-23; 15:10.
"Dwelleth" - 6:56.
"The Spirit" - 14:17-18.

CHAPTER FOUR

- V. 1** "Many false prophets" - 16:2.
- V. 2** "Every spirit" - 16:13-15.
"Come in the flesh" - 1:14.
- V. 3** "AntiChrist" - 16:3.
"Ye have heard that it should come" - 16:4.
- V. 4** "Ye are of God" - 1:12; 8:42.
"Greater is He" - 10:29; 14:17, 23; 17:23.
"He that is in the world" - 8:44.
- V. 5** "Of the world" - 8:23.
"The world heareth them" - 15:19.
- V. 6** "We are of God" - 1:12; 8:23, 42; 15:19; 17:16.
"Heareth us" - 8:47; 18:37.
"Spirit of truth" - 8:32; 14:17; 15:26.
- V. 7** "Love one another" - 13:34-35, 15:12-17.
"Love is of God" - 5:42; 8:42; 14:23; 17:26.
"Born of God" - 1:12; 3:4, 6.
- V. 8** "Knoweth not God" - 7:28; 8:19, 55.
- V. 9** "In this was manifested" - 3:16.
"God sent" - 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 17:3, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.
"Only begotten son" - 1:14-18; 3:18.
"That we might live" - 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24-40; 6:27-68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25-26; 14:6.
- V. 10** "Not that we loved" - 15:16.
"He loved us" - 3:16.
"Propitiation" - 1:29.
- V. 11** "We ought to love" - 13:34; 15:12.
- V. 12** No man hath

- seen God" - 1:18.
"God dwelleth" - 14:23; 17:23.
"His love perfected" - 17:23.

- V. 13** "Hereby know we" - 14:20-24.

- "Given us of His spirit" - 14:26.

- V. 14** "Seen and testify" - 20:30-31.
"Savior" - 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:47.

- V. 15** "Shall confess Jesus is Son of God" - 1:49; 3:16-18, 35-36; 5:19-26; 6:69; 8:35-36; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4; 14:13; 17:1; 19:7; 20:31.
"Cp. 9:22; 12:42.

- "God dwelleth" - 14:17, 23.

- "He in God" - 17:21.
- V. 16** "We have known" - 17:25-26.

- V. 17** "Love made perfect" - 17:23, 26.
"Boldness in judgment" - 5:22-23, 27.

- "Because" - 15:20; 17:14-16.

- V. 18** "Perfect love" - 14:23.

- V. 19** "He first loved" - 3:16; 15:16.

- V. 20** "And hateth" - 13:35.
"A liar" - 8:44.

- "How can he love God" - 13:20.

- V. 21** "The commandment" - 13:34-35; 15:12.

CHAPTER FIVE

- V. 1** "Whosoever believeth" - 1:12; 3:16, 36; 6:69; 9:35, 38; 8:24; 11:27; 14:1; 17:20; 19:35; 20:31.

- "Born of God" - 1:12; 12:36.

- "Loveth the begotten" - 8:42; 15:23.

- V. 2** "By this" - 13:34-35.

- "Keep the commandments" - 14:15, 21; 15:10.

- V. 3** "This is the love of God" - 14:21-24; 15:10-14.

- V. 4** "Overcometh the world" - 15:18-19; 16:33; 17:14-16.

- "The victory" - 20:29-31.

- V. 5** "He that believeth" - 3:15-16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 11:25-26.

V. 6 "Water" - 1:31-32; 3:5; 4:10, 14; 7:38-39.	24-25.	"Keepeth himself" - 8:31-32.
"Blood" - 6:55.	V. 11 "Eternal life" - 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 6:40, 47, 68; 10:28; 12:50; 17:3.	"Wicked one" - 8:44.
"Spirit beareth witness" - 1:33.	"Life in the Son" - 1:4, 14; 5:21, 26; 11:25-26; 14:6.	V. 19 "Of God" - 1:12; 6:46; 8:42.
"Spirit is truth" - 6:63; 7:39; 14:17; 15:26; 16:13.	"Hath not the Son" - Jn. 5:40.	"World in wickedness" - 12:31; 16:8; 17:15.
V. 7 "Bear record" - 8:13-14.	V. 12 "Hath life" - 1:12; 3:36; 5:24.	V. 20 "We know" - 20:31; 21:24.
V. 8 "Spirit" - cp. v. 6.	V. 13 "Have I written" - 20:31; 21:24.	"Given understanding" - 17:3, 14.
"Water" - cp. v. 6.	"That believe" - 1:12; 3:18.	"We may know" - 7:28-29; 8:55.
"Blood" - 19:34-35.	"Ye have eternal life" - 17:3.	"Him that is true" - 3:33; 7:28; 8:26; 17:3.
V. 9 "If we receive witness of men" - Jn. 5:34-36; 8:17.	V. 14 "If we ask" - 14:13; 15:7; 16:24.	"In him" - 14:20, 23; 17:21.
"Witness of God is greater" - 5:31-37; 8:18.	"He heareth" - 9:31; 11:42.	"In His son" - 14:6, 20-23; 15:4-7; 17:21.
God hath testified of His Son" - 5:36; 12:28.	V. 15 "We know" - 14:13-14.	"The true God" - 5:18-19; 6:46; 8:16; 10:30-38; 14:7-9.
V. 10 "Witness in himself" - 5:38.	V. 16 "A sin unto death" - 17:12.	"Eternal life" - 17:3.
"He that believeth not God" - 1:11; 3:33.	"Pray" - 17:9.	V. 21 "Little children" - 13:33.
"Believeth not the record" - 5:36-47; 21:	V. 17 "Whosoever" - 1:13.	"Keep yourself from idols" - 12:25.

THEME STUDIES

The Epistle is particularly rich in theme studies, for John is constantly contrasting ideas, or using words in particular relationships. The careful student of the Word will find great pleasure in developing these themes. As an indication of what might be done, we have outlined some themes on subsequent pages, and suggest that the reader extend the idea incorporating other subjects.

ERROR OPPOSED

In the Epistle, John rejects the claims of errorists, and reveals the fallacy of the following contentions:

* That we can walk in darkness and have fellowship (1:6) * That sin is not inherent (1:8) * That sin can be glossed over (1:10) * That we can experimentally know Him without obeying Him (2:4) * That we can abide in Christ, yet walk inconsistently (2:6) * That fleshly hate is consistent with walking in Light (2:9) * That disunity is consistent with Christ (2:18-19) * That true fellowship can be maintained in a denial of the relationship of the Father and Son (2:22; 5:1, 10) * That righteousness does not require works (3:7) * That Jesus Christ did not come in human nature (4:3) * That we can know God and refuse Apostolic teaching (4:6) * That fleshly hate is consistent with love for God (4:20).

ETERNAL LIFE

* Promised in Christ (2:25) * It is a gift of God on conditions (5:11) * Christ is the Word of Life (1:1) * He manifested eternal life, which is an attribute of God (1:2) * Proclaimed by the Apostles (1:2) * Only attained in Christ (5:12) * By belief in him (5:13) * This life can be obtained even in spite of sin (5:16) * It is obtained only through a knowledge of the Father and Son (5:20) * Believers have passed from a relation to death to one of life (3:14) * They must sacrifice natural life to attain eternal life (3:16).

The First Epistle of John

THE TRUTH AND THE ECCLESIA

THE UNCOMPROMISING DEMANDS OF TRUE LOVE

In which the requirements of the Truth are contrasted with the attitude of Errorists.

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN — Ch. 1:1-4

1. The Truth Has Been Plainly Revealed vv. 1-2.
2. Joy Is Fulfilled In Complete Fellowship Therewith vv. 3.4.

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Verse by Verse Exposition

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN

(Chapter 1:1-4)

The Epistle is an appendix to the Gospel. It takes hold of the very expressions used in the latter, and applies them under pressure of the false doctrines being taught at that time. Thus, whereas the Gospel of John emphasises the principle of God manifestation in the Lord Jesus, the Epistle asserts the reality of Christ's humanity, or flesh. The errorists denied that Christ came in the flesh (Ch. 4:2), but the Apostles countered by asserting the tangible reality of that one whom they had seen, considered, and handled.

The Truth Has Been Plainly Revealed — vv. 1-2.

John reveals that there is no shadow of doubt in the reality and tangibility of Christ's person.

VERSE 1

"That which was from the beginning" — "That" is neuter gender, and therefore indicates inanimate things hidden with the Father, but since manifested by Christ.

"Which we have heard" — This relates to a Divine wisdom. Jesus disclaimed that the doctrine he preached originated from himself, and taught that it came from God (John 7:16; 8:47). Obviously the doctrine of the Trinity is wrong, for otherwise, he would have identified this doctrine as his own.

"Which we have seen" — John, as the last of the Apostles, represented them all, and explains how that they had seen Divine miracles, supplementing the Divine wisdom of Christ. (John 5:36; Acts 2:22). These were works that God did through Christ. Such power was with God from the beginning, long before it was manifested in the Lord Jesus.

"Which we have looked upon"

—The word "looked" is *theaomai* in the Greek, and signifies "to contemplate earnestly with regard and admiration" (Bullinger). From this word is derived the English word "theatre." The Apostles had "looked upon" or "earnestly beheld" the Divine ways or character as it was revealed in the Lord, and therefore saw God manifest in the flesh (John 6:38; 17:6; 1 Tim. 3:16).

"Our hands have handled" — The previous expressions could be related to the Lord Jesus before his resurrection, but this is obviously a reference to the post-resurrectional Lord who invited the Apostles to "handle him" and see for themselves (Luke 24:39; John 20:27). They saw his glory the glory of the "word made flesh," of the "only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The word translated "handled" is *pselaphao* and signifies "to handle with a view to investigation," especially "to grope like a blind man, or as in the dark." In the Lxx it is found in Gen. 27:22, which records that Isaac "felt" Jacob, to prove that he was really Esau! John is thus proving that the risen Lord was in a body as real and tangible as that which

he had before he died. This is denied by Jehovah's Witnesses who would find themselves in the category of those whom John condemned as errorists.

"Of" — This is the Greek preposition, *peri*, signifying "concerning." The Lord was the word of life made flesh. *Peri* being in the genitive case governs the significance of the phrase "the Word of (the — Greek) life," to mean: "The Word who is the Life." This endorses the Lord's own comment: "I am the life" (John 14:6). In this verse John describes what he handled with a view to investigation. This was the resurrected body of the Lord, then a body of life, and no longer mortal. In the body of the resurrected Lord he saw a nature never before revealed to man.

"The Word of life" — The Lord Jesus Christ was the "word made flesh"; the personification of the Law and the Prophets in the midst of Israel. The word *Logos* (Word) denotes the outward expression by which inward thought is revealed. It signifies not only the spoken word, but the idea revealed thereby. *Logos* represents a *Declaration* of wisdom, reason, and purpose. Parkhurst comments upon the title as applied to Christ: "This title is not taken, as some have imagined, either from Plato or Philo (with whose writings there is not sufficient reason to think that the Apostles were acquainted), but from the Scriptures of the O.T., and the writings of the Jews in conformity therewith. The Greek philosophers conversed with the Jews, and borrowed many expressions from them".

The *Logos* was with the Deity in the beginning (John 1:1), for all creation was governed by wisdom and had design and purpose in its making (Prov. 8:22). Indeed, everything was dominated by it. Times and seasons, the rise and fall of nations, were established with Yahweh's purpose in mind; a purpose that was proclaimed from the beginning (Gen. 3:15). Christ was that *Logos* made flesh, the personification of the purpose of God. Accordingly, *The Logos of God* became his title (Rev. 19:13); and because the words he spake were life-giving words (John 6:63), he also bears the title *The Logos of Life*.

VERSE 2

"For the life was manifested" — What life is this? Obviously that life which was revealed through the body that the Apostles handled: eternal life, which was originally with the Father, for it constitutes an element of Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), but was manifested for the first time in a member of the human race, in the person of the Lord Jesus, the Word made flesh.

"And we have seen it" — This repetition is designed to emphasise the thought already expressed.

"And bear witness" — The reputation of John was such that his evidence would be accepted as reliable. It was well known that the Apostles had doubted at the time of Christ's death, and required full proof before accepting the fact of his resurrection. Their witness, therefore, was of great relevance.

"Shew unto you" — The word in the Greek is *apaggelo*, "to bring tidings." This was the theme of apostolic witness (Acts 1:8).

"Eternal life" — This is shown to be Divine in its origination, and as forming the basis of Apostolic hope (Titus 1:2). John declares that it has been promised unto believers (1 John 2:25). As it is a matter of hope (cp. Rom. 8:24-25) and promise, it is not at present possessed by believers, except in that sense. John, indeed, says that "ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13), but it is only a present possession because it is promised of God, Who cannot lie, and Who "speaks of those things that be not as though they are" (Rom. 4:17). If we fulfil the conditions set down, eternal life is a certainty, though we do not possess it at the moment. But what are we to make of such statements as: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God" (John 17:3)? Such expressions can signify: This is the basis upon which life eternal will be granted. The same form of expression is used in such places as John 3:19: "This is condemnation . . ." (it is the basis of con-

demnation); John 6:29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe . . ." (rather, this is the basis by which the work of God is performed); John 12:50: "His commandment is life everlasting . . ." (or, obedience to His commandment is the basis upon which life eternal will be granted). Eternal life is divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). It is an attribute of the Father and will become the nature of His children in the Age to come. They must qualify for it by developing those divine characteristics manifested in the Son.

"With the Father" — "With" is *pros* with the accusative case, thus signifying "before" or "facing" the Father, with motion towards Him, thus gravitating towards the Father. Eternal life, or Divine Nature, is not only the objective that God has in store for those who obey Him, but the ultimate means whereby they will be completely drawn to Him, so as to constitute them "one" with Him (John 17:21). This hope of eternal life, was formerly but an abstract principle, but became a reality in Christ.

The message of John is that since the believer is called to be a partaker of this nature and life, it is necessary that he reveal the ethical and spiritual qualities consistent with it, as revealed by the Father. Thus even the hope of eternal life, draws one towards (*pros* — flows toward) the Father (John 17:3).

"Was manifested unto us" — In the person of the risen and glorified Christ.

Joy is Fulfilled In Complete Fellowship Therewith — Vv. 3-4

John re-affirms truths he has already declared unto the believers, that they might have confidence in that which they had espoused, and that their joy might be full.

VERSE 3

"That which we have seen and heard" — The personal evidence of eyes and ears is contrasted with the theories of errorists who lack the credentials of the Apostle.

"Declare we unto you" — John does not limit this expression to the things contained in his Epistle, but relates them also to those found in his Gospel (John 17:20), by which fellowship might be had with the Father and Son (John 17:21).

"Fellowship" — The word in the Greek is *koinonia* and signifies "sharing in common," from *koinos*, "common." John would share with all believers, his knowledge of what he had seen, heard, and handled.

"With us" — "With" is *meta* in Greek, and signifies partnership. He would share in a common partnership his knowledge concerning the Christ. This "fellowship" and "partnership" is founded upon a common acceptance of revealed truth relating to God and His purpose.

"Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His son, Jesus Christ" — Here, again, "with" is *meta*, signifying "partnership."

VERSE 4

"And these things write we unto you" — By "these things," the Apostle signifies all the things he has disclosed to them, both in his Gospel as well as in this Epistle. He here gives his first reason for writing: "That your joy may be full."

"That your joy may be full" — The Revised Version changes "your joy" to "our joy." It is a joy that the Apostle shared in common with the believers. The joy relates to the pleasure experienced in true fellowship one with the other. See the use of the term in John 17:13; and the appeal of Paul in 1 Thess. 5:16.

God is Light

(Chapter 1:5 - 2:29)

This is the first main division of the Epistle. It affirms that God is Light, and in so doing, lays the foundation for all that follows. Without light, there cannot be love, and without love there would not be the promise of life. Thus, in proper sequence, John declares that God is Light, God is Love, and God is Life.

He declared that God is Light, not that God is the Light. Grammarians claim that the absence of the definite article in such a statement as that stresses quality, nature, or essence, so that what John taught was that God as to His very nature, essence and character is Light. Other writers declare that He is the Father of lights (James 1:17), the Possessor of light (1 Peter 2:9), the Dweller in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16), but John goes further, and states that He is Light itself.

If God dwells corporeally in the heavens as a Being of Light, His children on earth must reflect that Light, being begotten by it.

Light creates, makes manifest, and conquers. It creates, because it causes life to spring forth; it makes manifest, because its searching rays penetrate everywhere; it conquers, because darkness ceases to be in its presence. Thus it is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. And so also is God.

Light speaks of eternity, for whereas darkness limits, light is limitless. We might stand on a plain that is one hundred miles in diameter, but if it is night-time, and the moon (the reflector of the light of the sun) be not shining, we will be closely walled in by a darkness that will imprison us. But let the light of the sun appear, and the limitless distance will be exposed to our view; the immensity of the plain will spread out before us as far as the eye can see.

Light is active, but darkness is passive. Light penetrates, and completely destroys darkness. Darkness can only exist where light is absent.

Light is a revelator. It reveals the true shape of things, and brings out hidden beauty, by giving color and form to that about us. We see the beauty of light shining in the dewdrop, sparkling on the waters of the running brook, reflected from a million gems on the blue surface of the mighty deep.

Light is health-giving. Without light there could be no life, and where it is shut out true health languishes. It is anti-septic, for it purifies and heals.

Light is warming and cheering. How pleasant are the

caressing rays of the sun! How mankind responds to the cheering influence of the bright light of a clear, sunny day! People are drawn from the shelter of their homes to bask in its cheering rays. It calls both rich and poor to its bounty "without money and without price."

Light gives hope and joy. Nothing ever seems so hopeless when the sun is shining. "Joy cometh in the morning," sang the Psalmist (Ps. 30:5). "I will sing of Thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of Thy mercy in the morning" (Ps. 59:16). "My soul waiteth for Yahweh more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning" (Ps. 130:6).

Light shone in the homes of the Israelites, from the God of Light, when darkness reigned in Egyptian dwellings (Exod. 10:23); there was a pillar of fire to give them light in the midst of the darkness of the night (Exod. 14:20); there was the lampstand of light in the holy place to emphasise to the people that they should "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

Isaiah appealed to the people to "walk in the light of Yahweh" (Isa. 2:5), for, as the Psalmist declared, "Yahweh is light and salvation" (Ps. 27:1), "light and truth" (Ps. 43:3), "covering Himself with light as with a garment" (Ps. 104:2), "showing His light" unto the redeemed (Ps. 118: 27).

His law is described as light (Prov. 6:23), and the path of the just as "a shining light" (Prov. 4:18). Thus the mission of the Apostles was to turn people from "the power of darkness unto light" (Acts 26:23), so that they might be "light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8), being "children of light" (Eph. 5:13-14; 1 Thess. 5:5).

To that end, Christ came as the manifestation of Light (John 1:5, 7, 8, 9; 3:19-21), for he was "God manifest in flesh." He proclaimed himself to be the Light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5; 12:35-36, 46), though, for a time, that Light was encased in a body of flesh. Now, however, it is manifested through a body of glory (Phil. 3:21), whose radiant presence will one day destroy the forces of darkness that meanwhile enshroud the earth (2 Thess. 1:7-10), when he shall be "glorified in his saints."

These ideas are conjured up in the declaration of John that "God is light." But it is not sufficient to have light; we must have an organ adapted to its use. What is the use of a bright light to a blind man? It matters not how brightly it shines, it does not benefit him. Moreover, even when the eye has sight it must be correctly focussed, otherwise the vision will be distorted or blurred. When the natural eye is healthy, it brings all things into correct perspective, and the actions of the body can be regulated accordingly. In similar manner, when the mental eye is sound, the spiritual vision will be clear (Matt. 6:22-23). The

Lord Jesus exhorted: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Light is used in the Bible as a symbol for several divine things. The symbol of the Ecclesia is the moon, which has no light of itself, but reflects the light of the sun. The symbol of Christ, the manifestation of Yahweh, is that of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his beams (Mal. 4:1-2). The symbol of the coming age of glory is that of "the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. 23:4; Isa. 60:1). That Sun is the Sun of righteousness, whose illuminating, penetrating, purifying rays will flood the political, religious and social world with light to the glory of Yahweh and the wellbeing of man. It will then be acknowledged on all sides, that God is Light.

Fellowship Is Predicated Upon Walking In Light — Vv. 5-7

God is a Being of Light. The significance of that statement is illustrated by the influence of light in nature. To qualify as God's sons, believers must reflect that light, which, therefore, provides the basis of true fellowship.

VERSE 5

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you" — The substance of all that John had received from the Lord respecting the Father can be summed up in the declaration that God is light, and in the consequences that follow from his doctrine. Christ came as the messenger of Him who is Light (Mal. 3:1; John 8:12). In the Scriptures, Light is the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, prosperity, and happiness. It is the source of life and health; the enemy and destroyer of darkness. See James 1:17.

"God is light" — See introductory note.

"In Him is no darkness at all" — James describes God as "the Father of lights" with whom "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). In so describing God, he was using a scientific fact which was not generally known by the world of science of his day. To man it appears that the sun has movement that produces variations in the seasons such as summer and win-

ter, and shadow of turning in forming day and night. But, in fact, the sun is constant in its shining, and these variations arise entirely from our situation in regard to it. When we experience night, it seems as though the sun has ceased to shine; when it is winter, it appears as though it lacks strength. But, in fact, it is the earth's position in relation to the Sun that causes these changes, not the strength or constancy of the sun's shining. So it is with our associations with Yahweh. Trials and temptations are not indications that He has turned His face from us or forsaken us. John supplies the true affirmative and negative: God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. He is always "shining," and we can always turn to Him in prayer to receive the warmth of His presence. Because God is light, fellowship with Him must be based on light. He cannot fellowship darkness, any more than darkness can continue where the sun is shining. See 1 John 1:7; John 1:5-9; 3:19-21.

VERSE 6

"If we say" — This is the first of the seven tests of genuine discipleship that John postulates. He establishes the principle that fellowship is conditional upon walking in light; and declares that if we claim fellowship but walk in

darkness we are not honest with others.

"We have fellowship with Him"

— To claim fellowship with God, we must identify ourselves with His revelation in doctrine and practice, on the principle that, "Ye shall be holy: for I, Yahweh your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26). The world repudiates that principle. Jesus declared: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil... But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

"And walk in darkness" — To walk in darkness is to walk according to the dictates of the flesh unenlightened by the truth of God.

"We lie, and do not the truth"

— We are false in both word and deed, and our fate is described in such references as Rev. 21:27; 22:15.

VERSE 7

"If we walk in the light" — If our actions conform to the Truth.

"As He is in the light" — Paul taught that Yahweh dwells in light (1 Tim. 6:16). That light is typical of the Truth which is light expressed. Believers are called upon to walk in the light as "He is the light", that is, in the same kind of light as He has. They cannot manifest the same *measure* of light as does He, but they can reveal the same *kind* through the revelation He has given in His word. The Truth is designed for God manifestation; to reveal the character and outlook of God in those who embrace it. This common belief brings them into fellowship with others who share it, and with Yahweh Who revealed it.

"We have fellowship one with another" — We are united together in belief and action, and are likewise united with God.

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son" — See Acts 20:28; Rev. 7:14.

"Cleanseth us from all sin" — This is effected by the confession and forsaking of sin (see v. 9), in fulfilment of the promise of God (Ps. 65:3). See also Rom. 4:25;

1 Cor. 6:11; Tit. 2:14.

Light Reveals Sin And Leads To Confession — Vv. 8-10

Light reveals the truth concerning ourselves, showing that we possess a nature that is sin-prone, and, moreover, that we succumb to its impulses.

VERSE 8

"If we say" — John advances a second test of genuine discipleship. It is possible to claim a false sanctity, in which we deceive ourselves. This stems from failing to recognise the true nature of flesh, by which we are shown to be not honest with ourselves. Notice, how these various tests reveal a deterioration of attitude. If we fail in the first test, we are proved to be liars; if we fail to pass the second test we are shown to be self-deceived; but if we fail the third test (v. 10) we make God a liar!

"We have no sin" — It is important to notice that John is referring to the individual who claims that he is not related to sin, not to the one who says that he has not sinned! The self-deceived declare that they have "no sin," that is, that they are not related to sin in any sense. In the Greek, "sin" is in the singular number, and without the definite article. According to grammarians, when this happens in a context as the present, it relates to nature, and not to specific sins. The Diaglott renders the phrase: "If we say we have not sin..." Notice, that it does not render the statement as "If we say we have not sinned..." John is referring to those who delude themselves by failing to recognise the weakness of the flesh. The world does this when it speaks of the inherent goodness of flesh, of an inner light that reveals truth, or when it claims that the unenlightened conscience is competent to guide one in matters of conduct or belief. It is elementary to a walk in light to recognise the weakness of human nature, the evil tendency of flesh unenlightened by the Word, for such understanding will teach us to guard against it (see 2 John 7).

"We deceive ourselves" — The two basic doctrines of Scripture are the nature of flesh, and God manifest in the flesh. The former teaches us what we are; the latter reveals what we can become. If we fail to recognise the first, or to acknowledge the necessity of the second, we deceive ourselves.

"And the truth is not in us" — A person who maintains that he has never committed sin, is ignorant of the truth as well as of real nature of flesh (see Rom. 3:23). In the same way, according to the obvious meaning of this passage, a believer who declares that he is wholly sanctified, and lives without any sin, shows that he is deceived in regard to himself, and that the truth, in this respect, is not in him. He may understand other doctrines, but he is astray on this basic fact.

VERSE 9

"If we confess our sins" — The word "confess" is *homologeō* in Greek, from *homo*, "the same," and *logos*, "to say". Thus "to say the same thing," or to agree with another. In this context, it relates to acknowledging the reality of sins committed, by which we agree with God's estimate of our actions.

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" — In confessing our sins before God, we need to be frank and specific concerning them. Speak of them before Him, and seek His help in overcoming them. God has promised to forgive sins and is both faithful and just in doing so, because He has provided the means of redemption that emphasises these attributes (see Rom. 3:23-26). In forgiving sins, God is faithful because He has made good His promise to do so which He proclaimed at the beginning of creation (Gen. 3:15); He is just because the terms of redemption emphasise that principle (Rom. 3:23-26).

When sins are committed we must seek the forgiveness of God, and the strength to forsake them. The power to do so comes from the Word which is Yahweh's medium for cleansing.

"And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" — In his Epistle, John provides two definitions of sin. The first is lawlessness (1 John 3:4); the second is unrighteousness, or wrong-doing (1 John 5:17). The truly begotten of God never commit the former, but they are guilty of the latter. However, Yahweh can cleanse them from the latter through the influence of His word (see Psalm 119:9; John 15:3; 17:17).

VERSE 10

"If we say" — John advances the third test of genuine discipleship. The first revealed a false fellowship (v. 6), the second a false sanctity (v. 8), and now a false righteousness. In v. 8 he made mention of some who denied the fact of inherent sin; here he refers to some who do not acknowledge the reality of sin committed. They deny the fact of sin in action, even though they commit it. Like the adulterous woman of Proverbs 30:20, who wipes away external traces of her guilt and boldly declares, "I have done no wickedness," so some justify sinful actions and claim they are not sin.

"We make Him a liar" — To justify sin and repudiate its reality, is itself a sin of the greatest enormity, for it makes God a liar.

"We have not sinned" — This statement should be contrasted with that of v. 8. There John appears to be concerned with the sinful nature of man; here with the acts of sin. A man might falsely reason that flesh after the curse remained in the state in which God created it: very good (Gen. 1:31). Such a doctrine is deceptive. On the other hand, he might claim to have attained unto perfect obedience, so that whilst recognising the sinfulness of flesh, he has risen above it. Such a doctrine makes God a liar.

"His word is not in us" — A person may have an academic knowledge of the Truth, without the word dwelling within him as a dynamic motivating force (see John 5:38; 12:48). Knowledge is designed to create faith or conviction (Rom. 10:17) with the result that "Christ may dwell in your hearts" thereby (Eph.

3:17). When that happens, "his word is in us", for the Word or the *Logos of God* is synonymous with Christ (1 John 1:1).

CHAPTER 2

Light Reveals The Need To Imitate Christ — Vv. 1-6.

John writes to strengthen believers in their resolve to resist sin, and also to remind them that forgiveness is available when they do sin. He encourages them to walk as Christ walked.

VERSE 1

"My little children" — John writes from the standpoint of "an elder," the last of the Apostles, and he addresses his readers with the tender expression of affection and endearment, rather than that which is indicative of immaturity and lack of growth. They had been given into his care, and he treats them as a father would his children. The words "little children" are a translation of *Teknia* which signifies a child, and is related to *tikto*, "to give birth to." It therefore emphasises that believers are children by birth, the new birth into Christ. In addition, John uses another word (cp. v. 13) that emphasises children by instruction rather than birth, and both words are significant as indicating the relationship of believers to the Father.

Teknia is an expression that John uses frequently (vv. 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), and one which he borrowed from Christ. See Introduction. The Lord used it to address the Apostles who remained after Judas had left the little company in the upper room (John 13:33). Now again there had

been defectors who had left the company of believers (1 John 2:19), and John, recalling the expression of the Lord at that tragic moment when Judas left, used it to address those who remained, gently seeking to strengthen them in the face of trials that would test them. John is both patient and considerate, a contrast to his attitude when, as the Son of Thunder (Mark 3:17), he called upon Christ to pray for the destruction of the Samaritans (Luke 9:54-56).

"These things write I unto you" — This is the third reason given for writing (see Analysis). Previously he stated that he wrote. (1) — To declare things he had personally seen (Ch. 1:3); (2) — That their mutual joy might be full in the reaffirming of truth (Ch. 1:4). The third reason is now given: That they might avoid sin.

"That ye sin not" — John has already instructed them that they must walk in Light. What, then, did that Light reveal? It revealed that flesh is inherently sinful (Ch. 1:8), that acts of wrong-doing are inevitable (Ch. 1:10), but that forgiveness and cleansing from such are available in Christ (Ch. 1:9). Now he warns against presuming upon this. Some might reason that they could walk in light (i.e. with an academic understanding of truth), and yet sin with impunity, placing confidence in the forgiveness that would be freely granted in Christ. Paul had already warned against this false philosophy (Rom. 6:1), and now John does likewise. He exhorts his readers to avoid sin by manifesting the way of Light in action, though he comforts them with the knowledge that if they do sin, they have an Advocate

SIN

* Inherent in flesh (1:8) * Must be acknowledged (1:9-10) * Must be avoided or forgiven (2:1) * Forgiven for Christ's sake (2:12) * Christ is the propitiation for all sins (2:2) * Cleansed from sin by Christ (1:7) * A definition of sin as Lawlessness (3:4) * The lack of the habitual sinner (3:6) * The begotten of God do not sin (3:9) * Degrees of sin (5:16) * Another definition of sin (5:17) * Attitude of the begotten towards all sin (5:18) * Attitude of the world (5:19).

with the Father through whom they can plead forgiveness.

“An Advocate with the Father”

— The word “Advocate” is *parakletos* in the Greek, and literally signifies “to call to one’s side” or to one’s aid; thus a helper. In Greek usage, *parakletos* related to a witness called to one’s assistance in a law case, an advocate called in to plead a cause, or a person called in to instill encouragement in a company of depressed and dispirited men (such as a company of soldiers facing a dangerous and difficult consignment). Jesus Christ is all this to those who approach the Father through him. In John 14:16, the same word is translated “Comforter,” and it is related to the Spirit of Truth. Originally, the word “comforter” came from the word *fortis* meaning “brave.” Thus Jesus, in speaking of the difficult and dangerous mission before the Apostles, promised that he would provide them with a means of help that would fortify and encourage them. That Advocate, even the Spirit of Truth, is still available to us through the words of the Apostles (see John 17:20-22), so that we have both an earthly and an heavenly Advocate: The Spirit of Truth and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Truth assists us in our approach to the Father, for it helps us to filter prayer so that it conforms to His will (Rom. 8:26), and such prayers are presented by Christ at the right hand of God (v. 34). Thus the Spirit of Truth (our earthly Advocate) moves us to approach God in prayer, and the prayer is presented by Christ (our heavenly Advocate). Paul sums this up in Ephesians 2:18: “For through him (Christ our heavenly Advocate) we both have access by one Spirit (the Truth — our earthly Advocate — 1 John 5:6) unto the Father.”

“Jesus Christ the righteous”

— The Anointed Jesus rendered perfect obedience to the Father, even unto death, and this constituted him righteous (Rom. 3:23-26), and ensured his resurrection to life eternal (Acts 2:24; Heb. 13:20).

None could convict him of sin (John 8:46), and this makes him an effective Advocate for us (Rom. 4:25).

VERSE 2

“He is the propitiation” — The Greek word is *hilasmos*, which primarily signifies “to appease.” This meaning, however, is out of place in this connection, for God needed not to be appeased, but in mercy and love extended the means whereby our sins may be covered over, or blotted out. The verb, *hilaskomai*, is rendered “merciful” in Luke 18:13, and the related word *hilasterion* is used in Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5 for the mercy seat, or cover of the Ark. *Hilasmos*, therefore, points to the covering for sins obtained in Christ Jesus (Rom. 4:7), and evidently has that significance here.

“Also for the whole world” — Christ’s offering is adequate for every need, and is available unto all (John 1:29; 3:16). The unfortunate fact is that all do not avail themselves of it, though ultimately all the world will be redeemed thereby, both Jew (John 11:51-52) and Gentile (Zech. 14:16).

VERSE 3

“And hereby” — The Greek is *en toutoi*, “in this.” John postulates a practical test that reveals a genuine knowledge of Christ.

“We do know that we know him” — The word “know” in this statement is *ginosko*. It signifies more than mere academic knowledge, and implies to know by experiencing the fruits of knowledge. Jesus declared: “This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” Such a knowledge, which is manifested experimentally, establishes a relationship between the person knowing and the object known. In this context it implies the manifestation of knowledge in action (ct. 1 Sam. 2:12; Exod. 16:6; 33:13). To “know” the Father and Son in the way ex-

pressed by the Lord would be to express the results of knowing in action. John more clearly states this in the verse before us, by teaching that "we know that we know him if we keep his commandments."

"If we keep his commandments" — What tremendous importance is placed upon the little word "if." It teaches that something more than academic knowledge is necessary, even the fulfilling of his requirements. The word "keep" is *tereo*, and it signifies to watch over, to preserve, guard, keep. It implies not merely the act of obedience, but the desire to obey. It suggests the action of one keeping his eye fixed upon the object under observance; in this case, the commandments, or the precepts (Gr. *entole*) of Christ. If we watch over these, by filling our minds with his precepts, we are more likely to obey them, and, at the same time, to come to know him better. One of the best ways of coming to know a person, or his true character, is to serve under him. Let us study the precepts of Christ, and apply them, and we will come to really "know" him.

VERSE 4

"He that saith" — John introduces his fourth test: that which reveals a false allegiance, showing a person to be dishonest with God. The Apostle, however, has changed his approach. Instead of writing, "If we say," he writes, "He that saith". He is obviously referring to some specific person or persons. These were doubtless errorists, who were making claims to a relationship with God, which was not borne out by their deeds.

"I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments" — John is very forthright in his denunciation of those who make the claim of "knowing God," and yet do not keep His commandments, for he plainly and dogmatically categorises them as "liars." We must bear in mind that it is the Apostle

of love who is writing, indicating that such expressions are not inconsistent with a scriptural love when the facts demand them. See also 1 John 1:6; John 8:44.

"Is a liar, and the truth is not in him" — This is direct, forthright language; we cannot mistake its meaning. If a believer's life is inconsistent with its teaching, he makes a false profession; he claims to be what he is not. He has but an academic knowledge, and the truth does not abide in him as a motivating force.

VERSE 5

"He that keepeth his word" — John has been speaking of one "keeping His commandments," now he uses a more embracing idea, in that he speaks of them "keeping His word." There is sequential development in the two verses before us. A believer first "keeps God's commandments" (or precepts — v.4), he then moves on to "keep His word" (v.5), and through this development, love is perfected. John claims that this is necessary to the manifestation of divine *agape*, or love. Paul does likewise in teaching that "love rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6). Apart from the instruction, inspiration and guidance of the word it is impossible to manifest this form of "love." "Keepeth" is *tereo*, for which, see note on v.3. How important it is that we "keep," "watch over," and "guard" that word, that by its influence, love might be perfected. Let us graduate from "keeping his commandments" to "keeping his word" in its entirety that love in us might find the completion that God has designed for it.

"The love of God" — See note on the significance of this love at Chapter 3.

"Perfected" — The word is *teleioo* in the Greek, and signifies to bring to completion. We first experience the love of God when we accept the call, and commence to "keep His commandments"; we develop in that love when we "keep His word" and the full power of His revelation begins to

unfold. Through this means, we are brought into glorious unity with the Father and the Son, thinking along the channel of their ideals with the objective of being "made perfect in one" (John 17:23). By this means we experience the fulness of divine love (see John 17:26), and are induced by so doing, to reveal it to others. Paul describes this as "the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14).

"Hereby know we that we are in him" — What an important statement this is! It constitutes a comment on the Lord's intercessory prayer (see John 17:20-23). John warns us that we might claim to be in God and in Christ (1 Thess. 1:1), but that the claim is not valid unless we are manifesting the divine attributes of God that were revealed in such perfection in the Lord Jesus. In short, our claim to sonship is predicated upon the truth in action, and not merely in profession. We are living a lie if it be otherwise.

VERSE 6

"He that saith" — This is the fifth test of genuine discipleship. A person might make claim to an association with Christ which under test is revealed as false. Such a person is not honest with Christ nor the world.

"He abideth in him" — To "abide" is to dwell permanently. The word in the Greek is *meno*, and was an expression used by the Lord in the instruction he gave his disciples just prior to his crucifixion. In John 15:9-11, it is rendered by three words: "abide," "continue," "remain." It is used of persons abiding in a home, and not merely visiting it. It carries the idea of dwelling therein, and includes the principles of fellowship, family relationship, harmony, friendship. It signifies an intimate, continuous association and communion, and not a mere passing acquaintance. Thus Jesus exhorted: "Abide in me, and I in you . . . He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do

nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered . . ." (John 15:1-6).

"Ought" — John selected very important and significant words to express his teaching and we should ponder them earnestly. The Greek word translated "ought" is *opheilo*, and is much stronger in expression than the A.V. suggests. It signifies "to owe," and implies the existence of a debt that one must pay. It is our responsibility to pay the debt suggested in this verse in the way indicated, recognising, as we do so, that there is no great merit attached to the payment of a debt; it is something we "ought" to do.

"So to walk as he walked" — Christ has left us an example of such a walk as Peter declared (1 Pet. 2:21). As Jesus was the manifestation of the Father, so we are called upon to be likewise, though, naturally, in lesser measure (Matt. 5:48). He is set before us as the ideal and objective of our calling (Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 10: 5). He called upon his followers to heed his voice (John 10:16), and to follow in his ways (John 8:12; 13:15).

Love Is The Test Of An Enlightened Walk — vv. 7-11.

John emphasises the need to manifest a divine love. The law did likewise. But this old commandment is given a new application and force in Christ Jesus. Love in action, and not merely in word, is the criterion of a true walk.

VERSE 7

"Brethren" — The R.V. renders this as "Beloved," following the best Greek texts. The word, in Greek, is *agapetos*, and indicates those who receive and who manifest the Divine love.

"I write no new commandment unto you" — There was nothing new in that which John placed before the brethren, for it had been stated from the very beginning; and yet, in a sense, it was new in that it had been given

additional force by Christ's example. This fact John brings out in the verses now before us.

"But an old commandment" — The word rendered "old" signifies *of long duration*, old in years. The commandment given is old in the sense that it has always been inculcated; the Truth from the beginning has always enjoined it. Christ, however, has given greater power and significance to the principles of light, love and life inasmuch as he has revealed them in action.

"Ye had from the beginning" — This could relate to the beginning of the Mosaic age, for the Law commanded, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18), but new force had been given to this in Christ, in that we have Christ's own example. He laid down his life in love for those who come unto God through him, and in doing so, placed us under a great debt to manifest a measure of the same love to others.

"The old commandment is the word which ye have heard" — The words "in the beginning" which follow this statement should be omitted, as they are in the Revised Version, Diaglott etc. Those to whom John wrote, had heard of the old commandment which had been given at the beginning of the Mosaic age.

VERSE 8

"Again" — This is a note of contrast. The Greek word *palin* can signify "on the other hand," "in another sense." Whilst the command was not really "new," in that it had been given from the beginning of the Mosaic age, in another sense it was "new" in that it had been only theory in the Law whilst it had been given substance through Christ's example.

"A new commandment I write unto you" — John claims that what he wrote unto them was not new in that it had been proclaimed from the beginning. But, in another sense, it deserved to be called "new" for a new meaning had been given to it, inasmuch as its real significance had been revealed in the life and character of the Lord. That is why it can be called both an "old" and a "new"

commandment. Christ's example gave it added power. See John 13:34.

"Which thing" — In the Greek, these two words are expressed by one, *ho* and this is in the neuter gender, whereas "commandment" is in the feminine gender. The "thing," therefore, relates to the "new" force injected into the old commandment, and not to the commandment itself. Christ's example gave new force to this old commandment, and John claimed that those to whom he wrote manifested it also.

"Is true" — The word *alethes* can signify that which is "unconcealed," "manifest," "open." The new force given to the old commandment had been made manifest by both the example of Christ and the faithful walk of those to whom John wrote. From John 13:34 it is obvious that John built his comment upon the words of the Lord.

"The darkness is past" — The R.V. gives the phrase in the present continuous tense — "is passing." Since the manifestation of God in Christ, more light had been shed upon the Divine purpose, which was, in consequence, described by Paul as "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25). The Spirit of truth subsequently granted unto the Apostles guided them into "all truth," and as this knowledge was dispensed abroad, the darkness passed away. This likewise can be our experience, as we grow in knowledge and experience. Thus "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18-19).

"The true light now shineth" — The adjective, "true" is from *alethinos*, and signifies that which is real, genuine, or ideal, in contrast to that which is shadowy or typical. See the use of this word in Heb. 8:2; 9:24, where the "true" tabernacle (the real, genuine one in contrast to the shadowy typical one under the law) is referred to. John refers to Jesus

as the "true Light" in John 1:9. For centuries, the light had shone fitfully, but in the person of the Lord, the divine manifestation of light was revealed in its fulness (Rom. 16:25-26).

This was all foreshadowed in creation week. For the first three days, light penetrated the cloud that encircled the earth, but on the fourth day, the sun and moon shone in their full glory. Spiritual light, was similar. It had been predicted and proclaimed from the very beginning, but in the fourth millenium after creation, the true, genuine, or real light shone forth in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Consider the effect of this true light on the old commandment to love one's neighbour. The example of Christ gave substance to it. He illustrated the full requirements of it, so that it was no longer open to misinterpretation; and in so doing, he transformed it from mere precept to practical demonstration, and thus gave new meaning and power to it (John 13:34; Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 5:25). The law could command but not enforce; the Israelite could give lip service to love, and yet hide hate in his heart, undetected by the priest who was his judge in those days (Deut. 19:17). That is not possible in Christ who not only revealed what is required, but can read the hearts and motives of his followers.

VERSE 9

"He that saith" — John advances test No. 6, whereby the profession of truth is given close scrutiny. He reveals the possibility of a professed believer shown to be dishonest with his brethren, in that he claims to have light but manifests hate.

"He is in the light, and hateth his brother" — It is incongruous that one begotten of love should grow up to hate, and believers must be on their guard against such a possibility. The person who claims to walk in the light of Christ's love, and yet allows hate to govern his attitude towards his

brethren is a hypocrite, and, as John remarks, "is in darkness." But there is need of warning lest "hate" is as badly misunderstood as "love" sometimes is. John, who manifested love and avoided hate, could yet speak of errorists as "liars," "deceivers," "antichrist," and so on, even though they claimed to be brethren of Christ. Further, Christ commended those of Ephesus because they "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes which," he said, "I also hate" (Rev. 2:6), and because they "could not bear them which are evil" (Rev. 2:6). Hate has its place in the truth's relationships (see Ps. 97:10; 119:104), so that David could say: "Do not I hate them, O Yahweh, that hate Thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Ps. 139:21-22). Christ also, looked around on the hypocritical Pharisees with anger (Mark 3:5). Let us not misinterpret a vigorous repudiation of error as the hatred to which John makes reference in the verse before us. He is referring to hatred in the sphere of merely personal issues. Such emotion must be avoided, and we must extend love to the uttermost. As believers are sons of light, it becomes a law of their being that they oppose and destroy darkness, but it must be done without personal animosity.

"Is in darkness, even until now"

— Such a person remains in darkness, even though he may claim the light is shining, even though, in the person of the Lord Jesus, the true light of love in manifestation now shines forth to illuminate what should be done.

VERSE 10

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light" — To abide in the light is to abide in Christ who proclaimed himself to be the Light of the world. John emphasises that a person abides in light to the extent that he manifests love. What does that demand? Perhaps the best definition

of *agape* love is given in 1 Corinthians 13. Paul makes the point that love is more than understanding (v. 2); more than giving goods to feed the poor, or body to be martyred for a cause (v. 3). It is revealed in the affirmative qualities which he enumerates, and which he presents negatively and positively in the statement: "Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (v. 6). This divine love must not be confused with that sickly, sentimentality that passes current in the world of darkness for love; but develops out of an intelligent understanding of the will and purpose of God. Unless we manifest that love we are not of Christ; and yet it is an attribute that is frequently misunderstood even in the Ecclesia. Paul wrote the Corinthian brethren: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:15). Paul was prepared to sacrifice his personal interests to serve his brethren, and to win them back to a consistent walk in Christ, but his stern words of denunciation and exhortation to that end, all of which were uttered in love, only generated their dislike for the Apostle.

"There is none occasion of stumbling in him" — The phrase "occasion of stumbling" is *skandalon* in the Greek, and was the name given to the spring of the trap that ensnared the unwary bird or beast. If a person walks in the light of Christ's example and teaching, he will neither be snared, nor will he ensnare others (John 11:9-10).

VERSE 11

"He that hateth his brother" — The expression speaks of habitual hate based on mere personalities, not a hatred of evil.

"Is in darkness" — A person's profession of Christianity, his intellectual understanding of all mysteries of the Word, count for nothing in the absence of a practical manifestation of those prin-

ciples in action. See Ps. 82:5; Eccles. 2:14; John 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46.

"And walketh in darkness" — To "walk" is to manifest activity; and to do so "in darkness" is to be confused and uncertain as to one's direction and future. Those who walk in darkness "know not at what they stumble" (Prov. 4:19).

"And knoweth not" — This is a different word in the Greek to that used in v. 3. Here, the word is *oida*, and signifies "to see, perceive, or know." Vine comments:

"The differences between *ginosko* and *oida* demand consideration. *Ginosko* frequently suggests inception or progress in knowledge, whilst *oida* suggests fulness of knowledge. Whilst *Ginosko* frequently implies an active relation between the one who knows, and the person or thing known, *oida* expresses the fact that the object has simply come within the scope of the knower's perception."

Ginosko (the word used in v. 3) suggests experimental knowledge a knowledge that creates an active relation between the one who knows and the person or thing known as to reflect the one in the other. *Oida* signifies "to perceive, to intellectually understand." Thus v. 3 states: "We know (*ginosko*) that we know (*ginosko*) him if we keep his commandments." Knowledge is here predicated on action. That is not the case with *oida* in the verse before us. *Ginosko* is found in the statement of the Lord: "This is life eternal to know Thee" (John 17:3), by which we understand that life eternal is dependent upon a knowledge that brings the believer into such relationship with the Father and the Son as to reveal them in character: In John's epistles, *Ginosko* is found in the following places, and the reader would be well advised to mark them: 1 John 2:3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 18, 29; 3:1, 6, 19, 20, 24; 4:2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 16; 5:2, 20. 2 John 1. *Oida* is found in the following places: 1 John 2:11, 20, 21, 29. 3:2, 5, 14, 15; 5:13, 15, 18, 19, 20.

The difference between the two

words is seen in those verses where they occur in conjunction; e.g. "If ye know (*oida*) that he is righteous, ye know (*ginosko* — because you experience it) that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29). Again: "We know (*oida* — intellectually) that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know (*ginosko* — experimentally) him that is true . . ." (1 John 5:20).

"Whither he goeth" — The person who does not manifest the truth in action walks in darkness, and is blind to his ultimate destiny.

"Because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" — The "light of the body is the eye" (Matt. 6:22); however it needs light in which to properly see. The organ is useless in the absence of light. The unfortunate fact, however, is that many who walk in darkness imagine that they are walking in the light of truth. See notes on 2 Pet. 1:9.

Why Love Should Be Manifested— vv. 12-14

Those to whom John wrote were the recipients of divine love, and therefore had a responsibility to manifest it towards others.

VERSE 12

"I write unto you" — John gives a fourth reason for writing (cp. Ch. 1:3; 1:4; 2:1), this time to remind them of their privileged state in Christ and the responsibilities it entails (vv. 12-14).

"Little Children" — See note, v.1. By addressing them as "children," John reminds them of the state into which they have been begotten. In addition, it is a term of endearment, and embraced all to whom he wrote, both young men and fathers.

"Your sins are forgiven you" — This tremendous fact formed the basis of their hope. At the same time, the grace of God thus revealed through Christ, created a debt of love owing by recipients, that can only be repaid by them extending unmerited love to others

— an extremely difficult thing to do (see Matt. 5:44-48; Rom. 5:8).

"For his name's sake" — What is meant by such an expression? A person's name relates to the qualities that mark his character. The Father's character is revealed to us in such expressions as Psalm 103:8-15; Jer. 29:11, which emphasise His mercy. There are two sides to the character of Yahweh, however, and Paul exhorts us to "behold His goodness and severity" (Rom. 11:22).

VERSE 13

"I write unto you fathers" — The "fathers" are the more mature "children" to whom the Apostle wrote.

"Ye have known him that is from the beginning" — The verb is *egnokate*, the perfect tense of the verb *ginosko*, denoting an experimental knowledge of "him who is from the beginning." Who is that? The reference is to 1 John 1:1 which concerns the Word manifested in the Son, and therefore God manifest in the flesh. To "know" this in the sense of the word used by John is to manifest it, and to manifest it is to graduate for life eternal. See how John builds his thought on the words of the Lord Jesus in John 8:19; 14:7; 17:3. The perfect tense denotes something that has been brought to completion. These more mature members of the Ecclesia had developed the experimental knowledge of "Him that is from the beginning" to the extent that they manifested the Divine characteristics in their lives.

"I write unto you young men" — The younger, immature members of the Ecclesia.

"Because ye have overcome the wicked one" — The words "wicked one" is a translation of the Greek *poneros* which denotes that which is evil in itself and in its influence. From the use of the word in Matthew 6:13; 13:19, it is obvious that it is the flesh that John is referring to, and which

these "young men" had conquered by their acceptance of Christ. The evil propensities of the flesh dominate the world (1 John 3: 12; 5:18-19), but these "young men" had come out of the world, and had learned to conquer the flesh.

"I write unto you" — These words should be expressed in the past tense, as they are in the Revised Version: "I have written unto you." To what is John referring? Obviously to the Gospel that bears his name. Having first stated his reason for writing the Epistle (see v. 12), John now outlines his purpose in writing the Gospel which he had done earlier, and upon which this Epistle is based.

"Little children" — The word in the Greek is not *teknia* this time (see v. 1), but *paidion*. This

word likewise signifies children, or infants, but in a different sense. *Teknia* has relation to birth, from *tikto*, "to give birth to." *Paidion* is related to *paideuo*, "to train children" and thus indicates children under instruction. The word pedagogue (rendered "school-master" — Gal. 3:24) is related. As in verse 12, John is here writing to all the Ecclesia, which he then separates into "fathers" and "young men."

"Because ye have known the Father" — Life eternal is bound up in such knowledge (John 17:3). But to "know" in the context presented by John is to possess a motivating knowledge which manifests itself in action. Jeremiah declared that to "judge the poor and the needy" was "to know" Yahweh (Jer. 22:16). Hence, those to whom John wrote had embraced the Truth, and had commenced to apply its principles.

JOHN'S REASONS FOR WRITING (1 John 2:13-14)

It is very clear that the Epistle is based upon the Gospel, for the impress of the latter is found in every verse of the former. John would have us understand that, and to carefully compare one with the other. See 1 John 1:3; 2:14. In 1 John 2:12-14, John compares the Epistle with the Gospel by prefacing his comments with: "I write unto you . . ." or "I have written unto you . . ." The separation between the present and past tense should commence at the conclusion of v. 13, where the A.V. should conform to the R.V. John epitomises his purpose in writing as follows:

I write this Epistle

To all of you children by birth . . .
To the older members (fathers) . . .
To the younger members (young men) . . .

Reasons for doing so

You have been forgiven . . .
You have experimental knowledge.
You have gained a victory over evil.

I wrote my Gospel

To all of you children by instruction . . .
To the older members (fathers) . . .
To the younger members (young men) . . .

Reasons for doing so

You have knowledge of the Father.
You have knowledge of the Word.
You have strength through the abiding word, and have gained a victory over evil.

Thus John showed that the Epistle is an appendix to the Gospel, and that both were written for similar reasons.

VERSE 14

"I have written unto you, fathers because ye have known him that is from the beginning" — In this verse the Apostle addresses the same class of believers as he does in the previous verses. This, apparently, was for the purpose of emphasis, and to impress with the importance of that already stated. See v. 13.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" — In this statement, John adds that they "are strong". He presupposes that such is their condition, and he writes as to those who manifest strength. Paul exhorted believers that they "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10-11). He directed the Philippians to the source of such strength: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). John's repetition, emphasises the importance of his words, and is a fitting introduction to the exhortation that he now sets before his readers.

A Love That Must Be Avoided
— vv. 15-17

Whilst Divine love must be developed through the influence of the Word, a love for the world must be avoided. The present world, being temporary, is doomed to pass away with all that love it.

VERSE 15

"Love not the world" — The word for "love" is *agapao* which suggests a self-sacrificing love. It is possible to sacrifice self in service to the world, in a way not pleasing to God. Demas sacrificed his future with Christ to serve the world which he loved (2 Tim. 4:10), thus setting an example we must avoid. The only way in which we should love the world is by preaching the Gospel to it. Jesus declared: "God so loved the world (i.e. He loved it in this way), that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Compare this verse with John 15:19; 17:15-16.

"The world," John referred to is

the prevailing order or arrangement of things as it existed in the political, social and religious systems then and now extant. The word is *kosmos*, and signifies "order," "arrangement," "ornament," and so forth. It was the prevailing order or system of things that they were not to love.

"Neither the things that are in the world" — The "things in the world" are the elements thereof: the social, political and religious structure of society. See 2 Pet. 3:10, and notes. Their origin and source is summed up in the next verse, as the lust of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life.

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" — If, in the sense laid down by John, a man loves the world, he reveals that he is not motivated by a true knowledge of God, for he fails to reflect it in action. A person may profess the truth in regard to its doctrines, but if he shares that knowledge with a love of the world, living for the things that are in it; if it is the ruling principle of his life to gain and enjoy that which it offers, the love of the Father is not in him. He cannot serve God and Mammon.

VERSE 16

"For all that is in the world" — All the institutions of the world: its governments, its charities, its religions, are based on the flesh which is dominated by the three lusts enumerated by John. Originally, these lusts were inflamed by the teaching of the serpent, so that they dominated the fleshly mind, inciting Eve to disobey God. She looked at the tree from the perspective of the serpent's teaching. She saw that it was good for food, and so the lust of the flesh took possession of her; she saw that it was a tree calculated to make one wise, and she was influenced by the pride of life (Gen. 3:6). Since then, the world of flesh has been governed by these three lusts. Christ prayed: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). John's comment is really an ex-

position of John 8:44.

"The lust of the flesh" — "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," wrote Paul (Gal. 5:16). "We all had our way of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3).

"The lust of the eyes" — The eye is never satisfied, no matter how much a person may possess. See Eccles. 4:8.

"The pride of life" — See James 4:16.

"Is not of the Father, but is of the world" — These lusts are not generated by God, but by the flesh. In the first instance, they were inflamed by the suggestion of the serpent, which thought and taught in accordance with the mind of the flesh unilluminated by God.

Originally God made man "very good" (Gen. 1:31), and educated him in divine laws and teaching which then motivated Adam and Eve. But the serpent inflamed the desire of Eve, and she drew her husband aside to eat of the forbidden fruit. By transgression man became a sinner, and lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life were inflamed in him. He became sin-prone in nature. That this was not his state at creation is shown by John's words that the lusts of the flesh as they are found today are "not of the Father". The word "of" is *ek* "from" or "out of".

VERSE 17

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof" — The world of flesh is temporary and fleeting, and wisdom dictates that we look, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). This is not always easy to appreciate, for the world about us has all the appearance of power and permanency. This, however, is but an illusion. The world is doomed to pass away, and perhaps quicker than we think. Why, even the fashions of the world are shortlived, a token of

the world itself. If we put our confidence in the things it can offer, we will build on a foundation of sand which the storm of the last days will sweep away.

"And the lust thereof" — The lust referred to relates to mortality, and as such is shortlived. Giving way to the lusts of the flesh does never satisfy for long. It may appear to do so for a short period, but there comes a time when even "desire shall fail" (Ecc. 12:5). Present life is not only terminable, but comparatively short. That is not always appreciated in youth, but it forces itself on one as age takes its toll. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psa. 90:12).

"He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" — This defines a person who labors for eternity. He abides for ever. To "abide" is to dwell in, or to lodge. Where does he abide? John has already told us: not in the world but in Christ (Ch. 2:6). And Paul adds a comment: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

In what sense does the believer "abide in Christ forever"? The Diaglott clarifies the matter. It renders the last portion of this statement, as: "abides for the age." The preposition "for" is *eis* in the Greek and implies motion towards an object; in this case, the coming age. A person abiding in Christ, has found a lodgment that can secure for him a permanent place in the future age.

A Warning Against The Antichrist Of Darkness — vv. 18-23.

Having warned believers against the evil influence of the world, John now puts them on their guard against similar influences manifested within the Ecclesias.

VERSE 18

"Little children" — The word is again *paidion*, instructed ones, the word used in v. 13 where John makes reference to his previous writing, i.e. the Gospel.

"It is the last time" — There is

a need to discriminate between "the last time" of this verse, and "the end" referred to in such places as Matthew 24:10-14; Hebrews 1:1; 9:26. The former refers to the final dispensation in the preaching of the Gospel; the latter indicates the end of the Mosaic age which terminated with the fall of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15-16). John wrote after this time, and declared that it was "the last time," doubtless referring to the final dispensation in the preaching of the Gospel, called by the Lord, the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). The word translated "time" is *hora*, and signifies an hour, or, figuratively, a "season," and is apparently used in that way here. John thus declared that the "times of the Gentiles" or the last dispensation before the establishment of the Kingdom had commenced, and that it would be one noted for widespread error and opposition to the truth by those claiming to be its adherents.

But though John declared "it is the last time" he did not indicate how long that period would continue. In fact, it has extended to our time, and we await the return of the Lord which will terminate it. The term "the last time", therefore, relates to the dispensation of preaching to the Gentiles that commenced from the rejection of Jewry and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, until the return of Christ and the restoration of the Israelitish constitution of things under his control. The term relates to the "Gentile times" — the last of the three great dispensations of preaching.

"Ye have heard that antichrist shall come" — The antichrist is defined in Chapter 4:3 as those who teach error. In the verse before us, John warns that such organised efforts against the Truth had been predicted (see Matt. 24:24; Jude 17; 2 Pet. 2; 2 Tim. 3:1-5); but he makes the point that seeing the "last time" had commenced such were to be expected. What does he mean by "the last time"? It relates to the "times of the Gentiles," the final epoch of preaching which, John warns, would be characterised by

the emergence of antichrist.

"Even now are there many antichrists" — Even though the last epoch, or the times of the Gentiles, had only just begun, there were many who were teaching error in the name of Christ. John warned that this would develop into serious organised opposition to the Truth.

"Whereby we know that it is the last time" — John's words signify that the propagation of serious doctrinal error would be characteristic of the final dispensation (Acts 20:30). His statement is significant, for we are still in the same dispensation of time, though at its close. John's warning alerted the brethren to expect the Truth to be constantly under challenge during the final dispensation, and therefore constituted an exhortation to maintain vigilance that they be not seduced thereby.

VERSE 19

"They went out from us" —

When Judas left the upper chamber to betray his Lord, Jesus addressed the remaining disciples as "little children" (John 13:33). Now separatists within the Ecclesias were following in the footsteps of Judas the traitor, and it is significant that as Jesus had addressed those apostles who remained as his "little children," John does likewise to those who had remained faithful in the Ecclesias (v. 18). He evidently reverted in thought to the solemn occasion when the Lord was with his disciples, and sought to help and sustain them, even though the shadow of death stretched out to claim him. John was now in a similar position. His life, too, was nearing its end. But, before his departure, he followed his Lord in striving to help and sustain those who must follow on.

"They were not of us" — The preposition is *ek*, "out of." John disclaims that these separatists were ever really part of the true body of Christ; they had never developed "out of" the true teaching of the Apostles (cp. John 17:20).

"For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us" — John claims that if those who had left had been genuine believers, they would have remained in the Ecclesia; that is, they would not have apostatised. He makes the declaration so general that it may be regarded as a principle, that genuine believers will never leave the Ecclesia whilst it remains true to the Gospel.

"They went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" — The R.V. margin makes an important change in this statement. It renders the last phrase as: "that not all are of us." Accepting this reading, John's words become a warning to manifest the greatest vigilance. The action of the separatists in leaving the main body showed that they were not really part of Christ, even though they may have claimed to be so. But the fact that some could so act is a solemn warning that not all who claimed to belong to Christ were so in reality. There were some among them who were not of them. The Ecclesia must be on its guard against the fifth column activity of such a group; there was, and is, need for the greatest vigilance, lest a repetition occur of that which had already taken place.

VERSE 20

"But ye have an unction" — The word in the Greek is *chrisma*, "an anointing," and it is so rendered in the R.V. What is this unction, or anointing? In v. 27, John defines it as "truth" which abode in them. It is the holy spirit word (John 6:63), "the truth" (1 John 5:6), described as an "anointing" because the truth was revealed by the spirit in prophets, the Lord Jesus, and the Apostles (Neh. 9:30; Heb. 1:1). John did not claim that his readers had been anointed with it, but that they "had" or possessed it, so that it "abode in them." The true members of the Ecclesia possessed it; but those of the anti-christ faction did not. Jude sums

the matter up: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit" (v.19). Obviously Jude was referring to the spirit word, not to the outpouring of holy spirit power. The unction, or anointing, was the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17) given unto the Apostles, and proclaimed by them in the Gospel message.

"From the Holy One" — The Holy One is the Lord Jesus Christ. He promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles so that they may be fully taught in the Truth (John 14:26). The title implies what that Truth demands: sanctification or holiness (see John 17:17).

"Ye know all things" — If John's readers really knew all things, there would not have been any need for him to write unto them. The R.V. margin renders the phrase, "and ye all know." This changes the thought from knowing everything, to all having a sound understanding of Truth (v. 21). The purpose of anointing the Apostles with the holy spirit was to bring "all things to remembrance" (John 14:26). That having been accomplished, the fruits of that knowledge had been faithfully proclaimed by the Apostles to all believers so that all had come to an understanding. In measure therefore all possessed the anointing in that they received its benefit in the word of truth.

VERSE 21

"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth" — John emphasised that he wrote to those who *did* understand the principles of the Truth, and therefore were well qualified to follow his reasoning, and apply it in action.

"But because ye know it" — This was the ground of his appeal, and the reason why he believed that it would be effectual. It is far easier to appeal to those who are sound in the faith, for such is a necessary prerequisite to accepting and applying an exhortation.

"And that no lie is of the truth" — No form of error, however plausible it may appear, however ingeniously it may be defended, and however much it may seem to be favourable to human virtue

and happiness, can be founded in truth. The apostle's remark appear almost platitudinous, but it states a real truth of fundamental importance. The great heresies of the past have commenced as minor errors; but the slightest diversions from the Truth, when pressed to their logical conclusions will veer further and further away from it. Error often appears most plausible; it seems to make those who embrace it happy, and for a time they seem motivated by religion. But there is no future to it. The important question is, *What is truth?* Everything depends on the answer to that question, whether it be a sound life now, or eternal life in the future (Romans 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-3).

VERSE 22

"Who is a liar" — The Greek text provides the definite article: "Who is the liar?" (see Diaglott). The reference is to the supreme lie, the lie against the Truth, and not to falsehood in general (see Rev. 22:15). What was the supreme lie as far as John's statement is concerned? A denial that Jesus is the Anointed, involving a denial of the true relationship between the Father and the Son, and of the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh. This is the supreme lie. It is a lie that flesh unaided can reveal the righteousness manifested by the Lord; it is a lie, on the other hand, that teaches that Jesus did not come in the flesh, or that he is the second person of a trinity. Unitarianism and Trinitarianism are both lies. The former claims that flesh unaided can conquer sin; the latter denies that God manifest in the flesh was adequate to do it. The truth of the matter is that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19), that "God was manifest in flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). The Jews denied this, and were thus shown to be liars (John 8:44). On the other hand, the Lord taught: "This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

"That denieth that Jesus is the Christ" — To deny that Jesus

is the Anointed, is to deny that the Word was made flesh, or that God was manifest in flesh. The Gospel of John and the Epistle of John were both written to emphasise the truth of the doctrine of God manifestation.

"He is antichrist" — The Greek supplies the definite article: "He is the antichrist."

"That denieth the Father and the Son" — The relationship of Father and Son is virtually denied when it is maintained that the flesh could accomplish unaided that which Yahweh wrought through His son. If the flesh could do it, and did so in the person of the Lord Jesus, there was no point in Yahweh begetting a Son. That was only necessary because flesh unaided could not lift itself out of the hopelessness of sin and death into which it had fallen by the first transgression. Trinitarians, with those who deny the sinfulness of flesh, constitute the antichrist, for they deny the two fundamental doctrines of the word: the nature of flesh, and God manifest in the flesh.

VERSE 23

"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" — Jesus spake similar words (John 5:23). A person denies the Son when he rejects the doctrine of God manifest in flesh, because the appellations and relationship of Father and Son declare it. John's stern, forthright indictment emphasises how important it is to embrace the truth of this matter. Only those who grasp the reality of the relation of Father and Son really possess the Father (1 John 5:12).

"He that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" — Though these words are in italics in the A.V., they are acknowledged by many as being genuine, and are included in the Revised Version. The word "acknowledgeth" is *homologeo*, and signifies to confess to the same things. John, therefore, does not mean that if a person con-

fesses to the existence of the Son as an historic fact, he has the Father, but, rather, he has the Father if he confesses the same things as John has been teaching.

An Exhortation To Abide In Truth — vv. 24-29

Having reminded them of warnings that already had been given concerning the uprise of error during Gentile times, John proceeds to exhort each one of his responsibility to abide in the truth.

In 1 John 2:16-17, John provides two reasons for avoiding the world: (1) — it is alien to the Father; (2) — it is passing away. Now he counters with two reasons why we should cleave to truth: (1) — it unites with the Father; (2) — it promises eternal life.

VERSE 24

“Let that therefore abide in you” — The R.V. commences this section: “As for you . . .” thus providing a sharp contrast to that which has been stated before. John calls upon his readers to allow that truth to abide in them which they had heard “from the beginning.” Again we are directed back to Ch. 1:1, and to the theme of God manifestation: the theme of both John’s Gospel and Epistle. The word “abide” in this verse, is from the Greek word *meno*, which is also translated in this verse as “remain” and “continue.” The word signifies to be at home, to dwell as an inhabitant and not merely as a visitor. John exhorts that the truth should “abide” in us in that way.

“Abide in you” — In this comment, John drew upon the teaching of the Lord in which he emphasised the need to “abide in him” (John 15:4). A person abides in Christ when he embraces the truth in him, and permits it to motivate his life. Christ abides in our hearts through faith, taught Paul (Eph. 3:17), and as faith comes from “hearing the Word”, those convicted thereby will not be in danger of falling away.

“Which ye have heard from the beginning” — That which was taught them

from the beginning is the truth respecting the Son of God and the way of salvation. John’s statement is relevant to these two basic teachings of the Bible in comparison with that proclaimed by Christendom today. The doctrine of the Trinity is not found in Scripture. Even Trinitarians acknowledge that it was superimposed upon the Truth after the advent of Constantine. Its acceptance is a departure from that which was taught “in the beginning”. The same is true regarding the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. Gibbon has recorded how that the teaching of the Apostles regarding the Kingdom was changed and then “spiritualised” in the 4th Century, so that the doctrine as taught “in the beginning” found no place in the churches in subsequent times.

“If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you” — The things proclaimed from the beginning relate to the word made flesh (1 John 1:1), that is to the doctrine of God manifestation. Let that “remain” or dwell, in a believer, in the sense implied by John, and obviously it will mould his character as the inmates of a house determine the quality of a home. The character of the believer being thus changed to conform to that which dwells in him, he shall, in turn, continue in the “Son, and in the Father.”

“Ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father” — Fellowship with the Father and the Son is dependent upon walking in the light (Ch. 1:3-6). To walk in darkness, or in error, is to sever connection with the Father and Son who not only abide in Light, but, in themselves, are Light.

VERSE 25

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” — If we develop divine characteristics, we shall ultimately attain unto divine nature. This was illustrated in the Lord Jesus (see 1 John 1:1-2), and is the promise made to all in him. In that sense, and that alone, eternal life is “given” unto those “in Christ.” Eternal life is only found “in the Son,” so that he that hath the

Son hath life, in the sense that its ultimate bestowal upon him, is beyond all doubt (see Rom. 4:17).

VERSE 26

"These things have I written unto you" — The purpose of the Apostle was to warn and guide believers. In doing so, he put them on their guard against the arts and whiles of those who having embraced error, would seduce others into the same paths.

"Them that seduce you" — John could only view the errorists as being guilty of spiritual seduction and adultery (James 4:4; Rev. 2:20), for they were unfaithful to the truth that they had espoused. This is the case with all error, no matter how nicely it may be coated with sweet and attractive platitudes. There can be no compromise.

VERSE 27

"But" — Again this introduces a note of contrast which the R.V. makes even more definite by rendering: "And as for you . . ."

"The anointing ye have received of him" — The "anointing" is the spirit, which John later defines as the truth (1 John 5:6), and which has been received from Christ. This must "abide" in the believer (cp. notes on v. 20).

"Abideth in you" — In this statement John expressed his conviction that they were sufficiently grounded in the Truth to resist those who otherwise would overcome them.

"Ye need not that any man teach you" — They have no use for fleshly philosophy, no need for the words or wisdom of mere man, for their instruction comes from God (John 6:45; Isa. 54:13). They may need guidance from man (Acts 8:31), but it must be confirmed by the spirit word (1 Cor. 2:12-15).

"But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things" — The statement of John cannot mean that the mere act of physical anointing could teach one, and

therefore the term must apply to the "anointing" with the Word. This requires more than mere knowledge of the truth; it requires a conviction that results in an individual consecrating himself to its duties and responsibilities, as the result of the influence of the Holy Spirit word. "Walk in the Spirit," taught Paul, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). That Spirit, as we have noted above, is the Spirit-Word. However, the term signifies more than a mere acknowledgement of the Truth in an academic manner; it requires the development of the mind of the spirit (Rom. 8:6) or a mind disciplined and exercised by the Spirit Word: a form of thinking governed by the Truth.

"The same anointing is truth" — John's statement that the "anointing" (i.e. the spirit) teaches all things, and is truth, or true, aligns it with the "spirit of truth" that Jesus had promised the Apostles (John 14:17). He declared: "The words I speak unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). John defines the spirit as "the truth" (1 John 5:6).

"Even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" — The R.V. renders this a little clearer: "Even as it taught you, ye abide in him." The spirit word teaches us to abide in Christ (John 15:4), and we abide in him to the extent that we manifest the principles he stood for (1 John 2:6).

VERSE 28

"And now, little children, abide in him" — John thus impresses his readers with the exhortation that Jesus delivered to him in company with the other Apostles as they walked in the darkness toward Gethsemane (John 15:1-4).

"When he shall appear" — Some texts read *hotan* (see Diaglott), "whenever," implying uncertainty as to time; others read *ean*, "when" pointing to the future probability, and implying a set time. Whatever reading is accepted, the exhortation is that we should constantly abide in Christ, so that at the time of the return, we may receive him with confidence.

"Confidence" — The Greek word *parresia* signifies such a confidence as will be expressed in freely speaking. This, doubtless, relates to the account that each one will have to give of himself (see Rom. 14:12).

"And not be ashamed before him" — The word "before" is from the Greek *apo*, signifying "from," "away from," (Bullinger), and therefore implies the act of shrinking away from Christ in shame (see R.V. mg.).

"At his coming" — This is the time of the judgment of the household (2 Tim. 4:1). Believers will not be made ashamed at that time if they act as recommended by John. The promise to those who are motivated by faith is that they shall never be ashamed or confounded (see 1 Pet. 2:6). However, there will be some who will be ashamed at his coming (Matt. 7:21-23).

VERSE 29

"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that

doeth righteousness is born of him" — In this verse we have the two words for "know" used in conjunction — *oida* and *ginosko* (see note on v. 11). The former word implies a fulness of knowledge, and is used first in this verse. The latter word suggests that intimate understanding that will produce fruit. If a person comprehends that Christ is righteous, he will be led to that inner knowledge of the principles of righteousness that will find fruit in his own way of life. By that process Christ has a very powerful impact upon believers, for through it they manifest a newness of life. They are born, or begotten (see R.V.), of him. Here, the preposition is *ek*, out of; thus they are begotten out of him. As Eve was taken out of Adam, so the second, mystical Eve, the Ecclesia (2 Cor. 11:1-3) is begotten "out of" the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45; Heb. 2:13). In other words, Christ's example must become the mainspring of our actions.

Theme Study

THE BELIEVERS

* Are begotten children (2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4) * Are begotten of God (2:29; 5:1) * Are of God (4:4) * Must seek for forgiveness of sins (1:9) * Must walk in light (1:7) * Must know the Truth (2:21) * Must keep the Commandments (2:4; 5:2) * Must be changed into Christ's likeness (3:1) * Must test doctrine and teachers (4:1) * Must confess the Sonship of Christ (4:15) * Heeds Apostolic counsel (4:6) * Abstain from idolatry (5:21) * Purify themselves (3:3) * Do not sin (3:6, 9; 5:18) * Manifest righteousness (3:7) * Manifest love (3:11; 4:11, 19, 21) * Hated by world (3:13) * Abide in Christ (2:6) * Know the Father (2:13) * Overcome the flesh (2:13) * Promised eternal life (2:25; 5:11) * Are anointed in Christ (2:20, 27) * Seek confidence (2:28) * Become Sons of God (3:1) * Passed from death to life (3:14) * Manifest confidence towards God (3:21) * Are pleasing in God's sight (3:22) * Recipients of God's love (4:9) * God dwells within (4:12) * Dwell with God (4:16) * Overcome the world (5:4) * Manifest the Witness (5:10) * Petitions are heard and granted of God (5:14-15) * Are in Christ (5:20) * Summary of what is required (3:23).

God is Love

(Chapters 3 and 4)

The principle that God is light having been established, what does that Light reveal? First and foremost it reveals that God is Love, and this, naturally, becomes the second phase of John's treatise. But we must not confuse this love with that sentimental emotion that passes current in the world for love, for the love upon which John discourses is a Divine principle, and is not based upon flesh-likings.

There are three Greek words for love: eros, phileo, and agape. The first is never used in the Bible; the third is never found outside of it. The first relates to sensuality motivated by lust; the third relates to a self-sacrificing desire to serve, motivated by an enlightened mind.

The second word, phileo, is found both in the Bible and in Greek manuscripts. It expresses the affection of true friendship, and of personal regard. From this word is derived "philos", "a friend." Phileo speaks of the desire to cherish and manifest affection for the object of it. It is born of liking — something that attracts one to another.

Agape, on the other hand, is not necessarily born of liking, but can be shown towards an enemy as well as towards a friend. It is a word not found in any Greek writing outside of the Bible, and, apparently was originally coined by the translators of the Septuagint to express the Divine grace and mercy that God has revealed towards humanity, and which believers are expected to show to others. Bullinger defines it as: "Love that is self-denying and compassionately devoted to its object; the highest word among the Greeks was philanthropy but this does not denote love to man as such, but rather justice, giving him who was entitled to it his full rights; it even falls short of the philadelphia (brotherly love) of the New Testament. Agape, therefore, designates a love unknown to writers outside the Scriptures; love in its fullest conceivable form; first exhibited by Christ (1 John 3:16), expressive of God's relation to us (1 John 4:9), and the relation between the Father and the Son (John 15:10; 17:26; Col. 1:13). Lastly, it is the distinctive character of the Christian life in relation to the brethren and to all."

Because of the general misconception of the word "Love," we really need a different word to express it. The New Testament has "charity," but, again, that does not really define it. Agape is a self-sacrificing desire to render the greatest good to the object of it, not because that object has necessarily attracted one, but because the believer is intellectually enlightened to manifest that good. The qualities of that love are enumerated

in 1 Corinthians 13. It can be extended towards enemies, because it does not necessarily require the "emotion" that is normally associated with the term. It is pre-eminently God's love as shown in His work of redemption (John 3:16), and is reproduced in the hearts of believers by the power of the Spirit-word (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).

This is the love upon which John discourses. The noun is the word *agape*, and the verb, the word *agapao*.

CHAPTER 3

God's Love Is Revealed In That We Have Been Begotten To Sonship — vv.1-3

The love of God is already shown in our present position of privilege in Christ, but the fulness of it is yet to be revealed at Christ's coming.

VERSE 1

"Behold" — The word is in the plural (see Diaglott) — "Behold, all of you!"

"What manner of love" — The word "manner" is from the Greek *potapen*, "from what country," signifying that the love of God is foreign to that normally manifested. That love is defined in John 3:16, and was extended to sinners and enemies of God (Rom. 5:8, 10). Such action is foreign to normal behaviour.

"The Father hath bestowed upon us" — Yahweh acts as a Father towards those who are indeed His sons and daughters, viewing them with paternal interest as becomes His status as such. As a father is keenly interested in his children, so Yahweh is in His. Even the discipline they receive from Him is administered in love (Heb. 12:5-12).

"That" — The preposition is *hina* in the Greek and signifies

the purpose or goal of an action. A love foreign to human practice has been manifested by God with the purpose or goal of begetting sons to His glory.

"We should be called the sons of God" — The word "sons" is *teknon* in the Greek, and is related to *tikto*, to give birth to (cp. 2:1). The word thus signifies children by begetting, and is rendered as "children" in the R.V. The begetting is by the Word which Peter styles the "seed of God" (1 Pet. 1:23).

"The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" — Believers withdraw themselves from the world, and therefore the world does not know them experimentally (*ginosko*), for it does not reproduce its fruit in them (cp. 1 John 2:16-17; John 17:14).

VERSE 2

"Beloved" — The word in the Greek is *agapetos*, signifying those experiencing *agape* or the Divine love.

"Now are we the sons of God" — Believers now sustain this rank and dignity, and on that fact they may reflect with pleasure and gratitude. At the same time it is a position of responsibility. The

Father's Name is named upon such (Acts 15:14), and that Name they can honour or dishonour. Recognising this is their present status, believers must expect the discipline that a considerate Father will administer, for He desires their eternal salvation (Heb. 12:5-12). The Greek word here rendered "sons" describes a young child needing development. The Father recognises believers as such, and makes provision for their immaturity (see Psa. 103:13-14). At the time when the Lord appears, they shall be made like him, fully matured in every regard.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be" — Grammarians state that this verse is in the aorist, passive tense, and should be rendered: "It has not yet been made manifest or visible" what we shall be (see Diaglott). The R.V. renders: "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." The Greek word *ephanerothe* (made manifest) signifies to publicly reveal or make manifest. It is true that the pattern had been revealed in the risen Christ, whom the Apostles had seen and handled (1 John 1:1-2), but that had not been the privilege of the general members of the Ecclesia, so that, as far as they were concerned, that which "shall be," had not been made physically manifest in their midst.

"But we know" — Gr. *oida* the word implies to know intellectually not experimentally.

"That when he shall appear" — The Greek word rendered "appear" signifies to be visibly manifested. But to what is John referring? Not to the coming of Christ, but to the manifestation of the glory in the saints. The RV mg. renders "him" as *it*, and the Greek favours that rendition. John is explaining that whilst "it doth not yet appear what we shall be" when eternal life is bestowed upon us, it will change us into what Christ is now. This, of course, will be after Judgment is passed.

"We shall be like him" — This refers to the change that shall be brought about in the accepted saints. "We shall be changed," declared Paul (1 Cor. 15:51). He

"shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). This change will complete our development from mere children of God (*teknon*) to mature sons of God (*huios*): the full manifestation of sonship (Rom 8:19-23).

"For" — The Greek preposition, *hoti*, "because," introduces "that which rests upon a patent fact" (Bullinger). It is obvious that as he is, we shall be, for both he and we will enjoy the same relationship with the Father (Rom. 8:23).

"We shall see him as he is" — *Opsomai* (see) is the future tense, middle voice, of *horaō*, to see, and being in the middle voice, signifies "will see for oneself." However, it implies more than mere physical sight, and involves a discerning and perceptive mind. Bullinger states: "It denotes, not the action of seeing, but the state of him, and the affection of the mind of him to whose eye or mind the object is presented, to truly comprehend or know." The word thus suggests that the redeemed will gaze upon Christ with the realisation that they are one with him both mentally and physically, thus fulfilling the Lord's prayer on their behalf (John 17:21; cp. 2 Pet. 1:4).

VERSE 3

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself" — True worshippers are ever conscious that the time will come when they must present themselves before the Judge, and in anticipation of that solemn occasion, they purify their characters by seeking forgiveness of their sins through Christ and by reforming their ways (1 John 1:7). As the Israelites ceremoniously purified themselves prior to appearing at the Passover (John 11:55), or as the nation was required to do likewise in preparation to meeting Yahweh at Sinai (Exod. 19:10-11), so Christ's followers do morally in preparation of the Judgment Seat.

“Even as he is pure” — The same *kind* of purity is revealed today by those who are truly Christ’s, and the same *degree* of purity will be manifested then, when such are clothed upon with divine nature (Phil. 3:21). In their present pilgrimage, they aim for that degree of purity, seeing in the Son the ideal of God-likeness to which they aspire.

Divine Sonship Is Incompatible With Sin — Vv. 4-9.

Having shown the need of a moral purification, John presents a contrast. The world is divided into those who either “do” lawlessness or “do” righteousness. The begotten of God cannot do the former; the begotten of the devil cannot do the latter.

VERSE 4

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law” — This most important statement and definition of sin governs the propositions that follow, in which John teaches that the begotten of God cannot sin. In analysing the verse, first consider the verb “committeth”. It is rendered “doeth” in the R.V., and “practises” in the *Diaglott*. This does not denote a single act of sin, but the habitual and continuous doing of it. Further, the Greek text has the definite article: “*the* sin” indicating a specific sin; the worse degree of sin, its most abandoned form. What is “*the* sin”? John defines it in the A.V. as “the transgression of the law.” But in the Greek, these words are rendered by one word: *anomia* from *nomos* (law), and *a* (no), signifying “no law”, or *lawlessness*. So the phrase can be rendered “Whosoever committeth the sin doeth the lawlessness (acts in a way that recognises no restriction of law); for the sin is the lawlessness”. Any sin is transgression of law, but here John is referring to the most heinous sin; such a sin as is impossible for the begotten of God to commit (see vv. 8-9). What sin is that? The sin of Lawlessness, which is acting with complete indifference to God’s will. And why cannot the begotten of God commit *the* sin of lawlessness? Because his begetting is the result of the implaning of the seed of Truth in his mind so that he

must live in awareness of God’s law (1 Pet. 1:23). Lawlessness is the act of pleasing oneself without any twinges of conscience that God’s law is being broken. How can a person who is “begotten again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23) commit such a sin as that? He might sin against the law of God, but he knows it because he is familiar with it. But he cannot be lawless or indifferent to it: not if he is truly “begotten of God”. If he does sin (and because of the nature of flesh sin is inevitable), he is conscious of it, and able to seek forgiveness of it by approaching God in the correct way.

In this verse, therefore, John is not referring to ordinary sins such as will be forgiven (1 John 1:9), but to *the* worst sin of all, Lawlessness: living in complete indifference or repudiation of the will and law of God. The lawless person does not recognise sin as such. John’s definition, therefore does not relate to sins in general. All sin is transgression of law, but all sin is not lawlessness. Lawlessness is the deliberate, wilful rejection of the authority or right of God to impose law; and no true son of God, no matter how much he might fall short of the ideal in Christ, could commit such a sin as that. A person practices lawlessness when he lives in complete disregard to God’s word, or when he is utterly indifferent to its demands. Unfortunately, this is a common sin. When a person reasons that he will not be condemned if he refuses baptism, he is acting lawlessly, or practising Lawlessness, because what he says is in complete disregard of what God’s Word says.

VERSE 5

“And ye know” — The word “know” is from the Greek *oida*. See note on Ch. 2:29.

“He was manifested to take away our sins” — The Greek has the definite article and expresses the word in the plural: “the sins.” The personal pronoun, “our” should be omitted, and the phrase read as the R.V.: “He was manifested to take away sins.” The reference is to all forms of sin, wherever and by whomsoever committed (John 1:29).

As Jesus was manifested specifically to take away sins, it is in-

compatible that sons of God should practise habitually that which he was appointed to destroy, particularly in view of the statement, "in him is no sin."

Jesus was manifested to take away sin, but those guilty of the sin, the sin of lawlessness, do not recognise that they are sinning, and as such think to have no need of the atonement.

"In him is no sin" — In the days of his flesh Christ never gave way to sin, and now, clothed upon with divine nature, he is completely free from sin in any form. See also 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22.

VERSE 6

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" — To "abide" in Christ indicates a relationship in him which is revealed in the character of the one thus abiding. Such a person would have a healthy respect for the word of God, and as such could not possibly be guilty of the sin of lawlessness, which is complete disregard of divine law.

"Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" —

By this statement, John clearly shows that the sin of lawlessness, is only possible on the part of those ignorant of the truth in Christ. The word for "seen" is *horao* and signifies, to see with discernment. It thus speaks of understanding and comprehension of the true nature of the object seen. The word "known" is *ginosko*, and signifies an experimental knowledge which creates a relationship between the one knowing, and the object known. John is clearly saying that the person who is guilty of the sin of lawlessness has not viewed Christ with discerning eyes, nor felt the real impact of his teaching. As such, he has not been begotten by God through His word.

VERSE 7

"Little children" — The word is *Teknia*, for which see notes above.

"Let no man deceive you" — The word for deceive is *planao*, and signifies "to lead astray" (as

per the R.V.). Some might reason, as they did in the Apostle's day (see Rom. 6:1), that as we are not under law but under grace we can please ourselves; and that so long as we profess truth we do not need to practise it (cp. Rom. 3:8). This is a common doctrine, often urged with seeming reasonableness. If our motives are sound, suggest the deceivers, God will not condemn us. However, the fact is that if a person's motives are right he will seek out the will of God and do it. When Paul taught that we are not under law but under grace, he meant that personal justification cannot come by reliance of law because we inevitably sin and the law condemns us, and therefore we are in need of the forgiveness of God that comes through grace. But he did not mean that we can ignore law, nor that we will be saved whether we obey God or not. There is need for a twofold justification: by faith (as a sinner from past sin) and by works (as a saint, perfected in obedience). The latter is the outworking or development, of the former (James 2:19-26).

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous" — In this section of his epistle, John contrasts the person who "does" lawlessness with the one who "does" righteousness. The former lives a life that is not subject to God's word; the latter lives one that is built upon it. John teaches that we must practise righteousness, if we would be righteous or justified before God. It is sometimes implied that the redeemed have no righteousness of their own, which is true enough if it be meant that they build into their lives the righteous attributes of Christ's character; but it is untrue if it is thought to mean that they do not have to do anything about changing their characters to conform to God's requirements. It is true that Paul says that "faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness" (Rom. 4:9), but it should be clearly understood that the preposition "for" does not mean "instead of" but rather "with a view to." It is the Greek pre-

position *eis* which implies motion towards an object. So Abraham's faith was reckoned to him for righteousness, because it became the motivating power of the acts of right living that he proceeded to manifest in faith.

"As he is righteous" — Christ is the model of righteousness for all who would obey God; saints must build into their lives the divine attributes that they see manifested by him.

VERSE 8

"He that committeth sin" — The Diaglott renders this as "practises sin." Sin has already been defined as lawlessness, or refusing to acknowledge law, or the reality of sin.

"Is of the devil" — The preposition is *ek*, out of, so that John teaches that sin or lawlessness stems from out of the devil. By the devil is meant the flesh with its lusts, which Paul describes as "sin that dwelleth in me" (cp. Heb. 2:14; Rom. 7:17). These have been responsible for sin ever since they were inflamed by the serpent in the beginning (John 8:44).

"For the devil sinneth from the beginning" — Hebrews 2:14 defines the devil as "that which had the power of death". This relates the term to man's mortality, and to what Paul describes as "sin in the flesh". This was not in man "in the beginning", for God described him as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). The lusts of the flesh were aggravated through transgression, and as a result mankind became sin-prone and mortal. John's description seems to be drawn from that of the Lord, who declared to the Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning . . ." (John 8:44). Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, was dominated by the lusts of the flesh that had been aggravated by the transgression of his parents. These facts justify the use of the term by John in the verse before us.

"The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" — The works of the devil constitute sin in active

manifestation (Heb. 9:26), whilst the devil itself is the flesh (Heb. 2:14). Jesus never revealed the former, but he did come in the latter. The flesh never conquered him in life, and in death it could no longer assert itself against the will of God, which it was his constant desire to perform. Consequently he was brought from the grave, and given eternal life and so triumphed over the devil (Acts 2:24). The Lord Jesus was born to die that he might rise again and bring salvation to death-doomed humanity, for Paul taught: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). He saves them by blotting out their sins (the works of the devil) in forgiveness (Acts 2:38), and providing them with a strength that will enable them to rise above the flesh (Phil. 4:13; Rom. 8:5-9). The truly begotten are called upon to "mortify their members," or put them to death (Col. 3:5). Their baptism is a baptism "into the likeness of his death" from whence they rise to "newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). The "old man" of the flesh is figuratively crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24), and thus the "works of the devil" are destroyed. From thenceforth believers live as unto God, and whilst the flesh still asserts itself, they continue to obtain forgiveness by confessing to their weakness.

VERSE 9

"Whosoever is born of God" — "Born" should be rendered "begotten" as it is in the R.V. and Diaglott; "of" is *ek*, "out of." John thus taught that believers are begotten out of God, the process being through His word, which is described as "his seed" (1 Pet. 1:23).

"Doth not commit sin" — The Diaglott renders this: "No one who has been begotten by God practises sin . . ." The verb relates to "a continuous habit" (Vine). However, whether it is a

continuous habit or not, it is true that those who are begotten of God cannot commit sin, if the sin is limited to lawlessness, as it is in this context. How can one begotten to newness of life through the word, live in a state of lawlessness. The very seed that begat them — a knowledge of God's will and purpose — makes it impossible for them to live in indifference to God's word and law, so that they would either be conscious of sins that have been committed, or would avoid committing them. A person guilty of the former is not lawless, unless he refuses to avail himself of the means of forgiveness by acknowledging the reality of sin and seeking the mercy of the Father.

"For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin" — By the seed, is meant the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). Obviously, if this remains within a person, he cannot be guilty of lawlessness. However, it is possible for a spiritual miscarriage to occur. So long as the seed remains within a person, it would impress him with the reality of sin, and urge him to seek the forgiveness of God when it is committed.

"He cannot sin, because he is born of God" — The impossible sin for the truly begotten is the sin of lawlessness, for he either avoids sinning, or is conscious of it and seeks forgiveness.

The word "born" should be rendered "begotten" wherever it occurs in this Epistle. We wait the full birth of the spirit at the coming of the Lord Jesus, when the redeemed will experience "the redemption of the body" and the purpose of begetting will be completed in the full manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:23). Meanwhile, the present spiritual begetting demands action consistent with the One whom we recognise as our Father. We are either children of God or of the devil (the flesh). John's words are based upon those of the Lord recorded in John 8:34-44, and show that the very sin of which the Jews

were guilty and to which they were enslaved (John 8:34) was now manifest among some who claimed to be of Christ. Jesus showed that the claim of the Jews to be sons of Abraham was false (v. 39), and John shows that the claim of the separatists to be of God was equally false.

The preposition "of" is *ek*, "out of." Saints are "begotten out of God." The birth of Jesus illustrated the need of this, for he "proceeded forth and came from (out of) God" (John 8:42), and taught that those who would serve God in truth must be the subjects of a new birth "from above" (John 3:3 — mg.).

True Sonship Is Predicated On Action

Our attitude and actions demonstrate whether we are of God or of the devil.

VERSE 10

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil" — The spiritual parentage of a person is demonstrated by his actions. The children of God "do righteousness"; the children of the devil "do lawlessness." John's comments are based upon John 8:30-47, which records the Lord's discourse with certain who "believed on him" but who did not see any necessity for changing their lives. They claimed to be sons of God and sons of Abraham, but their actions belied their claim and demonstrated that they were of "their father the devil" (John 8:44).

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" — Sonship is predicated upon action, motivated by doctrine, and not merely upon the latter. Our ultimate justification will depend upon the manifestation of faith in action, or "doing righteousness." In this section of his Epistle, John has contrasted those who "do lawlessness" with those who "do righteousness." The actions of the former demonstrate that they are of the flesh, whilst

those of the latter reveal that they are of God.

"Neither he that loveth not his brother" — The begotten of God owe their privileged state to Divine love exhibited in the offering of Jesus (John 3:16), and therefore, they have an obligation to extend a like grace unto others. If they fail to love their brother, they fail to take pleasure in that which God has brought into being, and which provides Him with pleasure. Such an attitude demonstrates that they are not of God.

VERSE 11

"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning" — The margin gives *commandment*. However, in the received text it is *haggelia*, a message brought to one. See Ch. 1:5.

"That we should love one another" — The basis of the truth is love (John 3:15). We owe the hope of salvation to it, and are expected to reflect it (Rom. 5:8. See John 13:34-35; 1 John 2:7).

VERSE 12

"Not as Cain" — Cain's bitter hatred of his brother erupted in a vile murder. It was the very antithesis of love. John makes the point that "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer (by intent if not in fact)..... and no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).

"Cain was of that wicked one" — The preposition "of" is *ek*, "out of": Cain was "out of" that wicked one, for he was a man of the flesh, here personified as the wicked one. See the note on this term in Ch. 2:13. The "world" is governed by this "wicked one" or the flesh, "for it lieth in wickedness" (the same word in the Greek. See 1 John 5:19; 2:16). Though Cain and Abel were brothers in the flesh, they were not related in the spiritual sphere for Cain was a seed of the serpent, and Abel was a seed of the woman.

"And slew his brother" — The word *spazo*, "to slay", is used in Lev. 1:5 in the LXX for sacrificial slaying. It could be that it is used in this statement by

John to emphasise that Cain was not prepared to offer the lamb (Gen. 2:7), but was ready to sacrifice his brother!

"Wherefore slew he him?" — John's answer to this question is, "Because his own works were evil." The Greek word for "evil" is the same as that rendered "wicked one," namely, *poneros*, and therefore indicates that Cain's works were of the flesh. Cain was lawless. He gave the lusts of the flesh full scope, and refused to submit to the discipline of God's word. Abel, on the other hand, was righteous, and manifested it before God. Cain was consumed by envy and hatred against his brother; and the world (which likewise lies in wickedness) adopts the same attitude towards the saints.

"Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" — Cain was jealous of his brother, and acted under its influence. He was angry because his own offering was not accepted, and that of his brother was. He was directed to the offering that would put him right with God, but sullenly refused to avail himself of it. The reference is apt in the light of the context. John had emphasised the importance of love, and in referring to Cain he underlined the fate of those who act otherwise. Envy and jealousy are often the motives of hatred and sin.

VERSE 13

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" — God declared at the beginning that mutual antagonism can be expected between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), and that record of history that has unfolded since, has demonstrated that principle. Therefore, believers must not marvel if the world hates them; in fact, they must expect it, and prepare to meet it. Christ warned the Apostles that they would experience the world's hatred (John 15:18-19; 16:2, 33; 17:14), and this soon became the lot of the early ecclesias. They were hated by the Jews because they refused to capitulate to the demands of Judaism; they were

hated by the Gentiles, because they refused to compromise and capitulate to their demands. The Roman Government hated Christians because of their alleged disloyalty, and particularly because they opposed the principle of Caesar worship. Though this was ignored by the Caesars at first, it later aroused their antagonism. W. Barclay writes:

"There came slowly the day when once a year every inhabitant of the empire had to burn his pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar. By so doing, he showed that he was a loyal citizen of Rome. When he had done so, he received a certificate to say he had done so. Here was the practise and the custom and the convention which made all men feel they were part of Rome, and which guaranteed their loyalty to Rome. Now Rome was the essence of toleration. After he had burned his pinch of incense and had said, 'Caesar is Lord,' a man could go away and worship any god he liked, so long as the worship did not affect public decency and public order."

It was little that the world demanded, and some could salve their conscience by conforming on the grounds that the action was meaningless anyhow. But true Christians refused to conform to this practise, and also resisted participation in military service. This refusal to conform caused them to be hated as insurrectionists. The motives which dictated their actions were distorted. Further, it was claimed that they were immoral. It was alleged that their love-feasts were orgies of flagrant and promiscuous immorality. Their withdrawal from normal Christianity interfered with family relationships, and it was condemned as being anti-social. But the main ground of hate was the uncomfortable feeling that the presence of Christians gave to others, for their strict morality was a constant reproach to the ungodly ways of the world about them. The basic demand of the truth both then and

now, was and is, the need to develop the courage to be different and to refuse to conform. This the world hates, and therefore it incites its hostility

VERSE 14

"We know that we have passed from death unto life" — In this statement, "from" is *ek*, out of, and implies movement away from an object, and "unto" is *eis*, and indicates movement towards an object. We have passed from out of a state that leads inevitably and permanently to death, into one that leads unto life in the Kingdom of God. It is quite obvious that the "death" and "life" referred to are not literal, and that the statement refers to a relationship to each.

"Because we love the brethren" — The manifestation of brotherly love is the vindication of the claim that we have passed from a relationship to death unto a relationship to life. In short, the truth is more than theory; it is a practical way of life. Jesus declared: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another, (John 13:35). Let us not be mistaken about the nature of this love; it relates to a self-sacrificing service that aims to the greatest good for the object of it. And more, it is a love that is born of intellect, that knows what is best for the other and seeks to perform it, so that even chastisement can form an expression of that love (see Heb. 12:5-7). This love is a characteristic attribute of Christ's disciples, because it is a characteristic attribute of their Lord and Master, and of the Father who begat them. And what a beautiful attribute it is! Let opposition be ever so strong, let frustrations and difficulties make life dark and cheerless, there is inexpressible comfort, joy and encouragement in mutual sympathy and reciprocated helpfulness; whilst, on the other hand, alienation, distrust and antagonism among brethren add to the heavy burden of sorrow. There is noth-

ing quite so bitter, so destructive, so discouraging as internecine strife.

"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" — He abides in the sphere of death (Gr. *en*) because his loveless attitude demonstrates that he is no true disciple of Christ in spite of his profession of being so.

To abide in death is to have a hopeless future. Such a one remains "dead in trespasses and sins", for forgiveness of such is predicated upon one forgiving others (Matt. 6:12). A believer who "loveth not his brother" has never been properly converted; he has never been brought out of his former death-doomed fate, and hence remains, or abides in it.

VERSE 15

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" — In an earlier note (see p. 32) we saw that there is room for hatred in the sphere of the Truth, but not hatred of one's brother who is walking in the light (and such a walk is implied in the term "brother"). Hatred manifested under those conditions makes one a murderer by intent (Matt. 5:21; 27-28) and identifies one as a child of the flesh (John 8:44). As such he remains in the sphere of death and has not "eternal life abiding in him." The implanted seed has failed to germinate (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

"And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" — A person can have the seed of truth planted in him, only to find that it fails to germinate (cp. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). A loveless life is a hopeless life; eternal life does not abide therein; which means that the influence of the Word "that liveth and abideth forever" is not there.

Love Defined — Vv. 16-17

John reminds his readers that as they experienced Divine love, they have an obligation to manifest it towards others.

VERSE 16

"Hereby perceive we the love" — The word "perceive" is a translation of *ginosko*, elsewhere ren-

dered "know". It implies experiential knowledge, a knowledge that has gone beyond mere intellectual understanding. The A.V. adds the words, "of God," but they should be eliminated. It was not God Who laid down his life, but Jesus Christ, and John reminds us that in him so doing we have come to understand what love is, for we have personally experienced its benefits in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus (see John 3:16). In that way, God extended love to the world that hates Him, and to His enemies who despise Him. We are called to do likewise. The effacement of self in a service of good to an enemy who hates us is the quintessence of love (Rom. 5:8-10; 1 Cor. Ch. 13).

"Because he laid down his life for us"

— The first clause of this verse is better rendered: "Hereby perceive we the love" John's statement, therefore, signifies: "By this we know love" The offering of Christ is the apex of true love (John 15:13). He not only died for us, but did so *acceptably* in that he rendered perfect obedience unto the Father, so ensuring his resurrection (John 10:17-18). Obedience is the expression of true love (2 John 6). His whole life and sacrifice was thus an expression of love: to the Father and on behalf of his brethren.

"We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" — Christ has provided the example; what he did literally, we should do figuratively. We should sacrifice our own desires in order to help others. The word "ought" signifies a moral obligation, or debt, that we should repay (see note 1 John 2:6). To lay down one's life, is to sacrifice self for the benefit of others (Eph. 5:1-2).

VERSE 17

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need" — Love means much more than a profound exposition of the words *phileo* and *agape*; the significance of these terms must be transmitted into action, revealed in the humble services of everyday life (see James 2:15). Up until

now, John has laid emphasis upon Christ's sacrificial offering as the supreme example of *agape* (v. 16), a manifestation of love which is quite beyond us, for we are not qualified to render it, even if we were prepared to do so. However, we are able to reveal a measure of the same love in little unobtrusive services done to others in need (Matt. 10:42).

On the other hand, if one is not prepared to extend this service to another, how dwells the love of God in him? It simply does not. Particularly under the circumstances that John's words reveal when they are closely examined. The word "seeth" is *theoreo* and signifies a steady contemplative glance, and not merely a passing look, "a careful perusal of the details in the object" (Vine). John thereby reveals that it is possible for some to attentively gaze upon the abject need of another, examining all the details of it, and remain unmoved. The onlooker has carefully examined all the facts, and recognises a real need, but still refuses to help. There is no self-sacrificing in such an attitude.

"And shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him" — The addition of *compassion* is not in the original, and is unnecessary when the figurative significance of "bowels" is kept in mind. The bowels, or physical organs of the intestines, are in Scripture represented as the seat of mercy and compassion, because when the mind feels these sentiments it is that part of the body which is affected. See Isa. 16:11.

"How dwelleth the love of God in him" — The answer is, It does not therein dwell. See Ch. 4:20, and James 2:14-16. John makes it clear, that true religion will be reflected in action. As James has already expressed it: "Faith without works is dead". A merely academic believer is not a true Christian! Believers will be approved if faith motivates their actions, and not because of the peculiar theory of truth they have embraced. See Matt. 25:45; Gal. 6:10.

How Love Begets Confidence — Vv. 18-24

The manifestation of love in action can assure for us eternal life at the coming of the Lord, and therefore will create confidence for the day of judgment.

VERSE 18

"My little children" — Note John's constant use of this affectionate expression. The term denotes young, immature children.

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue" — "Word" is *logos*, and relates to doctrine; tongue speaks of profession. Love must not be limited to mere doctrine, or to meaningless words of hypocritical love such as the tongue finds easy to utter; but, stemming from doctrine, it must develop into action. That is the sign of spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:15).

"In deed and in truth" — Love must be manifested in such action as is consistent with the Truth. Paul poses the possibility of giving all one's goods to feed the poor, and yet be lacking in true Scriptural love (1 Cor. 13:3). Love, therefore, must be governed by the requirements of the Truth, and is not a boundless charity based upon flesh likings only, or the craving to satisfy a personal sense of well-being.

VERSE 19

"Hereby we know that we are of the truth" — We will experimentally know we are of the truth when we manifest a self-sacrificing service towards others, and even our enemies.

"And shall assure our hearts" — The word "assure" is from the Greek *peitho*, "to persuade" (Vine), or "to tranquilise" (Thayer). The performance of true love in action, will serve as a tranquiliser in regard to any misgivings we may have concerning future judgment: it can persuade or calm us, and give us confidence as to its outcome.

"Before him" — In His sight, and under His scrutiny. Abraham was commanded by God: "Walk before Me and be perfect" (upright, sincere, or mature — Gen. 17:1). A man of faith recognises that he walks in the sight of God, and yet he is conscious of sin. This disturbs him. How can he be tranquilised? By performing deeds of love to others. In so doing, he builds up for himself a reservoir of mercy that can stand him in good stead at the judgment seat. That was the experience of David at the time of his great sin. He received mercy from God, because, when threatened with death, he had extended mercy to his enemy, when he had him in his power (1 Sam. 24:10-11). That is the significance of the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

VERSE 20

"If our heart condemn us" — If our heart condemn us by reminding us of the fact of sins committed, we can obtain a tranquiliser in acts of mercy to others.

"God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" — God is more discerning than conscience, and can penetrate to the hidden motives of our actions. Knowing this, we have greater cause to be circumspect in our ways, and to cleanse our motives in His sight.

VERSE 21

"Beloved" — *Agapetos* — see note Ch. 2:16. The use of this term in this section of the Epistle where John is discoursing on love, could perhaps be a reminder to his readers that, as they had experienced the *agape* of God, they should extend it to others, and thus justify the title given them.

"If our heart condemn us not then have we confidence toward God" — In view of this obvious fact, the exhortation is to so live before God that our conscience does not condemn us; thus we can manifest confidence.

VERSE 22

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him" — In the context in which the statement is found, the requests doubtless relate to pleas for help to so walk as to develop confidence before God. Prayer will assist to that end, for God will surely answer such a prayer addressed to Him in faith (1 John 5:14; John 9:31; 14:13; 15:7; 16:23, 29).

"Because we keep His commandments" — The word "keep" does not necessarily imply "obey", otherwise we would have confidence before God. It is from the Greek *tereo* to watch over, to guard, hence to show respect for His precepts. Note the use of the phrase: 1 John 2:3; 3:22; 5:2, 3. Cp. John 15:10.

"And do those things that are pleasing in his sight" — This will develop from "guarding the commandments". It constitutes action, and demonstrates that the one so doing "abides in Christ". This is a necessary prerequisite for successful prayer (see John 15:7).

VERSE 23

"This is His commandment" — John limits it to two main precepts: Belief (faith) and Love. The first essential is belief. The word is *pisteuo*, and signifies a confidence born of understanding. It is similar to "faith" — *pistis*, for belief leads to faith. Belief must be in the name of the son, by which is meant, in the character and purpose of the one named. "The name of His Son Jesus Christ" relates to the doctrines of God manifestation, atonement, cleansing, love.

"That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ" — This is the answer the Lord gave the Jews who questioned what God required of them (John 6:29). The name of "His Son Jesus Christ" sums up the purpose of God in the Atonement. It proclaims what Paul enunciated in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself". The term Son signifies a God-like-ness; whereas Jesus Christ shows how it

was brought about. Jesus name signifies *Yahweh shall save*; whilst Christ (meaning *Anointed*) is his title, revealing the means by which it was accomplished: *anointing with the Spirit*.

“And love one another, as he gave us commandment” — This follows from the other, and so they are mentioned together as constituting his commandment (John 13:35).

VERSE 24

“He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him” — This clearly states that the basis of “abiding in Christ” is the keeping of his commandments. The word signifies to guard or watch over them with the object of performing them. (Note the use of the word in Ch. 5:18, 21.) How is this done? By the study of the Word. There is no other way. Thus Christ declared: “Ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you” (John 15:2). The Word “cleanses” in that it enables us to determine right from wrong. Thus we mentally acknowledge the right, and this leads us to reveal it in action. We can only “abide in him” by that means, for it is only by the Word that we can know either the Lord or the Father.

“And hereby we know” — The word “know” is *ginosko*, “to know experimentally”, that is, to show some fruits of knowledge because of the relationship established between the one knowing and the thing or person known.

“He abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us” — He abideth in us by the Spirit. What spirit is that? Jesus promised the Apostles that he would send them the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), and John declares that “the spirit is the truth” (1 John 5:6). The Word, or the Truth, reveals the Father and the Son to us, and teaches us to manifest their ways. By that means their influence will be made apparent in our lives, and we will experience that intimate fellowship with them, as stated by the Lord (John 14:23).

CHAPTER 4

Love Necessitates The Repudiation Of Error — Vv. 1-6

Divine love is not a boundless tolerance of evil, but is manifested in extreme jealousy of the honour of Yahweh and His word. This requires that the truth be preserved in its purity, and that we resist false teaching. God has magnified His word above all His name (Psalm 138:2) and love of God requires that we do likewise. John therefore warns that we carefully analyse all teaching submitted to us to see whether it is of God.

VERSE 1

“Beloved” — Consistently this kindly expression is used by the Apostle. It expresses what his readers were to God, for the term denotes one who has experienced such love. John was the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20), so that it is appropriate for him to use it for others. He knew what it meant. It is a title of great meaning and privilege. See note Ch. 2:13.

“Believe not every spirit” — The word “spirit” is *pneuma* and is derived from a root, “to breathe.” In the context of this verse it expresses the breathing forth of a doctrine. John uses it again in this way in 1 John 5:6 where he defines the spirit as “the truth.”

“But try the spirits whether they are of God” — The word “try” signifies to put to the test with the object of approving. Thus it is obligatory, on the part of every believer, to carefully try all teaching, all doctrines that are breathed forth, to see if they are of God. The crucible, of course, is the Bible, God’s revelation to man.

“Because many false prophets are gone out into the world” — These were the separatists of 1 John 2:19, and the object of their going forth was to make proselytes like the Pharisees (Matt. 23:15).

Christ had predicted that "many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:11), and Paul had challenged their efforts (2 Cor. 11:4, 13). It is significant, that John is thought to have ministered at Ephesus, and to that Ecclesia Christ dictated the message: "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2). These are expressions that John uses in this epistle.

VERSE 2

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God"

— By this means you can determine who are activated by the Spirit of God.

"Every spirit that confesseth not" —

In this statement the term "spirit" is used of those motivated thereby. It relates to every one professing to be under the influence of the Spirit of God. This can denote those who were given the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the days of the Apostles, or those who claim to base their teaching upon the Spirit Word as today. The Apostle uses the word *spirit* here with reference to the persons who made the claim. If the Spirit of God influenced them, they would confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. To "confess" is to make a proper acknowledgment of anything. John's teaching requires that the Atonement be not only correctly understood, but insisted upon, and proclaimed as essential to salvation. A person refusing to acknowledge that Christ came in sin's flesh is not of the Truth whatever doctrine he might advance.

"Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" — This declaration, wrote John, "is of God." As such it becomes a touchstone of truth. But do not all who claim the name of Christ subscribe to that? They do not. First of all, the name of Jesus is compounded of Yah and Shua: Yahshua: Yah's salvation. This alone teaches what is repudiated by many, namely, that Yahweh is a Saviour. But when the title "Christ" is appended thereto, it proclaims that Jesus is the medium of salvation and has been anointed to that end. The name of Jesus Christ, therefore, speaks of God manifestation: "God was in Christ

reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). This truth challenges Trinitarianism, and Unitarianism alike. It tries the doctrines of modern Christendom and finds them wanting. But John's declaration does not end there, for it includes the statement that this anointed one who is Yahweh's salvation, "is come in the flesh." He has already defined flesh as that in which sin dwells (1 John 1:9), and therefore as mortal. Therefore, the declaration also embraces the doctrine of the nature of man. Thus his statement incorporates the two basic doctrines of Scripture: that of flesh (what we are), and that of God manifest in the flesh (what we can become) . . . All saving truth, from the nature of the Godhead to that of the devil is comprehended in these two doctrines, so that they embrace much more than a mere affirmation that Jesus appeared in flesh. The word "confesseth" in its Greek form, signifies to proclaim the same things, so that John requires agreement upon two essential aspects of truth.

"Is of God" — The doctrine that Christ came in the flesh is of God, and therefore true. However, John's statement does not mean that this doctrine comprised all the Truth necessary for salvation, but that it was essential that this truth should be acknowledged by every teacher who truly represented God.

VERSE 3

"And every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God"

— The A.V. adds the words in italics: "*that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.*" But they should be excluded, as they are in the R.V. and Diaglott, though it is obvious that to truly "confess Jesus" is to acknowledge his anointing. Again we emphasise the importance of the word "confess" which signifies "to speak the same thing, to assent, accord, agree with." It is not enough to proclaim, "I believe in Jesus," it is necessary to assent to the same things concerning him as are found in the

Word. Every spirit or doctrine that does that is of God; all others are of antichrist. So wrote John, from which we can see that antichrist is very widespread today, and comprises Christendom as a whole.

“And this is that spirit of antichrist”

— Failure to comprehend the nature of flesh is an error that in past times contributed to the development of Antichrist (1 John 2:18). It was this error, together with others then in evidence in the Ecclesias, that grew into the Apostasy which consummated in the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church (2 Thess. 2:6-8). The two fundamental doctrines of the Bible are (1) The nature of flesh; and (2) God manifest in the flesh. The former reveals what we are naturally; the latter shows what we can become. This teaching is summarised in the things “concerning the name of Jesus Christ” to which John has already made reference (1 John 3:23).

“Ye have heard that it should come” — The development of apostasy after Apostolic times is frequently foretold in Scripture. We find reference made to it in Matt. 24:24; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 2: Jude 17. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and it was for that purpose that such predictions were given.

“Even now already is it in the world” — Paul warned in similar terms (2 Thess. 2:7), and showed that the error even then manifested would blossom out into great Apostasy which the Lord would ultimately destroy at his coming (Vv. 8-10).

VERSE 4

“Ye are of God, little children”

— The preposition “of” is *ek*, “out from”, and “little children” is *teknia* emphasising a relationship through begetting. John constantly reverts to such expressions, to remind readers of their privileged and unique status.

“And have overcome them” — By driving them out (1 John 2:19).

“Because greater is he that is

in you” — Let us appreciate the tremendous encouragement found in such words (cp. Rom. 8:31; 1 Cor. 2:12), and let us apply the principle expressed when faced with similar circumstances. Let us always lean upon Yahweh, and by prayer and meditation upon the Word, seek that strength that He will willingly grant.

“Than he that is in the world” — John has already described “all that is in the world”, and the temporary nature of such (see 1 John 2:16). The Truth is capable of overcoming the things of the world, and will ultimately do so politically, socially and morally.

VERSE 5

“They are of the world” — The word “of” is “out of,” indicating that the world has begotten them. This was so, in spite of their claims to be “of God”.

“Therefore speak they of the world”

— The Greek preposition is *ek*, “out of”. John means that the speech of such is inspired, or motivated by those things that came out of the world, including the lusts of the flesh (1 John 2:16).

“The world heareth them” —

The pseudo form of Christianity that they manifested is so pleasing to the flesh, that it receives a ready hearing from the world. That is why popular “religion” appeals to the masses, whereas the demands of the Truth do not.

VERSE 6

“We are of God” — Jesus proclaimed this fact in regard of himself (John 8:23, 42) — and so revealed the authoritative nature of his message, and now the Apostle does likewise for the same purpose (Acts 17:20).

“He that knoweth God heareth us” —

The word “knoweth” is *ginosko*, to have such a relationship towards the thing known as to motivate action. Those so influenced, hearken to the Apostle, because they realise that they spake by inspiration of God. God’s word must be honored and magnified by all His children. For the importance Yahweh

places on His word, see Psa. 138:2. The Apostle spake in the name and with the authority of the Lord (Matt. 10:40). **(replace with the above).**

"He that is not of God heareth not us" — The preposition of this verse is *ek*, "out of". Hence the Apostle makes reference to those "out of" God and those who are not "out of" God. The former are those who have been begotten from above (John 3:3 mg.), by the seed of the word (1 Pet. 1:23-25); the latter have not been so begotten, irrespective as to whether they have embraced the Truth academically. Whether or not a person is begotten from above is determined by his fruits, for "by their fruits ye shall know them".

"Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" — We may sometimes wonder why the Truth does not have a greater impact upon the general public, and here John places his finger on the cause. Those who are of the world reject the authority of the truth, because they do not believe that it represents the Word of God, and they refuse to submit to its basic requirements of separation from the world (2 Cor. 6:17-18; Acts 15:14). They reject the proposition that the "spirit of truth" was delivered into the hands of the Apostles (John 14:17), and have not the humility to undertake investigation of these claims. Paul taught that the natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2: 14).

True Love Originates From God — Vv. 7-10

As love is a divine quality it must characterise those who are truly begotten of God. Christ told his Apostles: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

VERSE 7

"Let us love one another" — cp. John 13:34-45.

"Love is of God" — The preposition, *ek*, signifies "from." Love stems from God. He first manifested love towards us, and did so when we were "sinners" and "enemies" (Rom. 5:8-10). *Agape* is therefore a Divine characteristic, and is not of the flesh. It does not stem from natural fleshly "feeling," but from an intellect that is enlightened in the will and purpose of God. Nevertheless it generates feelings of affection and regard for those who are like-minded, as John himself discovered (John 13:23). See John 5:42; 8:42; 14:23; 17:26.

"Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" — This statement shows that the type of love referred to by John is limited to the family of God, and therefore does not relate to that sentimental emotional feeling towards another which refuses to acknowledge a fault, and fears to administer a rebuke. It is a self-sacrificing interest in the welfare of others, that seeks for them the greatest good, knowing that such is only found in Christ. This divine love, therefore, only comes from God. Paul wrote: "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). It is manifested in deed, not merely in word (1 John 3:18), not in a grudging spirit, but with generous warmth (1 Pet. 1:22). Where love really exists it cannot be hid, but will find a way to prove itself in service to others, whether in laying down a life (see notes 1 John 3:16), or in offering material assistance (V.17).

At the same time, Paul warned against some presuming upon the love of brethren and eating the bread of idleness, by commanding the brethren to "work with their own hands" (1 Thess. 4:11), and decreeing that if they would not work, neither should they eat (2 Thess. 3:10).

VERSE 8

"He that loveth not knoweth not God" — We have pointed out that the word "knoweth" signifies to know ex-

perimentally, in other words, to have such a relationship towards that known as to reflect it in action. Whether a person "knoweth" God in that way is dependent upon whether he manifests the divine love. If he does not, he does not "know" God. The sons of Eli "were sons of Belial; they knew not Yahweh" (1 Sam. 2:12). They manifested such worthlessness of character as witnessed to the fact that "they knew not Yahweh", even though they were priests and ministers unto the people. A believer that does not manifest love, has no true acquaintance with God, no proper views of Him, and no right feelings towards Him. The reason for this is implied in the statement that follows.

"For God is love" — The grammatical construction of this statement indicates that God is love of His very nature; hence love is inevitable as far as He is concerned. Those therefore, who are begotten "from above" (John 3:3) must love for it is the nature of He Who begat them. Even as children inherit the physical nature (mortality) of their parents, so a true child of God manifests the characteristics of the Father. God is love, even in discipline for it is administered in love. In all the darkness of this world of sin, throughout the difficulties of walking the wilderness of sorrow and wickedness with which we are surrounded, we have the assurance that a God of infinite love rules over all, and in His own good time will establish righteousness in the earth. And that love is directed in its most powerful channel towards those who are His own. We can rest on that love in the same assurance as did Paul: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). How great is His love, Who "spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all"? The measure of that love is implied in Rom. 5:6,8,10, in that he describes those for whom Christ died as being "without strength", "sinners", "enemies". He "commends" that love to those who benefit thereby, thus calling upon them to pass it on to others as they can (v. 8). Such love is not a sickly, sentimentality based upon flesh-likings, but is created of knowledge, and is reflected in action. It will sacrifice self-interest in the pursuance of it; it is intellectual and will seek out the best for the object of it. It is "of God" and therefore not incidentally,

It will obey and not flout the commandments of God (2 John 6). Those who manifest such a love, manifest God. It should not be confused with mere friendliness for which a different word is used.

The Lord predicted that "the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:13), John, now probably at Ephesus, was writing when the first thrill of love had been lost, the flame of zeal had faded to a mere flicker. The Spirit had issued a warning to the Ecclesia: "I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4). If that be the case with any, there is a need to reclaim that first love.

VERSE 9

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us" — The very apex of divine love is revealed in what Yahweh did for us through His son. The word "toward" is from a Greek expression signifying "in our case". John reminds his readers that they have personally experienced the love of God, and he calls upon them to bear this in mind, and to ponder it.

"Because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world" — The glory of Christ was that "as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). He was sent into the world proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and in its cause enduring unto death (see John 3:16; 1 John 3:16).

"That we might live through him" — The Lord Jesus was sent "preaching peace", proclaiming the way of salvation (Acts 10:36-38). His was a life of sacrifice on behalf of suffering humanity of which he was a member. It involved giving his life in complete dedication, the preaching of the Word in the face of bitter hostility, and finally his death on the cross. Through these means, and his resurrection, the promise of life was confirmed to dying humanity: a way of hope was opened up (Rom. 15:8).

VERSE 10

"Herein is love" — In all that was accomplished on our behalf by Yahweh through the dedication and sacrifice of the Son, there is seen the highest expression of divine love.

"Not that we loved God" — Paul de-

scribes believers as being originally ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God (Rom. 5:6,8,10). They were not then among those who loved God, and who therefore may have had a claim of love on Him. No! They were subsequently introduced to that love. Now that they had come to recognise the reality and extent of that love, they should recognise that it originated from God, and is of such a nature as can never be adequately repaid, though it can be imitated (See John 15:16; Rom. 5:8).

"But that He loved us" — John does not mean to say that God loved us because our characters were worthy of that love, but that He extended love to us even before we merited it in any way.

"And sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" — The word "propitiation" signifies; "mercy seat". The noun *hilasterion* is used in the LXX for the Mercy Seat on the Ark. This was the appointed meeting place between Yahweh and man (Exod. 25:22). In the Atonement or Covering effected through Christ, mercy and justness are blended (Rom. 3:26). This was exhibited in the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat on the Day of Atonement, for it revealed the principle of Mercy through Sacrifice. Blood shed in sacrifice symbolises life given to God, death reveals what is due to flesh. When a believer recognises what he is, and how far he falls short of God's righteousness, he is led to seek forgiveness through Christ who is set forth as the antitypical Mercy Seat (see Rom. 3:22-26; 1 John 2:2).

Love Can Only Be Manifested Towards Those We Know — vv. 11-16

Having experienced the love of God, we have moral obligation to become the channel whereby that love flows through to others. If we do that, we furnish the best evidence that God dwells in us, and that our knowledge and faith of Him is effective to salvation.

VERSE 11

"Beloved" — John frequently uses this title. See note 1 John 3:21.

"If God so loved us" — The measure of God's love is expressed in the statement of the Lord: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). He loved the world in such fashion that He provided for the re-

demption of those who manifest a hearing ear.

"We ought also to love one another" — The word translated "ought" implies a moral obligation to do this. To love one another in the proper manner we must manifest to others the love that God has shown to us. By so doing, we manifest our love for God (see 1 John 4:26), as well as demonstrating that we are of the family of God (John 15:10).

VERSE 12

"No man hath seen God at any time" — This repeats the declaration of John 1:18. Paul adds, however, that the Lord Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), and in that image we can see God. We, in turn, can become images of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so reflect in belief and action the power of God manifestation in us.

"if we love one another, God dwelleth in us" — As *agape* comes only from God (1 John 4:8), it is obvious that if we manifest it, we are demonstrating that God dwells in us (John 14:23; 17:23). Though no one has ever seen God, they can see Him reflected in the lives of those drawn close to Him by the Word. Thus it is possible to reveal unto men the reflected glory of He Who is invisible. Jesus did that. He told Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). As we have been called out of the world as "a people for God's name" (Acts 15:14), it is our responsibility to glorify Him in action (1 Pet. 4:11).

"His love is perfected in us" — The word "perfected" is *teleioo* in the Greek, and signifies to bring to completion. The love that Yahweh revealed in making provisions for the sins of humanity, is brought to completion when His children are seen manifesting a measure of the same consideration and love to others. As Paul instructed the Colossians: "Love is the bond of perfectness" or completion (Col. 3:14). It is that which binds all other attributes together, and completes character.

VERSE 13

"Hereby know we that we dwell in Him" — To dwell in the Father, is to have fellowship with Him (1 Thess. 1:1).

"And He in us" — To claim that God is in us, we must manifest His characteristics in action.

"Because He has given us of His Spirit" — John's reasoning is clear. We know that we are in fellowship with God, and that we manifest Him in action, when we reveal His divine quality of love one towards another. But how does God get within us, so as to become the energising influence of these actions? The answer is through His Spirit, for He has given us of His Spirit. This is not the outpouring of the Holy Spirit power to perform miracles, but the Spirit Word, styled by John "the truth" (1 John 5:6). That this has nothing to do with the power to perform miracles is clearly shown by the experience of the early Ecclesia in Samaria. Its members enjoyed fellowship one with the other, and with the Father, before they received the power to perform miracles (see Acts 8:14-18). Of course, by "the Spirit" is meant much more than the mere Word though it is based on the Word. It is expressive of the power of truth which becomes transmitted into action, in the believer's life.

VERSE 14

"And we have seen and do testify" — The Apostles had seen the glory of the Invisible in the Lord Jesus (John 1:14), and to bear witness to that fact constituted their very office (John 15:27; Acts 1:8).

"That the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" — cp. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:47.

VERSE 15

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" — To confess to this truth demands that we reject the theories

of Trinitarianism, Unitarianism, a pre-existent angel, and so forth, and acknowledge the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh. How can God dwell in mortal creatures? Only by His word. And what will be the effect of that? The manifestation of His precepts in action.

VERSE 16

"We have known and believed" — John now explains what he means when he declared that God "has given us of His Spirit."

"The love that God hath towards us" — This is seen in the offering of His son.

"God is love" — The manifestation of the love of God was inevitable, because this divine love, this urge to so manifest Himself, is inherent in God's very being.

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God" — This is obvious, because God is the author of *agape*; it is found nowhere else than in Him.

Love Will Reap Its Reward At The Judgment — Vv. 17-21

As this form of love is exclusively a Divine attribute, it will be manifested only by true children of God, and he who practises it can look forward with confidence to the future.

VERSE 17

"Herein is our love made perfect" — The margin renders this: "Herein love with us is made perfect." The divine love becomes ours when it is reflected by us.

"That" — The word in the Greek signifies, to the end that.

"We may have boldness in the day of judgment" — The same Greek word is translated "confidence" (1 John 2:28; 3:21; 5:14), and signifies to speak freely, without reserve. We must give account of ourselves at the judgment seat (Rom. 14:11-12), and if we have applied the principles of God in our lives, we will be able to speak without reserve, instead

of shrinking back in shame (cp. 1 John 2:28).

"Because as he is, so are we in this world" — If we are not of the world, as he is not of the world (see John 17:14-16), we need have no fears as far as the judgment seat is concerned. The world rejected Christ so that he has no part with it, and in consequence he calls his followers out of it. This demands that we walk as he would have us walk. (See 1 John 2:6; 3:1, 7, 16).

VERSE 18

"There is no fear in love" — The word translated "fear" is *phobos*, and has the meaning of flight, such as is caused by being scared, and then that which may cause flight such as fear, dread, terror. There is a need to discriminate between this fear, and a Godly fear or reverence (Gr. *euibeia* — Heb. 12:28). A Godly fear is a fear of offending one whom we love; but the fear before us in this verse is a dread consequent upon a realisation of failure in developing Godly characteristics.

"Perfect love casteth out fear" — In view of that obvious fact, we need to perfect our love.

"Fear hath torment" — The word in the Greek for torment is *kolaris*, and signifies "penalty," or "punishment." The R.V. renders it: "fear hath punishment." The fear will be well founded, for it will result in punishment.

"He that feareth is not made perfect in love" — John presents his exposition both positively and negatively. Where love is absent, there remains but fear at the judgment seat of Christ. The fear referred to will not necessarily be manifested before then. Usually pre-judgment fear is revealed by those who have least need of fearing it, whilst those filled with confidence today are often those who should least manifest it. When the latter are brought before the august presence of the Judge, however, their present boldness will be dissipated and replaced with a terrible fear as they reflect upon past

failures and missed opportunities.

VERSE 19

"We love Him because He first loved us" — In this statement, the pronoun "him" should be eliminated. The R.V. reads: "We love, because He first loved us." God first revealed love, first brought it to our attention, and by His Word begat it in us. By the inspiration of His love, we extend it to others and do not limit the manifestation of it to Him, as the A.V. suggests. The idea is that we should reflect love because He first loved us.

VERSE 20

"If a man say" — John sets forth the seventh test of true discipleship: one that reveals the possibility of a false love, by which a man shows himself as not honest with anybody. He professes love, but manifests hate. He claims to love God, but spurns God's family on earth. Will any parent, who loves his children, stand for such treatment? By no means! If a person loves God, he must love those whom God loves. The Divine name has been named upon believers (Acts 15:14), and to ignore them is to ignore the One whose name they bear (John 13:20).

"I love God, and hateth his brother" — To claim a love for God and yet manifest hate towards one's brother, is to live a lie; for that brother is God's son.

"He is a liar" — Such a person lives a lie. See note Ch. 2:4.

"If he loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" — John has emphasised that love is not just an emotion, nor an idea, but is the outworking of an intellect that sees the need of extending to others a service calculated to extend to them the greatest good. We cannot see God, and therefore cannot extend to Him any greater service than that which He has commanded us to perform (v. 21), but we can see our brethren, and

recognise that they are in need. Here is the opportunity to hand to extend this quality of love, and to demonstrate to God that we love Him. From this it can be seen that love is not merely emotion.

VERSE 21

“And this commandment have we from Him” — The command to love a brother is as obligatory as that to love God. If one is obeyed, the other ought to be also; if a man feels that the first obligation is binding on him, he should feel that the other is also. *Agape* love is to be

manifested in action (1 John 3:18), and is evidence of a true follower of Christ. How can we love God? By obeying His commandments. What do they involve? That believers extend the love they profess for God in acts of self-sacrificing service to others. See Matt. 22:37-40; Luke 10:27; John 13:34; Matt. 25:40.

“That he who loveth God love his brother also” — Love of God is not limited to mere expressions of adoration, nor acts of worship, but must find a practical outlet in service first to those who form part of the family of God on earth, and then to others as opportunity affords (Gal. 6:10).

God is Life

The third main section of the Epistle introduces us to the miracle of a new life: the beginning of an existence that can culminate in eternal life. This requires various stages of growth from begettal, to childhood (teknon), to sonship (huios), to maturity (huiiothesia — rendered “adoption” but signifying sonship, the placing of a son).

Where there is no life there can be no growth; but where there is life, it can be developed to maturity by careful nurturing.

In the spiritual sphere, life is begotten by the light of truth acting in conformity with the love of God to produce it. In a beautiful way, therefore, John presents these ideas in correct sequential order. First God is Light; and that Light illuminated His Love; and from His Love there sprang new Life.

In his intercessory prayer, the Lord declared: “This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). The word “know” has been frequently used by John. It is the Greek word ginosko, which signifies an experimental knowledge; a knowledge that establishes a relation between the one knowing and that which is known, so as to produce results. The same expression is used in Scripture for conception (see Genesis 4:1), the fruit of such union producing fruit to the glory of the father.

Now John has revealed that God, as to His very nature, is Light and Love. This is entirely different to the flesh which is by nature Evil. One born of the flesh inherits the nature of his parents, a nature that soon reveals itself to be evil. But one begotten of God must reveal Light and Love, because God's nature demands it. Where those attributes are absent, there is no true begettal.

The channel of this Love that produces a new Life is the Lord Jesus. He is set forth in John's Gospel as the Light, the

Love, and the Life of God. He declared that he was the Light of the world, the manifestation of divine Love, and he proclaimed: "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:25). In the same context, he showed that the life referred to is first spiritual (v. 25), and then eternal (v. 29).

Jesus is styled the Author of Life (Acts 3:15—mg), and the call of the Gospel is a call to newness of life: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). The Promise of this new life is proclaimed in John 5:24-25; the Process is revealed in Romans 6:4; and the Performance of it is announced in 1 John 3:13-14.

The Word of Truth constitutes the Seed of God by which He begets His creatures to newness of life (1 Pet. 1:23; Rom. 6:17). Consequently they are styled "children of light" (John 12:36). Believers should be conscious of that fact, and reckoning themselves to be "dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). By that means, they will lay hold of eternal life, and, in the presence of the Lord Jesus after the judgment have it bestowed upon them. John's epistle commences and concludes with affirmations concerning Eternal Life, whilst the substance of it reveals how it can be transmitted from hope to fact. As God is Light, Love and Life, so Darkness, Hate and Death negate all that He is and will reveal in the earth. Death is the wages of sin which He hates, and because it is the negation of all that He stands for, He decreed, under the Law, that it was defiling. Thus the Law proclaimed that Yahweh is Life and called upon all to seek that life which is found only in the sphere of faith towards Him. We live unto Him by building into our lives the Divine characteristics seen in that of the Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER 5

The New Life Is Begotten Of God — Vv. 1-5

Begettal comes from belief, is manifested by love, and lays the foundation for victory over the world. Thus the believer develops along the progressive stages of Light (belief) and Love to Life.

VERSE 1

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ" — The word "believeth" signifies much more than mere intellectual acknowledgment of a fact; it implies

conviction and action arising therefrom. To believe that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah, is incomplete unless that belief is transmitted into action. This involves acknowledgement that he is at the right hand of the Father, mediating on behalf of his family; that "authorities and powers" are subject to him (1 Pet. 3:22); that he is coming again to judge his household and to reign on earth. To thoroughly "believe" this in the true sense of the Greek word, is to both acknowledge, and live, in accordance with it. Hence, the statement: "Jesus is the Christ" epitomises the facts concerning him (Eph. 4:21) in the prophecies,

his birth, humanity, perfection, death, resurrection, coming again: in short, the truth as a whole.

"Is born of God" — The RV renders this as "begotten of God". The Gospel, or the Word of God is described as the seed which begets one unto eternal life (1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:23). Unless a person is begotten from above, he is unrelated to God or eternal life (John 3:3). Birth demands a threefold development (1) Conception; (2) Quickening; (3) Birth. The Gospel, Baptism, and the change to immortality describes this process (John 3:5). Therefore, taught the Lord: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The first is at baptism, the second at the return of Christ.

"And every one that loveth Him that beget loveth him also that is begotten of Him" — If we love God, we must love the family of God for which He has such tender care and affection. The truth advanced by John in this statement is not so obvious in regard to God and his family, as it is in normal relationships. The members of a family are drawn more closely together by ties of blood than they are to mere acquaintances outside the family circle; and this natural fact illustrates the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46). No greater insult can be paid parents than to ignore or disparage their children. There is nothing that pleases them more than to see their children bound together in mutual love, assisting one another in the problems of life. So John expressed a natural fact of life that believers need to incorporate into their Ecclesial associations. The manifestation of mutual love will demonstrate that they are "begotten of God". Its absence shows that those concerned are not really members of the divine family.

VERSE 2

"By this we know" — The word "know" is *ginosko*; "to know experimentally", that is, demonstrating a relationship with that which is known.

"We love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments" — In v. 1 John has shown that spiritual begettal develops from belief, and this, in turn, will be manifested in mutual love within the family of God.

John now shows that this love for our brethren is governed by the commandments of God, and therefore is not merely tolerance or goodwill apart from His requirements. Love, therefore, must be an expression of God's will, and will follow the sequence suggested in this Epistle. As God is first Light, so we as "children of light" will, in love reveal that light to others: as God is Love, we as the children of His love, will manifest it to others: as God is Life, we as begotten unto newness of life, will find a desire to foster that life in others as the channel of our love. Thus, all that John in this Epistle has revealed God to be, we will manifest to others.

VERSE 3

"This is the love of God that we keep His commandments" — This is a most important definition of the love referred to, removing it entirely from mere emotion, and elevating it to an intelligent understanding of the will and purpose of Yahweh. The word "keep" is *tereo* to "guard", "watch over," "preserve," and though obedience is implied, it is obedience that stems from a meditative appreciation of Yahweh's requirements, and a wholehearted acceptance of the virtue of them.

"His commandments are not grievous" — The word is rendered "burdensome" in the Diaglott. Far from burdensome, His commandments or precepts are elevating, and when viewed properly actually lift the burden from life. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is the invitation of the Lord (Matt. 11:28).

VERSE 4

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" — The begotten of God derive from Him a strength that enables them to conquer all that is in the world (1 John 2:16; 4:4).

"This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith"

— Faith and belief are related terms. Faith (*pistis*) is derived from belief (*pisteuon*) and expresses the confidence and conviction of belief. *Pistis* is rendered "belief" in 2 Thess. 2:13 etc. It is this belief that constitutes the seed of God (1 Pet. 1:23) that begets the child of God, whilst it is faith (continuing belief) that sustains, develops and matures him, enabling him to overcome all life's problems. See 1 Cor. 15:57; Heb. 11:6.

VERSE 5

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" — This belief unites us with Christ who overcame the world (John 16:33), and by his example, and the forgiveness available in him, enables his followers to do likewise.

The New Life Is Revealed Through Christ — Vv. 6-12

Christ's life of obedience was revealed by a threefold witness, a witness that is available to all who are the begotten of God, and which authenticates their claim as such, and their relationship to Eternal Life.

VERSE 6

"This is he that came by water and blood" — In this statement "by" should be rendered "through" (*dia*). The declaration relates to Christ's public ministry. He was inducted into it through baptism (the water), and concluded it with his sacrifice on the cross (blood). The former announced it; the latter sealed it. Baptism is a symbol of sacrifice (Rom. 6:3), so that, in the Lord's case, his symbolic sacrifice culminated in a literal offering. Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:2) which had to be overcome in order that he might manifest the Father in flesh. His life of obedience culminated in his death on the cross which testified that the righteous character he had revealed in life had only been possible by denying the flesh. He rose to eternal life and thus gained the victory over the

world. "Be of good cheer," he told his disciples just before his death. "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Both the water and the blood were elements in his victory, and both revealed that the flesh profits nothing, and must be atoned for. Jesus benefited by his own death, for God Who is just, raised him from the grave to life eternal "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20).

"Even Jesus Christ" — This emphasis implies that Christ was "in all points made like unto his brethren" and required physical though not moral redemption (Heb. 13:20). He came "in the flesh" as John has already insisted (1 John 4:2). His baptism, sacrificial death and resurrection were elements in his own salvation (Phi. 2:8), whilst their efficacy was extended to help others in their need. If he "came by water and blood" his followers must likewise follow the process. They are called upon to submit to baptism, and to a figurative crucifixion (Gal. 5:24); hence to reach to newness of life through water and blood. The "blood of Christ" as an expression, indicates a life given up in dedication to Yahweh; and his followers are expected in measure to do this (see Gal. 6:17).

"Not by water only, but by water and blood" — Christ's baptism culminates in a literal crucifixion upon the cross, in contrast to the experience of many of his followers who are called upon only to figuratively "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). The figurative crucifixion of the flesh is necessary to manifest the Father, for God manifestation is only possible when the flesh is denied. Christ, in common with the rest of humanity, came in the flesh (1 John 4:2). He had to set aside its demands which he did completely with the strength derived from his Father. Thus "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). It is significant that water and blood were used under the Law in the cleansing of a leper, and for those defiled by contact with death (see Lev. 14:51; Num. 19:13).

"It is the Spirit that beareth witness" — The Holy Spirit poured out upon the Apostles brought all things to their remembrance (John 14:26), guided them in understand-

ing, and brought the Divine revelation to man to its completeness (1 Cor. 13: 9-10). Throughout the ages, God spake to man through His spirit in the prophets (Neh. 9:30), and finally did so through His Son and the Apostles (Heb. 1:1). This revelation of the Truth, therefore constitutes the breathing forth of the Spirit (*pneuma* — to breathe). So that believers are asked to "hearken to what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias" (Rev. 2:7). The results of the breathing forth of God in that way are found in His Word which constitutes the medium of the Spirit today. Accordingly, John taught that the spirit "beareth witness" to the truth.

In a literal manner, also, the Spirit provided witness to the Lord. It did so at his baptism, for the Voice was heard announcing the Father's pleasure in the Son (Matt. 3:17); and it did so at the time of his crucifixion by manifestations of darkness, earthquake and resurrection. Paul comments that the Lord was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). The Spirit's witness was irrefutable.

"Because the Spirit is truth" — The Greek supplies the definite article: "The Spirit is the Truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). This definition of the Spirit is in accordance with the consistent teaching of the Scriptures. Jesus declared: "The words I speak, they are spirit" (John 6:63); Paul taught: "The sword of the spirit is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). The expressions of the Epistles which speak of believers possessing the spirit should be understood in the light of this definition (e.g. Gal. 5:16-17). However, by the "spirit" is meant more than the truth, if the latter is limited to a statement of faith, or an outline of mere doctrine. The spirit of a teaching is its power, so that when John declared: "The Spirit is the truth," he signified that the spirit is the power of truth a power which changes the believer's outlook and character.

VERSE 7

"For there are three that bear record" — This is the only portion of this verse that should be retained. The rest of it including portion of v. 8 on to "the earth" is an interpolation, as is generally acknowledged. It is excluded in the R.V., Diaglott, Rotherhams, etc. The text should read: "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit," etc. The excluded portion of the verses is generally acknowledged as spurious, and is not cited in any document earlier than the 5th century. The Diaglott comments: "It was first cited (though not as it now reads) by Virgilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit, in the latter end of the 5th century; but by whom forged, is of no great moment, as its design must be obvious to all." Its design was to support the doctrine of the Trinity which has no support in Scripture.

VERSE 8

"The Spirit, and the water, and the blood" — These three elements of the one witness represent the Truth, Baptism and Sacrifice, and thus stand for progressive stages in the development of a walk of faith towards the kingdom of God. The truth must come first, but it must be followed by the water, and this must lead to a changed life of personal sacrifice. When a person graduates through all three stages, he reveals God in word, action and character, and the manifestation is complete apart from nature.

"These three agree in one" — The word "agree" is a translation of the Greek *eis* which implies movement towards an object; the object, in this case, being the witness; and the witness testifying to God manifest in the flesh. Where Truth leads to Baptism, and that in turn to a life of Sacrifice, God is manifested, and where God is manifested, priesthood is revealed. Now Aaron and his sons were inducted into their priestly office by a threefold witness of spirit, water and blood because they were

anointed (the symbol of the spirit — Lev. 8:12), washed (Lev. 8:6), and sprinkled with blood (Lev. 8:23). That which was foreshadowed under the Law, therefore, finds its substance in the Lord Jesus and his priestly sons (Heb. 2:13) who are consecrated to the Melchizedek priesthood (Heb. 7:26; 1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 5:9-10) by a threefold witness.

VERSE 9

"If we receive the witness of men" — John Baptist witnessed to Christ, but spake by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 5:34-36; 8:17).

"The witness of God is greater" — See John 5:37; 8:18. Yahweh audibly witnessed to the fact that Jesus is His Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28-29), and confirmed this by raising him from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

"For this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son" — The reference is to the open manifestation of Divine approval of the Son. This was manifest in the Voice from heaven at His baptism, the signs and wonders performed during his lifetime, and, above all else, the wonder and glory of his resurrection to life eternal as the "firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). Ponder the marvel of all this, and let faith be strengthened as a result.

VERSE 10

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" — The witness constituting the truth concerning God manifest in flesh stems from belief (John 5:38).

"He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar" — The great crime of those who believe not is clearly stated. Those who believe testify that God is true (John 3:33); those who do not believe proclaim Him a liar. As such they prove themselves to be of the devil (John 8:44).

"Because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" —

This record was not merely in openly testifying to his Sonship at his baptism, transfiguration and death, but also in the obvious testimony of God manifest in the flesh, as stated by Paul in 1 Tim. 3:16. In all that Christ said, did and revealed, there was heard or seen the manifestation of the Father. In doctrine (John 7:16), deeds (John 5:36), and demeanour (John 4:34) he revealed God unto man.

VERSE 11

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life" — To what extent has He given us it? The answer by John is, By promise (1 John 2:25). Paul declared that he was "in hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:1), and reasoned that "hope that is seen is not hope" (Rom. 8:24). Eternal life is immortal life, and its present possession can only be implied on the principle that "God calleth those things that be not, as though they are" (Rom. 4:17). He is able to so speak because of His ability to grant it, and the certainty of us receiving it if we fulfil the conditions.

"This life is in His Son" — That being so, until that Son is manifested in our midst, we cannot possess it. Paul declared: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). See also Phil. 3: 20-21; John 20:31.

VERSE 12

"He that hath the Son hath life" — The definite article is given to "life" in the Greek. As in John 3:15, eternal life is set in contrast to "perishing". The alternative is to live or die eternally. Meanwhile, we have "the life" as we have "the Son" — in hope. We await the Son from heaven, and we await the eternal life that he will then bring with him to bestow upon those who qualify for it.

"He that hath not the Son of God hath not life" — The believer has the Son; the unbeliever has rejected the Son of God; the former has no need to be reminded whose Son the Lord is, and hence the qualifying statement "of God" is not added to the declaration concerning him; but the unbeliever is reminded of the extent of his loss when John appends the words "of God" to the Son.

The New Life Will Be Crowned With Eternal Life — Vv. 13-15.

John states that the purpose of his writing the Epistle is to remind believers of their privileged state, and to remind them of what the future will reveal.

VERSE 13

"These things have I written unto you" — The things written in this Epistle relate to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Word of life (1 John 1:1), and the relationship of believers to him.

"That believe on the name of the Son of God" — The statement relates only to those "who believe". As noted previously, the word in the Greek denotes more than mere belief, or credulity; it signifies conviction or faith in the object or person believed. Only those manifesting such a "belief" are referred to in this statement.

"That ye may know that ye have eternal life" — The Greek word for "know" is *oida*, to intellectually comprehend, not *ginosko*, to experimentally know. The truly begotten of God have eternal life in promise (1 John 2:25), and because it is God Who has promised it, there is no doubt about them receiving it. Therefore, the present tense is used of that which the future will reveal. It is the language of Divine Inspiration to "call those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). So Christ prayed: "This is life eternal to know (*ginosko*). Thee the only true God" (John 17:3). To really "know" God is to apply the principles He has commanded (see Jer. 22:16); and that becomes the basis upon which Eternal Life is granted. In a similar grammatical construction, the Lord taught: "This is condemnation, that light hath come into the

world" (John 3:19). What he meant was, "This is the *basis* of condemnation...." Again he declared: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18); though elsewhere Paul reasoned: "But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Heb. 2:8). The use of the present tense of things to be granted by God in the future is a peculiarity of divine language, speaking of the certainty of those things which to us are matters of faith.

"And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" — This repetition is an interpolation, and should be eliminated, as it is in the *Diaglott* and the *RV*.

VERSE 14

"And this is the confidence" — See note on Ch. 2:28 for the significance of "confidence."

"That we have in him" — The *Diaglott* renders this: "towards him," the Greek preposition, *pros* signifying "towards."

"That if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" — There is wonderful consolation in this statement on the efficacy of prayer. However, it is governed by certain conditions. The Greek suggests continuous action: "keep on asking," implying continuous prayer, such as Christ advocated in Luke 18:1. Further, prayer must be limited "according to his will," or by the restrictions of the Truth (Rom. 8:27). Prayer is unavailing when it does not answer these conditions.

For further study relating to prayer see *Making Prayer Powerful*, available from *Logos Publications*.

VERSE 15

"If we know that He hear us" — We know academically that God hears and answers prayer, because it has been promised us (John 14:13-14), therefore we should freely exercise the privilege and "always pray and not faint" (Luke 18:1).

"Whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" — This statement is governed by

the previous one that if it is "according to His will" our petition will be granted. The specific thing for which we ask indeed may not be granted (see Luke 22:42; 2 Cor. 12:8-9), but the prayer will not be disregarded, and that which is most for our good in relation to it will be bestowed upon us. All petitions should be presented "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ". But it is useless asking "in his name" for benefits he will not approve, or which are not in accordance with his will. Hence the need to study God's Word that we may be better able to ascertain His will in any matter

The New Life Can Be Strengthened Through Prayer — Vv. 16-17

Prayer can strengthen the begotten of God to attain unto eternal life through the forgiveness of sins that are not unto death.

VERSE 16

"If any man see his brother sin" — From the general assurance that God hears prayer, the Apostle turns to specific cases where it can be effectually used. A believer sees his brother sin; but he should not tell the sin to others, but seek the help of God to assist the one concerned to overcome his weakness.

"A sin not unto death" — John concerns himself with two kinds of sin in his Epistle: one which he defines as lawlessness (Ch. 3:4), and the other which he describes as wrong-doing (Ch. 5:17). The former is the sin of the person who in fact (in possible contrast to profession) refuses the restrictions of God, rejects the reality of sin, and is intolerant of the limitations of law. For such an attitude there is no forgiveness, unless the person manifesting it completely reverses his attitude of lawlessness. This is a sin unto death.

"He shall ask" — He is recommended to enlist the help of God in assisting his brother overcome his weakness.

"He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death" — The punishment of sin is death, and forgiveness of sin must be obtained as a basis for life. God has undertaken to forgive sins of

wrong-doing when they are confessed (1 John 1:9; James 5:15), and this provides "new life" to the believer. The Psalmist declared: "With Thy precepts Thou hast quickened me," or given me new life. The term "life" is used in the sense of renewed vigor by Paul in 1 Thess. 3:8: "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." The Apostle found renewed vigor and life from the reports of faithful action on the part of the brethren that he received. So by prayer, and the forgiveness of sin, we can receive "life" now in this sense, as well as laying the foundation for eternal life in the future.

"There is a sin unto death" — John has already illustrated this by defining it as lawlessness (1 John 3:4), and revealing that one who lives in such a way "hath not the Son" (v 12). The person who persistently and deliberately rejects the Truth concerning Christ is committing such a sin (Heb. 10:26-30). If such will not heed the Word of Yahweh, He will not hear their words, nor words of prayer spoken on their behalf. The judgment will be on the basis of the Word (John 12:48), and for those who reject it there is no hope. Such were the separatists referred to in this Epistle (1 John 2:19, 22; 2 John 10).

"I do not say that he shall pray for it" — The NIV renders this a little more clearly: "I am not saying that he should pray about that." The sin of lawlessness will manifest itself in many actions opposed to the law of God, and whether these be minor or major sins, the fact that they stem from lawlessness, puts them beyond the pale of forgiveness as far as God is concerned. If a person has no respect for His Word or Law, he will not respond to it, and prayer in that case is useless (Prov. 28:9). Jeremiah records: "Then said Yahweh unto me, Pray not for this people for their good" (Jer. 14:11). Again: "Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth" (Jer. 15:1). However, where there is respect for God's Word, there is

hope; and prayer is relevant.

VERSE 17

"All unrighteousness is sin" — This is a further definition of sin (cp. 1 John 3:4), but, in this case, forgiveable sin. The Greek word rendered "unrighteousness" signifies "wrong-doing." It is forgiveable, because John in Ch. 1:9 declares: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"And there is a sin not unto death" — The sin referred to is that of wrong-doing. A person can have deep respect for God's Word and Law, and yet through very weakness of the flesh, fall from the standards therein set. He regrets his lapse, and endeavours to overcome his weakness. For such there is forgiveness, as John has already explained (1 John 1:7).

The Confidence Of Proper Living —Vv. 18-21.

The Apostle rounds off his Epistle by re-iterating the privileges of the spiritually begotten in Christ, and the loyalty to God which is expected of them.

VERSE 18

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not" — John is referring to the "sin unto death" which is the subject of the context (cp. v. 16, and see notes on 1 John 3:8). The begotten of God may lapse, as did the Apostles on occasions, but he will not be habitually and characteristically a sinner. He cannot sin the unpardonable sin of lawlessness, for he is always conscious of the requirements of God's Word. Though he may be guilty of wrong-doing, and sadden his brethren, yet they are never to cease to pray for such, whereas, in contrast, the lawless sinner is not worth a prayer.

"But he that is begotten of God" — A person is begotten by the Gospel, the Seed of God (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Therefore, he cannot be guilty of the great sin of lawlessness because the law of God is always present to his mind. He may be made uncomfortable by it, and reminded by it of his requirements before

God, but he cannot completely ignore it. The Word, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword", becomes a critic of a believer's actions (Heb. 4:12).

"He keepeth himself" — The Greek word is *tereo*, "to take care of," "to guard." The truly begotten of God will keep a guard over himself recognising the weakness of his nature.

"That wicked one" — The undisciplined propensities of the flesh; the word is sometimes translated "evil." (See note 1 John 3:10, 12).

"Toucheth him not" — The Greek word is more expressive; it is *hupto*, "to grasp," "lay hold of." The begotten of God recognises that the flesh is evil, that the propensity to sin is there (1 John 1:8), but guarding himself, he does not permit it to gain the ascendancy over him.

VERSE 19

"And we know that we are of God" — It is important, throughout the Epistle, to recognise the difference of the two Greek words translated "know". Sometimes it is *oida* signifying to know *academically*, and sometimes it is *ginosko*, to know *experimentally*. Here the former word is used. We know academically that we are "begotten of God", but whether in fact, that is the truth, will be revealed in the Age to come when the approved will be manifested as the Sons of God by a change of nature (see Romans 8:20-22).

"The whole world lieth in wickedness" — The word "wickedness", is translated from the same word as "wicked one." It is *poneros*, and it is expressive of that which is evil. The word has been translated "evil" in many places. See Matt. 7:11; 12:34; 15:19; Mark 7:23 etc. Jesus declared "These evil things (or, lit. "these things of evil"-*poneros*) come from within". Christ therefore saw the flesh as the source of evil, and John adds: "the whole world lieth" in this evil. The expression is in the passive voice, which signifies that it "lieth unresisting in evil." The world is governed

by the flesh, and because of that, it passively lies in wickedness. Jesus prayed that his followers might be kept "from the evil" (John 17:15), and here the same word is used. Because evil characterises the world about us, we must remain separate from it.

VERSE 20

"And we know that the Son of God is come" — This fact is made obvious by the evidence that John has referred to in this epistle. See 1 John 1:1-4; 5:6-8. In this statement the word "know" is *oida*: to know academically, because we are told and believe. The next word "know" is *ginosko*, to know experimentally.

"And hath given us an understanding" — We learn by the revelation of the Word that the Son of God is come. We do not see him personally; so we are among the blessed who believe without personally witnessing the miracle of Christ's first advent and resurrection (John 20:29). That gives us hope that we "may know him" experimentally; that is, that we may be made "like him" (1 John 3:2). So the word "know" in that statement is *ginosko*, to know because of personally experiencing the result.

"That we may know him" — This is the whole purpose of Christ's mission, as he declared in his prayer to the Father: "This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). John's epistle thus commences and closes with a reference to Christ's intercessory prayer. It begins by emphasising the Fellowship (oneness) that is possible between believers and the Father and Son (1 John 1:3; John 17:21), and ends by declaring that the purpose of the revelation is to have an experimental knowledge of the Father, a reference to John 17:3.

"That is true" — The word *alethinous* signifies that which is genuine and real in comparison with that which is shadowy and typical. God is the true One. We do not see Him nor personally hear Him; but we can come to know Him experimentally, in that we can attain unto His nature. Therefore, Paul declared that he stood in hope of the glory of God (Rom.

5:2); Peter declared that we can attain unto His nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and Christ promises that he will bestow the Name of the Father on those "who overcome" (Rev. 3:12). The Gospel call is a call to separation of a people for the Name of God (Acts 15:14); hence by the Gospel one is drawn into the family of God. However, for the moment, the true relationship of such is not revealed. Paul wrote that "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). They alone worship God in truth and acceptably who recognise that "He is, and becomes a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). They acknowledge the reality of their Creator and Redeemer.

"And we are in Him that is true" — See Acts 15:14; Gal. 3:26.

"In His Son" — This is the only way of approach to God, the only way to attain unto a knowledge of Him. See 1 Thess. 1:13.

"Jesus Christ" — The title of the Lord sums up the Truth in him, and should be used by those approaching the Father in prayer through him. See Acts 2:36

"This is the true God" — The word "true" is *alethinous* which signifies that which is genuine and real. God is a living reality, not merely a doctrine, or a proposition in a creed. We must worship Him as such, and not in the impersonal or detached way of one who takes everything for granted because idolatry has blinded his eyes.

"And eternal life" — This is the way to Eternal Life which can only be derived from God through Christ, and that by a knowledge of the Truth.

VERSE 21

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" — An idol is anything that usurps the place of God. Paul defines idolatry as covetousness (Col. 3:5). It is therefore not limited to worship of a pagan idol, but to the worship of self, materialism, family, home, business — anything that might blot out God from our spiritual sight. Idolatry is a very common sin,

and we are all susceptible to it. John's parting exhortation is a call for unqualified allegiance to the things of God.

"Amen" — This word is excluded from the Revised Version, leaving the exhortation of this verse as the closing appeal of the Apostle.

Theme Study

LIGHT

* A physical attribute of the Father (1:5) * A moral quality of saints (1:7) * Manifested by Christ (2:8) * Revealed in action by saints avoiding hatred (2:9) * Revealed by manifesting love (2:10).

LOVE

* Love defined (4:9-10) * Generated by the Word (2:5) * The outcome of love is sonship (3:1) * It must be manifested to one another (3:11) * It is the token of our changed status (3:14) * It must find practical expression (3:17-18) * It characterises the family of God (3:23-24) * It demonstrates that we are begotten of God (4:7) * It is inherent in God (4:8) * God's example of love (4:11) * The outworking of that example (4:12-16) * The confidence engendered by love (4:17-18) * True love demonstrates that we are of the family of God (5:1-3) * Is manifested in belief and obedience (5:3) * A love to be avoided (2:15) * The inconsistency of a pseudo-love (4:20).

THE NEWLY BEGOTTEN

* Avoid sin (2:1) * Have their sins forgiven (2:12) * Know the Father (2:13) * Overcome the flesh through the Word (2:14) * Abide in Christ (2:28) * Are begotten of love (3:1) * Cannot sin in the sense defined (3:9) * Manifest love in deed and truth (3:18; 4:7) * Provide strength to overcome errorists and the world (4:4) * Are begotten of the Word (5:1) * Conquer the world (5:4) * Are guarded by the only Begotten of the Father (5:18).

GOD

* The Father (1:3; 2:1) * A Being of Light (1:5) * Is revealed through the Son (2:23) * Extends fellowship to humanity dwelling in light (1:6; 2:24) * His love manifested in begetting us to sonship (3:1) * He is Omniscient (3:20) * He answers prayer (3:22; 5:14-15) * His basic commandments (3:23-24; 5:3) * He strengthens His children (4:4) * He is the Author of Love (4:7-8) * He revealed that Love in Christ (4:9) * He has created a debt of Love for us to repay (4:11) * He dwells in believers (4:12-16) * Dwells by His Spirit-Word (4:13) * And through His sacrificial love (4:16) * He begets sons to newness of life (5:1) * And through His indwelling witness (5:10) * He is the Author of eternal life (1:2 cp. 5:11) * The Father of the Divine family on earth (5:19) * He is revealed through His Son (5:20) * He demands total and exclusive allegiance (5:21).

JESUS CHRIST

* He is a visible, tangible body of life (1:1) * Came in flesh (4:2) * God's only begotten Son (4:9) * Savior of the world (4:14) * The Christ (5:1) * Witnessed by water and blood (5:6) * The manifestation of the Father (5:20) * The way to life eternal (5:20) * Life is in him (5:11) * A sacrifice (3:16) * An example of righteous living (2:6; 3:3) * Destroyed the works of the devil (3:8) * The Atonement (1:7) * The Advocate (2:1) * The Righteous (2:1) * The propitiation (2:2) * The need to abide in him (2:6) * He is denied by antichrist (2:22) * He is pure (3:3) * Fellowship with him (1:3) * He is coming again (2:28; 3:2) * To be manifested visibly (3:2).

ACTION REQUIRED

* Walking in light (1:7) * Confession (i.e. recognition) of sin (1:9) * Guard over commandments (2:3-4) * Walk as Christ walked (2:6) * Manifestation of Divine love and avoiding hate (2:7-11) * Separating from the world (2:15) * Allowing the Word to abide (2:24) * Abiding in Christ (2:28) * Manifesting righteousness (2:29) * Purification of character (3:3) * Love one another (3:11; 4:7, 20) * Sacrificing self interest (3:16) * Relieve the destitute (3:17) * Love in deed, not merely in Word (3:18) * Manifest belief and obedience (3:23-24) * Testing all teaching (4:1) * Hearken to Apostolic counsel (4:6) * Keeping commandments because of love of God (5:1-3) * To overcome the world through faith (5:4).

FELLOWSHIP

* Conditional upon walking in Light (1:6, 7) * Enjoyed with the Father and Son (1:3).

THE WORLD

* Lies in wickedness (5:19) * Governed by fleshly lusts (2:16) * Cannot comprehend believers (3:1) * Hates the followers of Christ (3:13) * Followers love not the world (2:15) * Though Christ died for its sins (2:2; 4:9, 14) * The world passes away (2:17) * False teachers gone into the world (4:1) * Antichrist manifested in the world (4:3) * Antichrist accepted by the world (4:5) * A greater strength within saints to overcome the world (4:4) * Antagonism from the world (4:17) * The begotten of God overcomes the world (5:4) * Gains the victory by faith in Christ (5:4-5).

The Second Epistle of John

Setting Forth

The Truth in the Home

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

The Truth in the Home

John's second epistle appears to have been written to an unnamed sister and mother in the truth whose mistaken kindness to errorists endangered both her home and the ecclesia. She was noted for her love and hospitality, to the extent that she was harboring those who were propagating serious error.

The Apostle gently tried to impress upon her the danger of such action. She doubtless was doing this because of a mistaken understanding of the term "love" and what it required.

John showed that the manifestation of a divine love demanded strict obedience to the commandments of God, which disciplined and narrowed the channel of love. There is no weakness in love, but a firm determination to maintain the purity of the faith, to the extent that hospitality was to be denied those guilty of serious error. Friendship for those in the truth, therefore, must be limited to those who embrace truth. This is a requirement of Love, a Love that gives God first place in our lives.

Though John in this epistle repeats much of what he states in his first Epistle, this second letter is an extremely important addition to the canon of Scripture, inasmuch as it reveals the application of the principles set forth for the guidance of the Ecclesia in relation to the home.

The Epistle has been interpreted as being directed to an ecclesia who is styled "the elect lady". This, indeed, was our opinion once; but a closer look at it has convinced us that it relates to an individual: an outstanding sister in the truth, one for whom John had the highest regard. But whether it is interpreted as being directed to an individual or an ecclesia, the message remains the same. Certainly, if John would have individuals act towards heretics in the home as he set forth herein, he would desire the Ecclesia to act in similar manner.

The Epistles of John establish a most important principle. It is that the love of "agape" can only be manifested along the channel of Light and Life. It reflects the divine Light and therefore cannot condone that which is related to death. It is more than kindness, it is a manifestation and extension to others of the grace that we receive from God, and which is governed by Truth. Therefore true love cannot be manifested where truth is absent, or where it is not the dynamics of the action performed.

This Second Epistle illustrates that fact.

An Analysis

THE TRUTH AND THE HOME

(2 John)



1. INTRODUCTION — vv. 1-4

To Whom Written	v. 1-2.
Greetings	v. 3.
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2. EXPOSITION — vv. 5-6

Love Defined	v. 5-6.
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3. EXHORTATION — vv. 7-9

Beware of deceivers	vv. 7-8.
Their evil influence	v. 9.

4. APPLICATION — vv. 10-11

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5. INFORMATION — vv. 12-13

Many Things To Explain	v. 12.
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Verse by Verse Exposition

INTRODUCTION

(Vv. 1-4)

The Epistle is written to the "elect lady" whose children caused the Apostle to rejoice (v. 14), and whose relations send her greeting (v. 13).

Was that lady an individual or an ecclesia? The Epistle could be interpreted as being sent to either, but on reflection, it does seem strange that John should address an Ecclesia in that way, even though it is an appropriate title for the espoused bride of Christ. As he wrote his third Epistle to a specific person, it seems most likely that this one was likewise written to an individual, a Sister of outstanding repute in an Ecclesia.

Some have translated the Greek word for "Lady" as a proper noun, and addressed the Epistle to the elect Cyria (see Diaglott). It could well be so. Of greater importance to us, however, is the instruction of John as to how love should be applied in the home.

To Whom Written

It is addressed to an outstanding sister in the Truth whose reputation for good is widespread, and whose example is imitated by others.

VERSE 1

"The elder" — The word is *presbutera*, and signifies one older in age. However, it is also used to define one of higher rank or office. The title was given to members of the Sanhedrin. In this case, it could apply to John in both ways. He was older, and higher in rank; therefore, on both counts, his words should be respected and heeded.

"Elect lady" — The adjective, "elect" signifies "chosen," and implies that she was outstanding among sisters. "Lady" is *Kyria* in Greek (Eng. Cyria), and might well be the name of the person to whom the Epistle is directed. It is so rendered in the Diaglott and other translations.

"And her children" — If the term *elect lady* refers to an Ecclesia, the children would be the individual members thereof. But if, as we suggest in the in-

troduction, the term should be rendered as a proper noun, Cyria, "her children" would relate to the members of her family. The Greek word would include in itself both sexes, though the following pronoun is in the masculine gender. That suggests that there were at least sons among the members of her family.

"Whom I love" etc. — This speaks of the character of Cyria, and of her reputation which was widespread. It was particularly necessary, in view of the latter, that she should be circumspect in every way.

"And not I only but also all they that have known the truth" — This speaks highly of the character of Cyria, for it signifies that all in the Truth who knew her were impressed and moved by the example she exhibited. It appears from the subsequent comments of John, that she was noted for her hospitality, particularly on behalf of those who claimed to be of the truth. In that regard, the Apostle offered some words of counsel and warning, lest she be imposed upon (v. 10).

VERSE 2

"For the truth's sake" — This was the ground of the widespread appreciation

of Cyria's action. All she did in the way of hospitality, or in other direction, was governed by the Truth. It motivated her actions.

"Which dwelleth in us" — The truth dwelt in the hearts of John and his companions, and consequently, they were drawn towards Cyria as well.

"And shall be with us for ever" — Gospel truth is related to life eternal, (see 1 Pet. 1:23-25), therefore friendships based upon it have the seeds of eternity in them. It enables those governed thereby to see even beyond the grave (1 Thess. 4:13-16).

Greetings — V. 3

The expressions of greeting are carefully selected, and are of greatest significance. They are not idle words used without meaning.

"Grace" — Grace is divine favor. Christ is the vehicle of such to mankind (John 1:14, 16, 17), and he himself experienced it from God (Luke 2:52). It is extended to mankind through the offering of Christ, who humbled himself to make this possible (2 Cor. 8:9). In Christ Jesus we live in a sphere of grace (Rom. 5:2), though it is possible to fall from the high plane of favor to which we have been elevated (Eph. 2:6; Gal. 5:4). Grace is the position of favor in which Cyria had been elevated in Christ.

In the Greek, however, this is given in the future tense (see margin): "There shall be with us grace . . ." The benefits indicated in these terms shall continue with us into the future.

"Mercy" — The word in the Greek signifies kindness and goodwill to those who need it, and is manifested in the forgiving of sins. Thus mercy is still needed by those who have embraced Christ and have experienced favor.

"Peace" — This was promised the Apostles by Christ (John 14:27). The Greek word *eirene* is derived from *eiro*, "to bind together." The peace thus indicated is not merely absence of antagonism, but

a complete welding together of individuals in understanding and outlook. Such a peace is also indicated by the Hebrew word *shalom*, which implies fellowship as a means to the complete unity that awaits the redeemed in the age to come (John 17:21).

"From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father" — This is the only Source from whence true grace, mercy and peace can come. The very full title that John gives the Lord Jesus precludes any possibility of Trinitarian ideas. He is "the Son of the Father," not God the Son.

"In truth and love" — This is the sphere in which grace, mercy and peace will be found, and the only basis upon which it can be derived, even through the Father and the Son. They cannot be obtained outside of the truth, and the divine love expressed in the sacrifice of Christ (1 John 4:9)

Condition Of Cyria — V. 4.

Cyria was one who had brought up her children to embrace the truth; she was either a widow (which is more likely), or wife of a husband who was not in the Truth.

VERSE 4

"I rejoiced greatly" — The R. V. renders this in the present tense: "I rejoice greatly that I have found . . ." Cyria is commended for the manner in which her children behave. It reflects to the credit of the instruction and discipline she has given them.

"That I found thy children walking in the truth" — The preposition *ek* signifies "out of", and implies that only some of her children were doing so. That could imply that some of her family had not attained unto the state of responsibility in the Word. To "walk in the Truth" is to be actively pursuing the way of life laid down in its commandments.

"As we have received a commandment from the Father" — This statement is susceptible of two meanings: firstly, that the command received is to walk in the Truth; secondly, it has re-

gard to the manner in which parents bring up their children. It should be in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as Cyria had done (Eph. 6:4). Children are accounted an "heritage of Yahweh" (Psa. 127:3), and therefore parents have a responsibility to bring them up as His word commands. They should not spoil

them by over-indulgence; nor discourage them by undue restrictions (Col. 3:21); but by warm and loving consideration of their eternal welfare, carefully guide them into the Truth, and assist them with sympathetic compassion in the day to day problems that afflict them.

EXPOSITION

(Vv. 5-6)

John provides Cyria with a definition of love, that narrows it down to principles of the truth. She had been mistaking acts of hospitality and kindness for love (vv. 10-11).

Love Defined — Vv. 5-6

Love is not a boundless tolerance, not kindly hospitality, but respect for and obedience of the commandments of God and Christ.

VERSE 5

"I beseech thee" — The Greek expression signifies a request. John is somewhat peremptory in tone, as he reminds her of earlier instruction (perhaps his first epistle), and requests her to apply the exhortations therein outlined. See 1 John 2:7; 3:11.

"Lady" — If this is to be treated as a proper noun, render: *Cyria*.

"Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning" — See notes 1 John 2:7; 3:11.

"That we love one another" — This is a command that all must heed if they would please Christ. The exhortation is introduced at this point, and in regard to a Sister with the reputation of Cyria, suggests that there was a need for her to carefully analyse the terms of the hospitality she was extending to others. As John gently indicates later, hospitality given to heretics is not true love as Scripturally defined.

VERSE 6

"This is love" — It is thus defined, expounded, and limited. This is a divine love for God and man. The commandment is found in Mark 12:28-31; 1 John 5:3, and

elsewhere. Warmth of feeling, acts of kindness, are useless, even dangerous, in the absence of a true love here defined as keeping the commandments of God and Christ. These commandments define and limit love.

"That we walk after his commandments" — To "walk" is to display activity. And to "walk after his commandments" is to be active in ways that are pleasing to Christ. This definition of love narrows it down to doing the will of God, and not merely expressing flesh likings. "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Mere hospitality is pleasing to the flesh, and generally results in reciprocal action; but love sometimes must be cruel to be kind. Paul declared: "The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:15). He found it necessary to chastise and rebuke, but all he did was done in love. Now John reminds Cyria that true love is bounded by restrictions, those expressed in the commandments of God. To extend hospitality to heretics is not true love.

"This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it" — This repetition is for emphasis. John underlined the great and peculiar commandment; the one by which the Lord's disciples are to be characterised, and which witnesses to the Truth they have espoused (John 13:34-35). He insists that the commandment not only be accepted as such, but that disciples should *walk* therein; they should be active in manifesting it.

EXHORTATION

(Vv. 7-9)

John warns Cyria that love will clearly see heretics as deceivers, and in order to guard that which has been given into her care, will demand separation from such. The doctrine that they set before their dupes will only bring death, and as death is defiling, so there is need to carefully avoid that which defiles. Cyria owed it to her family, some of whom were already drifting, to protect them from the influences of those who taught doctrines contrary to Truth. Love demanded that; and demanded that she exclude these heretics from her home, and thus care for those who were in her particular care.

VERSE 7

"For many deceivers are entered into the world" — The R.V. renders this: "are gone forth into the world" linking this statement with that of 1 John 2:19. See also 1 John 2:26; 4:1. The word "deceivers" is *planos* in the Greek, and signifies "to wander, rove, mislead," and hence to lead astray. The cognate verb, *planao* is one frequently used by John—1 John 1:8; 2:26; 3:7. Rev. 2:20; 12:9; 13:14; 19:20; 20:3, 10.

"Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" — See note 1 John 2:22.

"This is a deceiver and an antichrist" — John's insistence upon love forming the basis of a believer's life does not prevent him frankly and clearly stating the real character of these errorists. See also 1 John 2:18, 22.

On the contrary, the use of "for" at the beginning of this verse contrasted these deceivers with those who had embraced the Truth, walking in it in love. These deceivers did not walk in love because their doctrines were contrary to the Truth. Hence, a person cannot manifest the love referred to by the Apostle unless he walks in the Truth.

VERSE 8

"Look to yourselves" — This was the very personal exhortation of the Lord Jesus to the Apostles (Luke 21:34), which John now passes on to those who have come "to believe through their word."

The word "look" is *blepo* in the Greek which signifies: "Keep a watchful eye upon." As the deceivers were active in all directions, there was a great need for Cyria and her household to keep a watchful eye upon themselves lest they be led astray also.

"That we lose not those things" — The R.V. changes the "we" into "ye." The word "lose" is translated from *apollumi* which signifies to "destroy," to "ruin." In Matt. 10:42 it is used to describe losing a reward. Cyria was endangering the reward that she would otherwise receive by her unwise hospitality and pseudo-charity which had the effect of introducing these deceivers into her household, and into the ecclesia. John warns that they could lead their dupes astray, and by so doing, draw them out of the sphere of the Father and the Son, and away from life eternal.

"Which we have wrought" — In using the plural pronoun, John emphasised the mutual labor in which Cyria had engaged upon with the Apostle, and which had apparently brought some to a knowledge of the truth.

"That we receive a full reward" — The R.V. transposes the "we" into "ye," and by so doing, emphasises that Cyria would be responsible for any loss caused through her unwise action in introducing these heretics to her household and to the Ecclesia. What reward would be endanger-

ed by such action? The reward suggested in 1 Cor. 3:13-15. Paul there emphasises the need to build soundly on the foundation of Christ, and declares that if we do not do so, we shall suffer loss, even though we personally might gain salvation. This means that a person will not only be granted Eternal Life at the Judgment Seat, but also a higher or lower status according to the value of work performed at present. A person might remain personally faithful to the truth, and yet labor unskillfully within the ecclesia, so that his work for Christ is imperfect. He may be personally saved, but will suffer loss in that he will be held responsible for the faulty workmanship of his ecclesial labors. That was the case with Cyria in her home. She was a faithful sister, whose personal attitude pleased the Apostle, but she was acting foolishly in allowing these heretics entrance to her home or the ecclesia, for their influence could be such as to lead some of her family astray. For that she would be held responsible at the judgment seat, and whilst she may receive eternal life, she would lack the full reward which would otherwise be hers. Cp. Luke 19: 17-18.

The Evil Influence Of The Deceivers — V. 9

The Apostle realistically shows the true character of the deceivers; a character that might have been disguised by pleasant manners or kind speech. He factually reveals them for what they were.

VERSE 9

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ” — According to the best Greek texts, “transgresseth” is from *proago*, and signifies, “to lead forth, to go before” (Vine). The R.V. accordingly renders this: “Goeth onward.” These deceivers led their dupes from out of the abiding place in Christ into the world which lieth in wickedness (1 John 5:19).

“Hath not God” — cp. 1 John 2:23.

“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ” — The doctrine of Christ is the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh. See 1 John 1:7.

“He hath both the Father and the Son” — There is such union between the Father and the Son, that he who has proper views of the one has also of the other. See John 14:7,9,10,11; John 17:20-23, and contrast with 1 John 2:23

APPLICATION

(Vv. 10-11)

Having provided Cyria with a clear and concise definition of love, having warned her of the true character of many who were posing as the custodians of truth, and exhorted her to look to her own because there was a danger of them wandering out of the way of righteousness, John now gives specific and Apostolic advice in regard to the application of these principles.

False Charity To Be Avoided — Vv. 10-11

Cyria had allowed mere emotion to govern her conception of love, and in the kindness of her heart, had opened her home to the enemy. John sternly warns against such action, and clearly shows what it involves.

VERSE 10

“If” — The Greek word is *ei* with the indicative mood, assuming hypothesis as an actual fact. Bullinger defines it as: “If any come, as I know they do...”

“Come unto you” — John wrote as though there was no doubt of this. Cyria was known for her warm hospitality.

That is an excellent characteristic, but it also has its dangers. Some may take advantage of the generous liberality of such as her, and if they be false teachers, they could introduce their wrong ideas to the members of her household. That danger is incidental to every age; and has proved a very potent source of trouble in these times.

“And bring not this doctrine” — The doctrine relates to the nature and sacrifice of Christ. Hospitality is not to be shown unto those who fail to embrace the Truth. To act otherwise is to introduce trouble into the household. Many have been drawn from the Truth by extending such to trouble-makers and heretics. John left no doubt as to the action Cyria should taken when approached by any such.

“Receive him not into your house” — The Ecclesias were frequently located in the homes of their members (Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15; Acts 12:12); and Cyria could have been a woman like Mark’s mother who maintained an open house for the work of the Truth. That being the case, the children of Cyria, to whom John makes mention (v.4), may have included spiritual ones. Whether her home be used for this purpose or not, the Apostolic command was clear: no hospitality to heretics in the form here indicated!

“Neither bid him God-speed” — We normally use the term. “God-speed” when we are farewelling somebody, but that is not the way John used it. The word “God” does not appear in the original form of the word. In the Greek it is *chairem*, and signifies, “Greeting. hail. rejoice!” Therefore it is a salutation of welcome. This was not to be extended to heretics.

VERSE 11

“For he that biddeth him God speed” — To do so is to condone the doctrine taught, and so confirm the heretic in his belief.

“Partaker of his evil deeds” — If Cyria persisted in extending a greeting to these heretics, and opening her home to them, she would have to share the responsibility for all the harm that their false doctrines could cause. Her love for God and her family must nerve her to show firm resistance without any external appearance of welcome. Her conception of the real danger of false doctrine would enable her to see the wisdom of the Apostolic injunction. To act otherwise than directed would jeopardise her own worship before God, as well as the spiritual welfare of those gathered in her home.

INFORMATION

(Vv. 12-13)

John expressed his anxiety to write to Cyria of many things, but he lacked opportunity for the moment. However, the matter advanced in this short letter was so important, that he dared not delay writing, and therefore immediately penned the letter. This, in itself, expresses the urgency of the matter.

Many Things To Explain — V. 12

John states his intention of visiting Cyria personally, which would imply that she was a person and not an ecclesia.

VERSE 12

“Having many things to write unto you” — There was much upon which

John could have written to Cyria; but one thing was essential: she had to be put on her guard against the influence of certain heretics

“I would not write” — John had given careful thought to this. The word “would” is from the Greek *boulomai* and signifies: “A purpose formed after mature consideration” (Bullinger). John had

pondered the problems that he wished to discuss with Cyria carefully, and concluded that letter writing was a poor medium of communication for the things he wished to say and explain to her, as it could lead to misunderstanding. So, having written this preliminary letter of warning, the aged Apostle, in love, determined to go out of his way to personally visit his sister. In all this we perceive the hand of God. It is obvious that John would not have written at all if he could have immediately visited Cyria, but something prevented him from doing so. In consequence we share the benefit of this important little letter.

“With paper and ink” — The paper referred to was papyrus; the ink was made of soot and water mixed with gum to give it consistency and durability. To write with paper and ink is to be personally involved in the exercise. It takes time and effort, and very often agony of mind to do so.

“But I trust to come unto you and speak face to face” — The letter was a hurried intimation of a potential danger, designed to put Cyria on her guard. John was hopeful of meeting her personally at a later date to confirm the contents of the letter, and explain in greater detail that which he has briefly outlined therein. How valuable it is that he was prevented from travelling instantly to her. If he had done so this letter would not have been written; with its valuable advice to all those “given to hospitality”, as we all should be. However, love must take precedence over hospitality, and

that requires that we “walk after his commandments”; among which is the instruction to refuse entertaining those heretics who would undermine the faith of the undiscerning.

“Our joy may be full” — This would be the case after mutual discussion, as he would be able to personally expound the things of God. See 1 John 1:4.

John looked forward to meeting Cyria personally, enjoying the loving hospitality for which she was noted, and extending to her the privilege of expounding the Truth. He was the last of the Apostles, and it would have been a tremendous joy to entertain such a visitor in one's home.

Final Greetings — V. 13

John is in touch with relations of Cyria, and sends their greetings to her. It may have been that the letter was written in view of information he had received from them.

VERSE 13

“The children of thy elect sister greet thee” — The mention of these relations of Cyria was a gentle reminder that John was familiar with her circumstances and hospitality, and also of the visitors who sometimes imposed on her. The absence of any greetings from Cyria's sister would suggest that the mother of these children was not present, or was dead.

“Amen” — This concluding word is not contained in the Greek mss.

The Third Epistle of John

Setting forth the Principle of

The Truth in the Home

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

The Truth and the Individual

THE EXAMPLE SET BY THREE INDIVIDUALS

John's third epistle highlights the example of three entirely different individuals, all of whom professed to follow Christ. It brings the trio of Epistles to a natural conclusion. The first Epistle expounds the principle of God manifestation, with particular emphasis on love; the second epistle reveals its application in the home; the third epistle describes its influence on individuals. The first Epistle sets forth Ecclesial responsibilities; the second Epistle, Domestic responsibilities; the third Epistle, Personal responsibilities.

The third epistle was written to Gaius, and mentions Diotrophes and Demetrius. These three men each provide an example of behaviour to be emulated or avoided. Like the second Epistle, this is an intensely personal one. It is one which circumstances compelled John to write (v. 13), although he sought to avoid it. But the Spirit through John was writing for posterity, and it is to our benefit that we are able to study the contents of this short letter. We can follow the example of Gaius, Diotrophes or Demetrius. Let us learn to apply the good and avoid the evil.

An Analysis

1. GAIUS: THE SINCERE, DEDICATED, LOVABLE — vv. 1-8

Introduction	v. 1.
Supplication	v. 2.
Reputation	v. 3.
Consolation	v. 4.
Commendation	v. 5.
Exhortation	v. 6.
Explanation	v. 7.
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2. DIOTREPHE'S: THE DOMINEERING, SELF-ASSERTIVE, ARROGANT — vv. 9-11

Usurper of Christ's Position	v. 9.
Domineering and Arrogant	v. 10.
An Example To Avoid	v. 11.

3. DEMETRIUS: OF GOOD REPUTE TO ALL — v. 12

Apostolic Approval	v. 12.
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4. LAST WORDS FROM JOHN — vv. 13-14

Concluding Greetings	vv. 13-14.
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Verse by Verse Exposition

GAIUS: SINCERE, DEDICATED, LOVABLE

(Vv. 1-8)

Gaius was an extremely common name in the days of the Apostle, and several men by that name are mentioned in the Scriptures. If this Gaius was the one mentioned in Romans 16:23 (and there are similarities about their characters), then he was converted by John (3 John 4), baptised by Paul (1 Cor. 1:14), and was a wealthy and hospitable member of the Ecclesia at Corinth.

John wrote this urgent message to him, to encourage him in the attitude he was adopting towards the truth, and to warn him against the overbearing demeanour of Diotrephes.

Introduction — V. 1

"The elder" — See note 2 John 1.

"The wellbeloved" — Greek *agapetos*, and denoting one who is a recipient of the divine *agape* or love. The R.V. renders this: "Beloved." He is given this title four times in the epistle (Vv. 1, 2, 5, 11) which is an indication of his character. He was not only a recipient of the divine love but manifested it towards others.

"Gaius" — Gaius signifies, "I am glad." He was noted for his sincerity (v. 3), for using his material resources faithfully (v. 5), and for his generosity (v. 6).

"Whom I love in the truth" — The margin renders this: "Whom I truly love". John had a great affection for the sincere, dedicated and lovable Gaius.

Supplication — V. 2

"Beloved" — The repetition of this title shows the deep regard which the Apostle had for Gaius.

"I wish above all things" — The R.V. changes this to, "I pray that in all things." John's prayer on the behalf of Gaius was that he should prosper in all ways, recognising that even material blessings come from God (James 1:17). His prayer acknowledged that Gaius used his resources to the very best ad-

vantage. This is ever the responsibility of brethren in a position like his (see 1 Cor. 16:2; 1 Tim. 6:17; Eccles. 5:19; 6:2).

"Thou mayest prosper and be in health" — This does not necessarily indicate that he had been in ill health, but was the normal greeting of the times. Deissman in *Light From The Ancient East* quotes from the papyri to show this to be the case.

"Even as thy soul prospereth" — Gaius was a man whose life was given to the truth without stint, and the prayer of the Apostle was that the blessing of God might continue with him in all the circumstances of his life both physically and spiritually, even as it had to that moment. "Soul" is sometimes used for feeling, or the heart, as in Luke 1:46, in which case John prayed that the material and physical wellbeing of Gaius might equal his spiritual health.

Reputation — V. 3

"For" — John discloses the reason why he was able to write: "Thy soul prospereth;" it was because he was "walking in the truth."

"I rejoiced greatly" — Cp. 2 John 4. John's joy at the faithful conduct of Gaius outweighed his sorrow at the folly of Diotrephes,

as a comparison of the expressions used in regard to both does show.

"The brethren came and testified" — The aged, and probably only remaining, Apostle evidently received reports of Ecclesial activities from various parts of the Ecclesial world (cp. 2 John 4). These caused him both joy and sorrow as this Epistle reveals.

"Thou walkest in the truth" — His manner of life was consistent with his beliefs.

Consolation — V. 4

"I have no greater joy" — The R.V. makes this more emphatic: "Greater joy have I none than this..."

"That my children walk in truth" — The personal pronoun, "my," is a translation of *emos* which denotes possession, power over, authorship, and right (Bullinger), and implies that Gaius was converted by John. There was particular joy for John that such as Gaius should so walk, for it testified that he had built thoroughly upon the foundation of Christ (1 Cor. 3:13-15). In like manner, Paul stated that the faith of the believers in Thessalonica would be a cause of rejoicing by him when they stood before Christ (1 Thess. 2:19).

Commendation — V. 5

"Beloved" — Again John repeated the title. He did so as he began to write of the generous acts of hospitality for which Gaius was known.

"Thou doest faithfully" — The R.V. renders this as, "a faithful work." The context shows that Gaius extended material help to some who were preaching the Gospel, and John emphasises that his action in that regard was a work of faith, that is, one stimulated by the requirements of the Truth, and not merely an act of kindness.

"Whatsoever thou doest" — John commended Gaius because he acted in good faith in his speech and conduct towards others. Gaius was a brother

whose sole aim was to live as Christ would have him live; and particularly in his associations with others. To him this was to witness to the Truth that he espoused.

"To the brethren, and to strangers" — The phrase does not mean to believers and non-believers, but to believers who were strangers, or visitors. The Diaglott renders, "and this to strangers." The hospitality of Gaius was extended to all who were brethren, whether they were personally known to him or not (Heb. 13:1-2; Matt. 25:35, 40).

John referred particularly to brethren who were moving from place to place, to preach the word. Gaius had shown exceptional kindness to these brethren (v. 6), and assisted them materially in the spiritual work in which they were engaged. On the other hand, Diotrephes resisted them, as he felt that these strangers would challenge his authority and standing. John commended the attitude of Gaius, and condemned that of Diotrephes.

Exhortation — V. 6

"Which have borne witness of thy charity before the ecclesia" — The word "charity" is *agape*, elsewhere rendered "love." The stranger-brethren who had met Gaius and had been assisted by him, had witnessed to his love and generosity before John and the ecclesia.

"Whom if thou bring forward on their journey" — John thus exhorted Gaius to maintain his action in supporting their efforts from place to place, and to give them every assistance in their labors. See similar expressions used in regard to Paul's labors (Rom. 15:24; Tit. 3:13). This Apostolic commendation and exhortation was needful in view of the bitter hostility Gaius had received from Diotrephes who was a dominant personality in his Ecclesia.

"After a Godly sort" — The margin renders: "worthy of God."

and this is supported by the R.V. Gaius is encouraged to continue his support of the brethren concerned. They were doing a work of God, and should be encouraged (cp. Matt. 5:48; John 13:20). This is entirely opposite to the manner in which Cyria was to treat the heretics who had sought her hospitality.

"Thou shalt do well" — If Gaius followed John's advice, he would do all that the Truth demands under such circumstances.

"Because for his name's sake they went forth" — The R.V. renders this: "For the sake of the name they went forth." They revealed the qualities of the Name, and their work was dedicated to the proclamation of it. They, therefore, went forth on the Truth's labor, and as such were worthy of the help that Gaius extended to them.

"Taking nothing of the Gentiles" — The word Gentiles is *ethnikos* ("heathen") in Greek, as in Matt. 6:7; 18:17. They refused help from such, and only accepted it from brethren, evidently adopting the procedure indicated in Luke 10:5-8.

Reciprocation — V. 8

"We therefore ought to receive

such" — Christ taught that one genuinely going forth in the name of another should receive a like reward (Matt. 10:41). John urged that brethren have a moral obligation to extend such help. The word for "ought" is *opheilo* and signifies a debt to be paid. See its use in 1 John 2:6; 3:16; 4:11.

The word "receive" is from the Greek *hupolambano* which is compounded of *hupo*, under, and *lambano*, to hold up. It therefore has the idea lifting up or supporting from beneath. The word is used in connection with the cloud that bore up Christ (Acts 1:9), and is particularly appropriate to describe the refreshing support that such as Gaius must have rendered those brethren who were devoting their life to serve Christ. It signifies more than merely supporting them financially, for it involves the idea of personal association with the problems facing such. The R.V. renders the word as "welcome," and the Diaglott as "entertain."

"That we might be fellow helpers to the truth" — By personally identifying themselves in a material way with the work of those brethren, others such as Gaius became effective fellow helpers in their labor.

DIOTREPHES: DOMINEERING, SELF-ASSERTIVE, ARROGANT

(Vv. 9-11)

In contrast to Gaius, Diotrophes enjoyed the pre-eminence among the brethren, and bitterly opposed anybody who might challenge this. He looked with suspicion upon those brethren who were travelling from place to place in the service of the truth. Their selfless dedication was a contrast to his political place-seeking, and he not only opposed them, and refused them a voice in the Ecclesia, but also vigorously challenged the right of such as Gaius to assist them. This led to verbal conflict. The Apostle was asked to adjudicate in the matter, but his instruction, which supported such as Gaius, was ignominiously rejected by the arrogant Diotrophes.

The attitude of Diotrophes was a menace to the spiritual

development of the Ecclesia, even though he may have been quite sound doctrinally. Even an Apostle was not safe from his prating tongue. The doctrine of love, preached so effectively by John, demanded that Diotrephes be vigorously challenged, and effectively silenced, and the Apostle now proclaimed his intention of doing it.

**Usurper Of Christ's Position —
V. 9**

VERSE 9

"I wrote unto the Ecclesia" — John wrote previously commending such unto the attention and good services of the Ecclesia, not doubting that his recommendation of them would be accepted, and the Ecclesia would minister such things as was necessary. The letter is now lost, and doubtless was only a brief, and unimportant note of commendation. But such a comment as this is helpful in an inspired epistle, for it is a reminder that the Apostles took time to think about the trials, and to care about the good will of those who were given to the work of the Lord. They were not indifferent to their bodily and material needs. However, the Apostle's previous letter of commendation on behalf of his fellowhelpers in the truth was bitterly opposed by Diotrephes who saw such teachers and speakers as challenging his supremacy in the local Ecclesia.

"Diotrephes" — The name signifies, "Nourished by Jove." He certainly imitated the thunder of that pagan god!

"Loveth to have the pre-eminence among them" — In this statement, the word "loveth" is from *phileo* which relates to a feeling of friendliness towards an object; the object in this context being self! Diotrephes desired the "pre-eminence," and in so doing craved the very position in the Ecclesia that should be reserved for Christ. It is he who should have "the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:18).

"He receiveth us not" — He refused the advances of the Apostle, and in so doing, rejected the help of Christ and of God (Luke 10:16). John had written unto the Ecclesia, but evidently Diotrephes had repudiated or destroyed the letter. The terms of John's

comment would suggest the latter, for apparently, Gaius knew nothing of any such letter.

**Domineering And Arrogant —
V. 10**

VERSE 10

"If I come" — At that stage, John could not state with certainty as to when he would come, or even if such a visit were possible. He was then very old, and this fact could have made the visit hypothetical.

"I will remember his deeds" — The Apostle is administering a rebuke to Diotrephes based upon Christ's instruction in Matthew 18. He had first remonstrated with Diotrephes privately to no avail (v. 9); he had then sent messengers who had been treated in a similar manner; now the Apostle states his intention of laying the facts before the Ecclesia (see Matt. 18:17). The R.V. renders: "I will bring to remembrance his works . . ."

"Prating against us" — The word in the Greek signifies "to bubble or boil up," and suggests words that are both fluent and empty!

"With malicious words" — The Greek word is *poneros*, evil, pernicious. The R.V. renders it as "wicked."

"Neither doeth he himself receive the brethren" — The brethren are those referred to in Vv. 5-6 who were travelling from place to place preaching the Word. Whereas such as Gaius received them, and supported their efforts, Diotrephes rejected them, and hindered them in their labors.

"Forbiddeth them that would" — Probably on the grounds of Ecclesial control, he stood up

against such as Gaius, and publicly indicted them for receiving and supporting these brethren.

"Casteth them out of the Ecclesia" — By so doing, Diotrephes imitated the action of the Pharisees (John 9:4, 35); so that Pharisaism was now found in the midst of the Ecclesias (Luke 11:52), justifying the harsh rebuke of the Apostle, who imitated the Lord Jesus in that regard.

An Example To Be Avoided — V. 11

"Beloved" — Again, John uses this title of tender endearment; so frequent in this brief letter.

"Follow not that which is evil" — For the exhortation see Ps. 34:14; for the assurance of Divine help see 1 Pet. 3:11, 13. Gaius is exhorted to observe the example of Diotrephes in order to avoid it.

"But that which is good" — Gaius was exhorted to act positively in the things of Christ; seeking that which is good.

"He that doeth good is of God" — God-manifestation must be observed in action, not merely in words. A person that practises good, demonstrates that he is motivated by the Truth, and therefore is of God. See 1 John 3:8-10. The margin (and the R.V.) renders this: *is worthy of God.*

DEMETRIUS: AN EXAMPLE TO EMULATE

(V. 12)

The final individual introduced to our attention is faithful Demetrius, who probably carried the letter to Gaius, and whose reputation was in accordance with the truth and the subject of Apostolic endorsement .

Apostolic Approval — V. 12

VERSE 12

"Demetrius" — Demetrius was a very common name, and the individual in question cannot be identified. The name means *Belonging to Demeter or Ceres*, the goddess of agriculture and rural life. He was probably the bearer of the Epistle. It is thought that John wrote from Ephesus, and if so, this Demetrius was a great contrast to the other Demetrius mentioned in Acts 19:24.

"A good report of all" — As such he was a contrast to Diotrephes, and a character that Gaius could safely emulate.

"And of the truth itself" — His life was a consistent manifestation of the truth he embraced and taught (1 John 3:18-19).

"Our record is true" — John's commendation of Demetrius and warning against Diotrephes was true to fact, and could not be gainsaid by his opponents.

FINAL GREETINGS

(Vv. 13-14)

With a few words of final greeting to his friend and brother, the faithful and hospitable Gaius, John lays down his pen.

VERSE 13

"I had many things to write" — See note 2 John 12.

"With pen" — The word in the Greek signifies a reed pen as distinguished from a sharp stylus such

as was used for writing on waxed tablets.

VERSE 14

"I trust" — The R.V. renders this as "hope."

"Peace" — See note 2 John 3.

"Greet the friends" — He carefully discriminated between friends and enemies such as Diotrephes!

"By name" — This is a most important and significant addition. John was a shepherd to the flock, leading it to Christ. As such he knew the sheep "by name," and so called them along the way they should go (John 10:3). With this note, he lay down his pen, to continue his labors by personal in-

struction. One day all these individuals will be brought together at the judgment seat of Christ. And then will be recognised the wisdom of John's instruction, and the abiding power of that self-sacrificing love that he taught and manifested. Let us learn from his words, and the experiences of his times, and let us build into our lives those divine attributes of virtue manifested by the Lord Jesus and by the Apostles who were changed for good by their contact with Him.

The Third Epistle of John

This epistle lays down further guidelines on the subject of love. The First Epistle emphasised that love is of God, and unless it is manifested in a practical manner towards one's contemporaries, it is not revealed at all. The Second Epistle warned against extending hospitality in love to those whose presence in a home or household may have an adverse effect upon others who may misunderstand it as an endorsement or condoning of their wrong teaching. The Third Epistle considers the subject of hospitality as a manifestation of true love, whilst uttering a warning against schism, which is always due to lack of love. The Epistle considers three persons: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. In Gaius there was an example of love practised; in Diotrephes an example of love violated; and in Demetrius an example of love expanded. He had a "good report of all", so he was active in the work of Christ, and his bearing and teaching conformed to the Truth which motivated him, so that he witnessed to it (v. 12). In him, therefore, was seen a manifestation of that Light, Love and Light which is John's theme throughout his writings.

The key statement of the Epistle is found in verse eleven: "he that doeth good is of God; he that doeth evil hath not seen God". The relationship of light and life to love is revealed. Doing good is acting according to God's requirements, and therefore is the outlet of Light; and in turn it manifests itself in a way of life. The three men named in the Epistle all claimed to have the truth; but only two manifested it in proper ways. The Light in them shone forth in acts of love, and became in them the motivation of a new life in Christ. Those who claim to walk in the Light, but who are motivated by pride and selfishness, have not "seen God" and therefore walk in darkness in spite of their profession.

The Epistle of Jude

Contending Earnestly
for the Faith

Revealing The
Urgent Need to

Combat Perils from Within

Jude - The Reluctant Letter Writer

The Man

Very little is known of Jude, for, in the Scriptures, he stands in the shadow cast by James and Peter. He is merely known as the brother of the former, whilst his Epistle is obviously built upon that of the latter. His name means *Praise*, and the epistle that came from his pen teaches that there is need to contend to the praise of Yahweh.

Jude is described as a "brother of James", and, assuming James to have been the half-brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19), Jude was closely related to Jesus. Matthew (Ch. 13:55) records, that among the half-brothers of the Lord was one by the name of Judas.

He was evidently the writer of this Epistle.

Little is known of Jude apart from the brief remark in Matthew's record, and the expressions of Jude himself made in the epistle that he wrote. He was probably among the brethren of the Lord who were with him in his early ministry (John 2:12). If so, he was also among those who, as his ministry gathered momentum, gradually became ashamed of Jesus. The Lord's devotion and burning zeal in regard to divine things was misunderstood by his own brethren (Ps. 69:8-9); so much so, that they tried to put him under restraint (Mark 3:21 mg.). Possibly, the very familiarity of their domestic relationship, bred in them a contempt for the methods he used, and a misunderstanding of his ministry.

Be that as it may, at the time when the enthusiasm of the people for Jesus was greatest, his own brethren attempted an unwarranted interference in his work, only to receive a well-merited rebuke from their elder brother (Matt. 12:46). At that stage they had apparently prevailed upon his mother to join with them in restraining him. Mary, of course, could never forget who he was and what he was to become (in spite of the attitude of her other children she kept with him until the last — John, 19:25), but their representations to her, together with the accusations of the Scribes and Pharisees, evidently caused her to doubt the wisdom of the methods he was using, and so, at that stage, she joined with them in an attempt to reason with him to be more pliable to the suggestions of the leaders of the nation. The rest of the family, however, was hardened in their rejection of Jesus; John declares that "his brethren did not believe in him" (John 7:5), which is indicative of a decline on their part since his public ministry began (John 2:12).

The resurrection of Jesus, therefore, must have been particularly staggering to his unbelieving brethren. He specifically manifested himself to James (1 Cor. 15:7), and no doubt from him, the rest of the family learned that the half-brother they had despised was, indeed, the Christ. Their conversion was complete and wholehearted, and from thence onwards they associated with the Apostles, evidently occupying positions of eminence in the Ecclesia (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5). James, indeed, became the dominant figure in the early Jerusalem ecclesia (Acts 12:17; 15:13; Gal. 1:19), acting with the full authority of an outstanding elder and leader.

The slight references to the various members of the family of Joseph and Mary that are found in the Bible, and particularly those concerning James, and even Joseph, suggest a certain opinionativeness, a perhaps Judaistic obstinacy about them (John 7:3-8; Gal. 2:12; Acts 15), which may have accounted for their opposition to the Lord, particularly in view of the charges of breaking the Law and the Sabbath, that were constantly levelled against him by the Jewish leaders.

In any case, they fulfilled the prophetic Messianic Psalm which declares: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my *mother's* children" (Ps. 69:8).

It is significant, that his Father's children accepted him (John 1:12-13; 13:33).

The opposition previously shown by the children of the Lord's mother was swept away by the fact of his resurrection, and once converted their very knowledge of the Law assisted them to become skilful and powerful advocates of the half-brother they had earlier so strongly opposed.

This is shown by the way they expounded the Law and quoted from it in the Epistles they wrote.

What part Jude played in the opposition the Lord received from his family we know not.

The Epistle

The Epistle of Jude reminds us that there is a "time of peace and a time of war" (Eccl. 3:8), and that we must not confuse the issues.

He had been engaged in writing a treatise on the common faith (V. 3), but was interrupted in this labor of love and pleasure by the spectacle of rapid spiritual declension that was sweeping Ecclesias. Moved by the Spirit, he laid aside the pen of exposition and took up that of warning and rebuke. He possibly completed his treatise after finishing this short letter, but it is the latter that the Spirit has seen fit to retain for the guidance of succeeding generations.

The result was a clarion call for ecclesial contention.

We do well to keep in mind that "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private origination" (2 Pet. 1:20, R. Roberts' rendering); none was of the prophets' own prompting, and this applies to this letter as well as to the rest. Here, then is placed on record a message of Divine indignation, and yet a loving appeal for separation from all that is defiling and doomed to certain destruction.

There was no room for doubt in the minds of the recipients of the epistle as to the danger that was looming, nor as to the methods that should be adopted in dealing with the corrupting elements within the ecclesia of God, once this letter had been read. All were fully equipped to discern between good and evil. What of Jude who had been selected to pen these uncompromising words? There are no indications that he was naturally a belligerent man. Certainly he would not have wished to pen the epistle he did, had things been left to his choice. But they were not. This was Yahweh's message, to be recorded for all who lived in the time of the end, and so Jude took up his pen and called for spiritual warfare within the ecclesia, that a remnant might be saved from the defiling influences of false doctrine in teaching and practice.

That Jude was a warmhearted, loving brother must not go unnoticed for on three occasions, in this short letter, he addresses his readers as "beloved" (Vv. 3.17.20). But the warmth of his love developed the heat of his indignation and moved by the Spirit the result was the fiery little epistle before us.

Therein, Jude makes mention of the fact that he is the brother of James (V. 1), but, contrary to general exposition, we do not think that he did so out of modesty; rather do we believe that such was done to make this Epistle more authoritative. James had a reputation that Jewish believers would have heeded, but he had been martyred about A.D. 62. Peter, another voice of authority whom Jude quotes (V. 17) was also dead, having been executed (it is thought) about A.D. 65. The silencing of these two "fathers" caused the voices of scoffers to be raised in flagrant repudiation of the very things for which they had contended, as Peter had predicted they would (2 Pet. 3:3-4). It was left to lesser men to hold aloft the standard of Truth. Jude, the brother of James, and a student of Peter's writings which he quotes, took up the task and, identifying himself with these men, showed that his words were an endorsement of their attitude, being dictated by the same Spirit, and originating from the same Divine author.

Why the Epistle was written

Peter had predicted the condition of moral and doctrinal corruption that would arise from within the ecclesia. That had

since developed (2 Pet. Ch. 2), and Jude shows how his words were being fulfilled. He takes the very terms used by Peter, and applies them to the false teachers of his day. He actually makes direct reference to the prophetic warnings of Peter (cp. Jude 17 with 2 Pet. 3:3), and calls upon his readers to heed the voice of the dead Apostle.

Jude seems to have written primarily for Jewish believers. This is implied, if not openly stated, by his constant references to the Old Testament, and to the words of Enoch, which he quotes as though his readers would be thoroughly familiar with them.

The Epistle of Jude attacked the false teachers in no uncertain manner. A viper might look pretty but it is nonetheless a very dangerous animal, and that is how Jude lays bare the issues before the brotherhood. There were vital issues at stake between the false and the true, and the challenge came from within the ecclesias, from those who were celebrating their love-feasts with their brethren (V. 12). The issues were those of life and death, and facts had to be stated clearly, bluntly, and without doubt. The love of Jude for his brethren shows through the very language that he uses, for he had a deep concern for their spiritual wellbeing.

Who were these false teachers? Most commentators believe that they related to the gnostic sect, but we do not think that that was so. The Gnostics (whose full development came some time later) would appeal to Gentiles more than they would to Jewish believers, and would be particularly offensive to Jews whilst the Temple was still standing. But the words of Paul to the Romans (see Rom. 3:1-8; 6:1-2) imply that there were some Jewish believers who, accepting that they had been delivered from the curse of the Law, swung to the other extreme of libertinism, and were advocating every licence of action, on the grounds that they had been liberated from every form of restraint. They claimed that the flesh should be given free expression without any inhibitions. They proclaimed: "Let us do evil, that good may come", and "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound" (Rom. 3:8; 6:1). This philosophy, declared Paul, is worthy of every condemnation. Paul told Timothy, "The Law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8), and the Apostle always showed a careful balance between those who were advocating the extreme formalism of the Law, and those who would turn the liberty from the curse of the Law which the Gospel provided them, into mere licence, "for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). James, also, made reference to the "perfect law of liberty", but likewise pointed out that "faith without works is dead" being alone.

However, no matter from which of these groups the errors

originated, the grand principle remains that when Truth is in danger from within, there is a need to put aside the more pleasant duties relating to our common salvation, and to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." The Epistle of Jude constitutes a guide to that end.

A "Time of the End" Epistle.

Peter had foretold and forewarned of the trial that would develop from within ecclesias (2 Pet. Ch. 2), and had declared that this would be particularly in evidence at the "time of the end" (2 Pet. 3:3). Jude records the rapid fulfilment of the prophecy at a time when "the end" had arrived for the Jewish State.

Though his words have specific application to the end of Judah's Commonwealth, therefore, and thus indicate that he wrote on the very eve of the disaster of A.D. 70, they also have an application to these times, for as we have noted in our treatment of Peter's epistle, the crisis of A.D. 70 was typical of the end of Gentile times.

Jude's epistle, therefore, is an epistle for today.

It is significant that he treats with three main errors, all of which are referred to in V. 4:

- (1) **The repudiation of the principle of God manifestation;**
- (2) **False ideas concerning the atonement;**
- (3) **The libertinism of those who interpreted liberty as licence.**

It is important to note that all three errors are such as are commonly advocated within ecclesias today. There is a prevailing misunderstanding, and therefore rejection, of the doctrine of God manifestation; there is a failure to appreciate the significance of the Atonement; there is likewise a measure of libertinism which rejects the concept of too much restraint.

This last error may not be as obvious as the two former ones, but its impact can be more disastrous, and will doubtless grow. It stems from prevailing psychology which, originating from Freud, teaches the theory that all restraint is wrong, and will result in serious inhibitions in a child with dangerous consequences in future years. "Children must be spoken to but never restrained; they must have principles explained to them but never any corporeal punishment administered." This is the modern theory of child upbringing commonly advocated today. Never before has the science of child-welfare been considered in such detail as in modern times, and never before has the world been so plagued with juvenile delinquency! The one is the result of the other. Yahweh's treatment of His children (consider the crisis of A.D. 70) is illustrative of the firm need of restraint and correction administered in love. This principle

is flouted by modern psychology with the sad results seen on all hands. Let Christadelphian parents ever bear in mind the inspired instruction of Proverbs 13:24: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Of course, Jude is not dealing with the subject of child-upbringing, but with the demands of adult believers and teachers who did not wish to be subjected to restraint. Nevertheless, the principles are related, and the modern theory of psychology that the world applies to child-welfare is often unconsciously introduced into ecclesial life today. The brother erring in doctrine or practice is often granted preferential treatment at the expense of the one who is trying, under difficulty, to maintain the standards of the truth. Many will rush to the support of a theorist who advances a theory like evolution (a "time of the end" heresy — 2 Pet. 3:3), and try to explain away the seriousness of that which has been advanced, but will turn with bitterness on those who recognise the danger and boldly "contend for the faith" as did Jude.

In *Elpis Israel* p. 113, Brother Thomas wrote:

"The doctrine he (Christ) taught is distasteful to the natural mind; and, by the purity of its principles, and astonishing nature of its promises, excites the enmity and incredulity of the flesh. Loving sin and hating righteousness, the carnal mind becomes the enemy and persecutor of those who advocate it. The enmity on the part of the faithless is inveterate; and where they have the power, they stir up war even at the domestic hearth (Matth. 10:34-36). If the believer will agree to be silent, or to renounce his faith, there will then be 'peace and love' such as the world, that 'loves its own', is able to afford. But the true believers are not permitted to make any compromise of the kind. They are commanded to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints' (Jude 3), and so long as they do this, they may lay their account with tribulation of various kinds. There is a vast deal of this false peace and spurious charity in the Protestant world. Men have become traitors to Christ, and betray him with their lips. They say, 'O how we love the Lord!' and were he here they would doubtless kiss him; but, like Judas, they have collogued with his enemies, and are as popular with the world as its god can possibly desire."

Peter, and Jude both indicate certain dangers that would be manifested particularly at the "time of the end". The antitype of the times to which they specifically referred are with us now. We need to be on our guard!

Key Words and Teaching

We have already noted that Jude uses the word "beloved" frequently, and this indicates that he was moved by feelings of the warmest love, despite the fire of his words.

Another key word is *tereo*, rendered "preserved", "reserved", and "keep". It signifies to "keep an eye upon, to watch", and by implication, "to detain". Jude teaches that saints are preserved in Christ Jesus (V. 1); they must act to preserve that

state (V. 21); for, those who fall from grace are reserved for judgment (V. 6); and their sin is that they preserve not their first estate (V. 6).

In treating with the apostates, Jude shows that a forsaking of the faith will lead to deterioration of character which will be revealed in loose morals V. 4, corrupt thoughts V. 8, evil speaking Vv. 8.10, religious sham and hypocritical pretence Vv. 12. 13, murmurings against the righteous V. 16, boastfulness V. 16, gratification of self V. 16. On the other hand, those who "keep themselves in the love of God" will build on faith V. 20, rely on prayer V. 20, seek Divine guidance V. 21, look to the future V. 21, exercise pity towards errorists V. 22, seek to save the amenable V. 23, hate evil V. 23, repose in Divine help V. 24.

FORE-WARNED — FORE-ARMED

Let us be wise and open our eyes to what has happened in the past in relation to departures from the Truth.

Who have been the worst corrupters of the Faith and the worst spiritual seducers of the brethren? Not bad men, or brethren of bad repute; not ambitious novices or dissatisfied upstarts. Oh, dear no! That class of corrupters would succeed in drawing after them very, very few!

No; experience has taught that the corrupters who have done the most mischief have been the kind, broad-minded, liberal-hearted leaders, who invariably have an eye to a seat on the fence — leaders, not because they possess the qualities of leaders, but because their followers are made up of non-thinkers, who, loving to be at peace with all men, choose the easiest route thereto, and therefore, needing a leader, select one after their own heart, and invariably have as their motto: "Let sleeping dogs lie," which is the reverse of the exhortation: "Contend earnestly for the Faith (Jude 3)."

—F.J.

An Analysis



THE EPISTLE OF JUDE A CLARION CALL FOR ECCLESIAL CONTENTION

Revealing the need to contend to the praise of Yahweh. This Epistle fittingly summarises the importance of preserving the principles already laid down by those who have gone before, and therefore is very properly placed at the conclusion of all the other epistles.

1. INTRODUCTION — Vv. 1-2

*What constitutes a true Believer Vv. 1- 2

2. THE NEED TO CONTEND — APOSTATE TEACHERS — Vv. 3-16

*Their evil perversions: Three basic denials Vv. 3- 4

*Their certain doom: Three historic examples Vv. 5- 7

*Their impious ways: Three historic examples Vv. 8-11

*Their utter depravity: Six terrible metaphors Vv. 12-13

*Their final destruction: Enoch's testimony Vv. 14-16

3. THE WAY TO CONTEND — AVAILABLE RESOURCES — Vv. 17-25

*Recognise that apostasy has been foretold Vv. 17-18

*Analyse actions and fruits V. 19

*Draw upon Divine resources Vv. 20-21

*Seek to reclaim where possible Vv. 22-23

*Rest upon the help of Yahweh Vv. 24-25

The natural division in this epistle occurs at verse 17 with the statement: "But, beloved". Having warned them of the dangerous influence of apostasy, Jude then instructs his readers how to counter it.

Verse By Verse Exposition

INTRODUCTION

Jude's object is to clearly warn the brethren of evil influence of the false teachers and ungodly men whose specious talk and pleasing platitudes (v. 16) camouflage their true character. He illustrates his theme with Biblical examples descriptive of similar crises in the past, and concludes with an exhortation to his readers to keep themselves free from all such wickedness. In order to impress this firmly upon their minds, he commences by reminding them of their privileged status in Christ Jesus, and what this involves.

What constitutes a true Believer — Vv. 1-2

Jude introduces himself, and reminds his readers of the privileged status they enjoy as members of the Divine family. The very things to which they have been called lay the foundation of the warning and appeal that follows.

VERSE 1

"The servant of Jesus Christ"—He was also probably the half-brother of Jesus Christ, though he does not mention this fact. Perhaps he recalled the words of the Lord, that "the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63). It is not flesh relationships that count, but those that are welded together by a bond closer than blood, even faith. Therefore he refers to himself as the servant of the Lord. The word is *doulos*, bond-slave, and signifies one* who submerges his will in another. If Jude was really the half-brother of the Lord, there is greater significance in his choice of the word *doulos*, because at one time the brethren of Jesus were foremost in opposing his will and ministry.

"Brother of James"—His relationship to James not only identifies him, but also gives the weight of James' authority to what he is about to write. We do not think that flesh-relationships enter the

consideration of Jude at this time, but see this statement rather as a means of pointing the lesson of this epistle, and giving it added power. Peter had warned that the "falling asleep" of "the fathers" would provide the false teachers with the excuse to teach their evil doctrines, for there would be few left with the ability to speak authoritatively (2 Pet. 3:3-4). The voice of scoffers would be heard decrying the coming crisis that had been predicted. Who would be able to answer such? James with Peter had predicted the coming of this time of crisis (James 5:7-10), and Jude now identifies himself with James, not merely because of blood-relationship, but in full endorsement of what James had taught and stood for.

"Sanctified"—This word is rendered "beloved" in the Diaglott. Believers are beloved in (Gr. *en*) God the Father. That is, they are incorporated as members of a Divine family (see 1 Thess. 1:1), and have the great privilege of addressing God as "Father." Therefore, they are brothers of Jude who was a brother of James, and they should endorse the teaching and principles of those who had begotten them to such a living hope.

Believers are described in three ways in this verse, and the effect of their standing of privilege is outlined in the next verse:

Beloved in God (V.1)—
they obtain mercy (V.2);
Preserved in Christ—
they experience peace;
Called—
they repose in Divine love.

"Preserved in Jesus Christ"—The word means to "keep an eye upon," to "watch," and to "guard." Jude reverts to this thought in Vv. 21, 24, and thus throughout this epistle reveals the intimate relationship of believers with God and Jesus Christ. Both God and Christ are concerned with the welfare of those who have accepted them in faith; they have their eyes ever upon them, and seek to guard and keep them. In heaven, the Lord intercedes for them, to "prepare a place" for them (Joh. 14:3), and in his intercessory prayer he called upon Yahweh to keep them in His name (Joh. 17:11, 12, 15), praying not only for the Apostles but also for us (V.20). We need to be conscious of this fact that the Divine eyes are upon us. Both the Father and the Son are anxious to help us if we will allow them to do so. (See Hebrews 4:13 for the penetrating Divine eye that is fixed upon us.)

"Called"—The Greek word is *kletos* from *klesis* from which is derived the word *ecclesia*. The word is used to summon a man to take office in the service of his community, to partake of a feast as a guest, to summon to judgment. Jesus declared: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44), and God calls such to be a "people for His name" (Acts 15:14). In this last statement there are three stages implied: *Invitation*—God calls; *Separation*—out of; *Dedication*—A people for His name. A call involves all three requirements.

Paul wrote that believers are "called to be saints." The basic meaning of the Greek word *hagios* is "to be separate," or "to be different." That is the challenge of true Christianity—a refusal to con-

form to the world. Jesus warned the Apostles that their refusal to conform to the world would be met by the world's hatred, but that they were not to fear because he had "overcome the world" (John 16:33). The Apostles soon felt the hatred of the world. One writer has stated: "The Roman Government hated Christians because of their alleged disloyalty. They opposed the principle of Caesar worship. Though ignored by the Caesars at first, there came slowly the day when once every year all inhabitants of the empire had to burn a pinch of incense to the god-head of Caesar. By so doing he showed that he was a loyal citizen of Rome. When he had done so he received a certificate to say he had done so. Here was the practice and the custom and the convention which made all men feel they were part of Rome, and which guaranteed their loyalty to Rome. Now Rome was the essence of toleration. After he had burned his pinch of incense and had said, 'Caesar is Lord,' a man could go away and worship any god he liked so long as the worship did not affect public decency and public order." But faithful believers refused to compromise with Rome, even though it was but a little thing, and Rome came to hate them for what they considered their obstinacy and stupidity. They also refused military service, so that they were also hated as insurrectionists. From that hatred came a distortion of their motives. They were falsely accused of flagrant and promiscuous immorality because of the love feasts they had together, of interfering with family relationships because of the demands of separateness that the Truth imposed, but more particularly they were hated because their manner of life was a constant reproach to that of the ungodly conduct of worldly people. Thus the basic demand on Christ's followers, was then, and remains today, the demand that they should have the courage to be different.

This invariably incites the hostility of the world, or of those within the movement who see no need to follow this pattern. All this is involved in the word "the called."

VERSE 2

"Mercy unto you and peace and love, be multiplied"—Mercy expresses our need of forgiveness in

view of our infirmity, peace expresses the harmony or fellowship that results from this extension of mercy, and love expresses the continued Divine blessings we receive from the Father through the Son. God is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4); we need to pray for it (Heb. 4:16); and manifest it to others (Matth. 5:44-45).

OUR WARFARE NOW

Paul says: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual" (2 Cor. 10:4). In his letter to the Ephesians (6:14), he enumerates them as the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the Gospel of Peace for sandals, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This is the "whole armour of God" which "the people of the holies" are permitted to use. The two-edged sword of the Spirit is the only offensive weapon they are allowed to wield in combat with the Beast. The impulses of the flesh would lead them to crush the tyrants who have drenched the earth with their blood, and to bruise their heads like serpents, but their Captain has said: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." The people of the holies are forbidden to act under such impulses; but to imitate Jesus, who resisted not, but committed his cause to God. Unresisting suffering is the law of their spiritual warfare. If persecuted, they must fly; if smitten, they must not smite again; if reviled, they must bless; but, withal, "fight the good fight of faith" with the Word of God, without favour, affection or compromise, with anything that exalts itself against the Knowledge of God.

—J. Thomas.

The Need to Contend - Apostate Teachers

(Vv. 3-16)

There is an urgency in the words of Jude that brooks no denial. The trial from within concerning which Peter had warned was upon the brotherhood, and the need was there to consolidate those forces that would be able to effectively contend for the faith. Jude shows the seriousness of the challenge, and draws upon the examples of the past to re-enforce the teaching of Peter as to the certain doom of heretics. He draws parallels between them and examples of depravity that the Old Testament records, shows the full extent of evil in six terrible metaphors, and proclaims imminent final judgment in words borrowed from Enoch. In this section of his epistle he shows that there is a need for vigorous action when the truth is in danger.

Their Evil Perversions: Three Basic Denials — Vv. 3-4

Jude discloses how urgent is the crisis that faced the brotherhood, appeals for a super effort of complete dedication, and outlines the three basic errors that false teachers were advancing.

VERSE 3

“When I gave all diligence to write unto you”—The Diaglott gives the present tense: “making all haste to write unto you.” Jude was interrupted in his preparation of a treatise dealing with positive aspects of the truth, and was forced by circumstances and the Spirit, to lay it aside, and treat with the negative aspect of truth by challenging the current controversy. His action thus reminds us that it is sometimes necessary to stress both the positive and negative aspects of Truth. It sounds well to urge that Truth should always be proclaimed positively (and Jude does not deny the need of that!) but Truth must also be effectively defended, and to that end the enemy must be fully known. It was necessary for his readers to both see the Truth, and the true character of its opponents, as well as the evil of the doctrines they were advancing.

“I gave all diligence”—Jude applies his mind earnestly to the subject of his epistle, reflecting upon it at length. From his strong affection for his brethren, he decided to take up pen and paper on their behalf.

“To write unto you of the common salvation”—The salvation concerning which Jude desired to write was common to both Jews and Gentiles. This indicates the great change in the attitude of the writer, for if he were the half-brother of the Lord, he was, originally, Judaistic in doctrine, and would have rejected the concept that both races were offered salvation on a common basis.

“It was needful”—The words express a compelling force: “I was compelled to write a letter to you,” “I had a necessity to write to you” (Diaglott). There was a fearful urgency about the matter.

“To write unto you and exhort you”—As Jude reflected on the letter he intended to write, the Spirit dictated the area in which it should be done. As he reviewed conditions in the Ecclesias, he was compelled to turn from his original intention, and to write on a particular subject of urgency. Moreover, he saw the need, not merely to write, but to powerfully exhort them on this topic of deep concern.

“Ye should earnestly contend”—The Greek word translated “earnestly contend” is *epagonizesthai*, and

signifies "super-agony." It is a word taken from the sports' arena, and is expressive of the greatest effort in harnessing mind and muscle in a contest to gain the victory over other contestants. The most dedicated effort is required in such cases, and a similar dedication is required in preserving in its purity the "faith once (for all) delivered unto the saints."

"For the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"—Jude describes the Gospel as "the faith," because it stimulates faith. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), and is essential to salvation (Heb. 11:6). This had been delivered once to the saints. The expression denotes *once for all*. There was no need for any revision of it. It was a revelation made known by God, and therefore not subject to change (see Heb. 9:26-28; 1 Pet. 3:18). The word "saints" signifies those separated for divine use. The very basis of the Gospel is the separation of those called by it (see Acts 15:14; 2 Cor. 6:16-18).

VERSE 4

"Certain men crept in unawares"

—The word in the Greek signifies to "insinuate oneself," "to enter by stealth." Dr. Strong gives as a definition, "to settle in alongside." The idea is to creep in at the side door so that one is not openly revealed for what one really is! Paul uses a related word in Gal. 2:4: "False brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty in Christ Jesus." See also the notes on the related word in 2 Pet. 2:1, and the suggested manner by which the false teachers insinuated themselves in the ecclesias.

"Before ordained"—Gr. *pro-graphe*, from *pro*, "before," and *graphe*, "to write" thus, to write before. The R.V. has "were set forth." The condemnation and judgment to be poured out upon these false teachers have been clearly set forth from earliest times in the examples recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, some of which Jude advances. Peter, also, had "written before" of these very in-

dividuals (2 Pet. 2:1).

"Ungodly men"—The word "ungodly" occurs several times in the epistle, and is a translation of the Greek *asebes* which signifies one defiant of God, and not merely a misser of the mark (the usual word for sin). It expresses the opposite attitude to that required according to 2 Pet. 1:3,6, there styled "godliness." These ungodly men did not even look for the mark; they were not merely irreligious but deliberately acting in defiance and contravention of all God's demands (see V.15). Further, it must be kept in mind, that Jude refers here to men within the ecclesia, not those in the world. This is the terrible state to which false doctrine, or lack of appreciation of Divine principles, will take those who have not full knowledge of Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

"Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness"—This is the first error that Jude charges against the false teachers. They turned liberty into licence (Gal. 2:4). Having accepted the doctrine that the Gospel delivered them from the curse of the Law, they became contemptuous of all restraint. They sinned deliberately, that grace might abound (Rom. 6:1). In their perverted concept of truth they "did evil that good might come" (Rom. 3:8), and their damnation, declared Paul, is just. The word for lasciviousness signifies wanton, shameless conduct; complete absence of restraint. These errorists feared not God nor man; they had embraced a doctrine that suggested they should please themselves what they should do, and they proceeded to put it into practice.

"Denying the only Lord God"—The Greek word is *despotes* as in 2 Pet. 2:1, and is rendered in the Diaglott as "denying the only sovereign." The R.V. renders: "Denying our only Master..." The word *despotes* signifies one with supreme authority. It is derived from *deo*, to bind, and *pous*, the foot, and hence to dictate a person's walk, or limit his freedom. The Lord is

our sovereign, and has authority to guide our walk; to deny him is to walk contrary to him (Titus 1:16; 1 Tim. 5:8). The statement that these false teachers would "deny the Lord," links the words of Jude with those of Peter, and introduces us to the second error: wrong ideas relating to the Atonement (see notes on 2 Pet. 2:1).

"And our Lord Jesus Christ"—The word "Lord" is emphatic in the Greek text. It is a translation of the word *kurios* that normally indicates the authority of the one to whom the title is given. It is used in relation to God, Jesus Christ and mortal men. However, the fact that Jude uses it in the very next verse for Yahweh ("the Lord who saved the people out of Egypt"), suggests that it is here used in a similar fashion. The R.V. renders: "Denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Accepting this reading, and acknowledging that Jude is using *kurios* for Yahweh, the statement would suggest that these false teachers were not only denying the authority that Christ has over them as their Sovereign, but also they were denying that he is the manifestation of Yahweh in the flesh (see notes on 2 Pet. 1:1). This was the third basic denial of truth advanced by the errorists. All three errors are related. The doctrine of the Atonement reveals the true nature of flesh—what we are; the doctrine of God manifestation shows what we can become; the doctrine of grace and self-denial outlines how we can attain unto that to which we are called. These principles of Divine wisdom were rejected by these false teachers with the result that they turned grace, or liberty, into licence. They denied the authority of Christ to dictate their walk, and rejected the concept that they must reveal God in their lives. This paved the way for the gratification of the flesh in whatsoever way they pleased.

Their certain Doom—Three Historical Examples—Vv. 5-7

It is impossible that believers,

embracing these errors, can escape the judgments that shall surely fall upon them. Jude advances three examples demonstrating the inevitability of such punishment. The first example reveals the doom of faithlessness, the second example shows the fate of pride, and the third example sets forth the destiny of self-indulgence and depravity. The first three examples, therefore, outline in order the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, and the lust of the flesh, and demonstrate that those who indulge therein shall surely perish (1 John 2:16).

VERSE 5

"I will therefore put you in remembrance"—Jude's intention was to remind his readers of the doom of such men as he described, by drawing their attention to the Divine judgments of the past with which they should be familiar.

"Though ye once knew this"—The RSV renders: "Though ye were once for all fully informed" of this. Jude does not mean that his readers had necessarily forgotten the things that he is about to set before them, but that, though they were once for all fully informed of them, there had arisen a need for them to be recalled to mind.

"The Lord having saved the people"—By "the Lord" is meant Yahweh (1 Cor. 10:5). The people to whom Jude is referring were those who were saved out of Egypt, and who sung the song of deliverance on the other side of the Red Sea (Exod. 15). It is important to ever bear in mind that this generation of Israelites perished even though Yahweh did great things for them, extending His arm to destroy their enemies, and drawing them out of the land of slavery. They were doubtless full of confidence when they sung that song of Deliverance and gazed triumphantly upon the drowned bodies of Pharaoh's host, and yet they, themselves, having once experienced Yahweh's goodness, ended by perishing in the wilderness. They perished because they did not comprehend the pur-

pose of their deliverance from Egypt. They imagined that Yahweh had extended His arm merely to save them; but actually that was but incidental to His main objective. They would have been saved conditionally upon them glorifying Yahweh in action. But this they did not consider. They were called out of Egypt for the purpose that they might be "a holy people," unto Him "called by the name of Yahweh" (Deut. 28:9-10), even as were the brethren to whom Jude wrote, but "they would not hear" (Jer. 13:11). Brother Thomas has written: "Men were not ushered into being for the purpose of being saved or lost! God Manifestation, not human salvation, was the great purpose of the Eternal Spirit. The salvation of the multitude is incidental to the manifestation, but not the sole end proposed."

That was the object of the call out of Egypt, but it failed, because the people "believed not," or (*pisteus*) lacked faith. Therefore God who saved them from the hands of the Egyptians, Himself destroyed them in the wilderness, and Paul points the exhortation: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). But the basic failing of the Israelites, the thing in which they lacked faith was the realisation of the purpose of their call—that they had been drawn out of Egypt, not for their own pleasure merely, but that "they might be unto Yahweh for a people, and a name and a praise and a glory" (Jer. 13:11). They did not understand the doctrine of God manifestation as it applied to themselves; they did not realise that being called by the name of Yahweh implied a great responsibility, for "every one that is called by My name . . . I have created him for My glory" (Isa. 43:7). Not comprehending the purpose of their call, they failed to manifest that which Yahweh desired to see in them, and so perished in the wilderness.

The point of Jude's comment, of course, is the fact that these people who had experienced the

goodness of Yahweh, finally were subjected to His severity (Rom. 11:22), a grim reminder that believers will experience that goodness only if they remain within the sphere of it.

"Afterward destroyed them"—The word "afterward" is *deuteros* in Greek, and signifies "the second time." The Israelites were at the point of death in Egypt; they perished on the very borders of the Land of Promise (Num. 32:8-13). They died to Egypt when they were baptised in the Red Sea, and in type they suffered the "second death" with the Promised Land in sight. In like manner, those "who were dead in sins, and were quickened by God's mercy" (Eph. 2:4-5) will experience the "second death," if they fail to appreciate the purpose of their call, or to apply the principles thereof (Rev. 2:11).

"Believed not"—Vine defines this Greek verb *pisteuo* as follows: "to believe, also to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, signifies in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence." The word is closely related to the word "faith." The Israelites knew the purpose of God, and perhaps "believed" in God in an academic way, but they lacked the faith to see beyond the difficulties that plagued them through the wilderness; they "knew" that the Promised Land was ahead of them, but had no confidence in Yahweh to provide them with an inheritance therein. The basic failure of Israel was lack of faith; in the words of the Psalmist, "They forgot . . ." (Ps. 78:11; 106:13,21).

VERSE 6

"The angels which kept not their first estate"—Lack of faith will lead to the manifestation of personal pride and jealousy, and this was exhibited in the next example advanced: the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:3). (See notes on 2 Pet. 2:4). They "left their first estate," or "their own principality" (see mg.) or pos-

tion of authority. The word *archon*, here translated "estate," signifies "authority," or "rule." These men had been appointed to positions of eminence in Israel, but they considered that what they had received was not sufficient for their puffed-up pride: they sought greater power, and challenged the leader and saviour who had been placed over them, even Moses. The false teachers of Jude's day were doing the same in regard to the teaching of Christ as set forth by apostles and "fathers" appointed by him (Eph. 4:11-13). These were the "fathers" or pioneers of the Ecclesias, now despised and derated by their successors (see notes 2 Pet. 3:3-4). The same attitude has been repeated many times since, and is not unknown today.

Each of the examples advanced by Jude, should be closely and personally pondered over by his readers, if they would extract the real point and power of his application of the incidents referred to, and themselves avoid the pitfalls thus suggested. The circumstances of Korah's rebellion are outlined in Numbers 16 (and for other references see Num. 26:9-11, 27:3, Deut. 11:6-8, Psa. 106:16-18). Josephus describes Korah as a man of outstanding oratory and wealth, who used both means to gain his end. As a member of the Levitical family of the Kohathites, he was also first cousin to Moses and Aaron (Exod. 6:18, 21, 1 Chron. 6:2-3). But he was evidently jealous that Aaron, whom he considered only his equal in rank, should be elevated as high priest above him. Korah used his means, position and ability, to rouse resentment and rebellion in the minds of others to such effect, that two hundred and fifty "princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown," followed him in challenging the authority of Moses and Aaron. Moses met this formidable challenge by warning them that they were despising the high position to which they had been appointed (Num. 16:9), and that they were not opposing Aaron

so much as Yahweh Who had appointed him to his position (v.11). But Moses' warning and appeal had no effect. The deluded princes continued on in their headstrong way, even in spite of the terrible judgment that consumed the ring-leaders when the earth opened up beneath them and swallowed up both them, their tents, and their families (with the exception of Korah's children—see note 2 Pet. 2:4). The persistence of these princes in their folly was met by further manifestation of Divine anger, when fire flared down upon them and instantly consumed them (v.35). But the most tragic aspect of the incident was the attitude adopted by the nation as a whole. Instead of recognising the significance of the Divine judgment, and seeing in it a vindication of the appointment of Moses and Aaron, on the morrow, the people "murmured against" these two great men, claiming: "Ye have killed the people of Yahweh" (v.41). They claimed that they were responsible for the evil that had come upon the nation, because they had vigorously defended the honor of Yahweh. How often is a similar attitude adopted during times of Ecclesial trouble, when some vigorously stand up in defence of the truth! In the case of Israel's rebellion, some fourteen thousand, seven hundred people died!

We stand amazed at the folly of such men as Korah, Dathan and Abiram daring to incite rebellion against such as Moses, or at the stupidity of the two hundred and fifty famous princes among the Levites, following them so blindly in this action, for to read the incident as recorded in Numbers 16 is to be instantly impressed with the ingratitude of the leaders, and the grossness of the vile crime they committed. But those ring-leaders and princes no doubt fully justified their action in their minds, and felt that they had cause to complain. They could point to the obvious failure of Moses to lead them into the promised land (Num. 14:29), not realising that they,

themselves were responsible for this, and that mercy was still available to them, even at that late hour, if they would but turn to Yahweh with their whole heart. The intercession of Aaron on behalf of the guilty congregation, as recorded in Numbers 16:44-50, demonstrated that! But both princes and people evidently rationalised themselves out of the way of righteousness, and thus became guilty of one of the grossest crimes ever committed against God. But the gravity of the incident is emphasized by the fact that Jude quotes it as an incident illustrative of what was then happening in the Ecclesiastias, and could happen again! In his day there were prominent, and eloquent, leaders, inciting the people to revolt against the principles of the truth laid down by the Apostles and fathers of the Ecclesiastias. Jude, probably, personally became a mark for their attacks and censure, because his vigorous denunciation of their folly, must have made them smart. But in spite of all that, and in the very face of the lessons of Divine history, the people again followed the lead of silvery tongued leaders, who, "with great swelling words," did not hesitate to set up their authority against the expositions that the "fathers" of the Ecclesiastias had left on record (2 Pet. 3:3-4), and virtually to say of the Apostles and teachers appointed of God, as Korah had said to Moses: "Ye take too much upon yourselves, seeing that all the congregation are holy, every one of them . . ." (Num. 16:3). Approximately 15,000 died in the days of Korah. As we visualise Death sweeping the camp of Israel to such an extent, with families mourning on every side as loved ones are cut down in the prime of life by the grim enemy, death, the punishment seems out of proportion to the sin—but that is because we view the incident from the standpoint of flesh. We stand aghast at great punishments, but who trembles to an equal extent at great sins! We are sensitive when the flesh suffers, but not so much when Yahweh is mocked! The ex-

tent of the punishment reveals the true nature of sin, and is as beneficial to humanity as pain which prevents a person mortally hurting himself. In the days of Korah, the extent of the punishment must have brought home to spiritually-minded Israelites the enormity of the sin. Let us clearly see the issues involved in this example advanced by Jude, and let us be strong to vindicate Yahweh's ways and judgments, and seek in every way to avoid among Ecclesiastias in our time, a modern repetition of the crimes referred to by Jude.

"Their own habitation" — The word means their own place of dwelling. The men of the rebellion (see Num. Ch.16) came from the Kohathites of the tribe of Levi, and from the tribe of Reuben, and as such they occupied an honored position on the southern side of the Tabernacle (Num. 3:29; 2:10). But they aspired to the more honored position occupied by the priests and Moses on the eastern side of the Tabernacle, and thus challenged the authority and status of Moses and Aaron, only to suffer the wrath and judgment of Yahweh.

"Reserved" — See note 2 Pet. 2:4.

"Everlasting"—Gr. *aidios*, a word that lays stress upon uninterrupted time. Incarcerated in the pit, they will remain there until the day of judgment (see notes 2 Pet. 2:4).

"Chains"—The word used here is *desmos*, (contrast 2 Pet. 2:4), and signifies the bonds by which a person is held prisoner (see Num. 16:30-31).

"Under darkness unto the judgment of the great day"—In this statement, darkness and day are contrasted. The rebellious princes were suddenly plunged into the darkness of the pit caused by the miraculous opening of the earth, there to remain until the light of a new day should dawn for them: the ominous day of judgment. Meanwhile, they remain as prisoners in an underground dungeon into which light cannot penetrate

there to languish in death until their case will be officially tried.

VERSE 7

"Sodom and Gomorrha" — The third example takes the enormity of sin a step further, for, as pride is a manifestation of flesh, so it lends itself to self-indulgence and fleshly depravity. The three examples are therefore aligned with the three basic errors. The failure of Israel was the failure to rise to the requirements of God manifestation; the fault of Korah and company was the refusal to submit to the one placed in authority over them; the sin of Sodom was the manifestation of lasciviousness. (See 2 Pet. 2:6 and notes thereon for Sodom and Gomorrha as "an example.") The sexual perversion practised in the city destroyed the very foundations of true, healthy family existence, and therefore sound national life as well.

"And the cities about them in like manner" — These cities were Admah and Zeboim (Gen. 14:2; Deut. 29:23; Hos. 11:8). They followed the example of Sodom and Gomorrah and suffered a like fate.

"Giving themselves over to fornication" — The Greek word *ekporneus* signifies an intensive form of prostitution, such as knows no bounds of decency. The word is in the feminine gender, indicating that the women were willing partners to the gross immorality.

"Going after strange flesh" — The margin renders this as "other flesh." Sodom was noted for every form of sexual perversion, indulging in homosexuality and worse (Rom. 1:27). But is the so-called "Christian" world of today any better?

"Set forth for an example" — See the notes on 2 Pet. 2:6.

"Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" — The word "vengeance" is a translation of *ekdikesis*, and signifies that which proceeds "out of (*ek*) justice," and therefore just punishment. The

Diaglott renders it as "retributive justice." The punishment poured out on Sodom was awful, and yet, when the shocking immorality of the city is considered, it was just. The fire that consumed it burnt up the very ground, so that the once smiling, prosperous fields of the cities of the plain were transformed into a burnt-out and salt-encrusted wilderness. G. A. Smith, in *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* describes it as: "This awful hollow, this bit of the infernal regions come to the surface, this hell with the sun shining into it . . . in this bituminous soil took place one of these terrible explosions and conflagrations . . ." The approach to Sodom today is through a wilderness of harsh, arid desert, and at one spot the traveller looks down upon the salt-encrusted land that extends to the Dead Sea. The clear light of the sun is reflected brilliantly, and harshly, from the white soil; the earth is split open by deep crevasses that run in all directions; a terrible silence and stillness broods over the whole scene (or did so on the occasions we visited it) and it is devoid of life, as though meditating the Divine judgment that plunged it into this arid condition so long ago. The present state of the site of Sodom, in contrast to the beauty that once attracted Lot to the spot, is a grim warning to man, an awful "example of suffering the just punishment of God" (Heb. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:11).

The destruction of Sodom is also set forth in Scripture as an example of that just retribution that awaits Babylon the Great of the Apocalypse (Rev. 14:10; 18:8). In *Eureka*, vol. iii, p. 634, Brother Thomas comments concerning the Roman Babylon: "Her judgment is consummated by the fiery overthrow—*she shall be consumed in fire*'. The foulness and filthiness of her abominations, and the similitude of the fate that awaits her, has caused the Great City and State to be 'spiritually called Sodom and Egypt' (Rev. 11:8). The punishment of Sodom will be

Rome's, and perhaps, that also of the whole 'Patrimony of St. Peter.' This will consummate the plagues which begin her torment and sorrow in one and the same year after the Aion-tidings of good, salutes the ears of Israel in Rome. But following upon 'pestilence, and famine' is the twofold rendering of torment and anguish by the troops of Michael, the Great Prince, who invades her territory to become a smoking furnace of judgment, 'a lake of fire burning with brimstone' (Rev. 19:19). From this she never emerges, and therefore, like Sodom, suffers the vengeance of a fire which is eternal (Jude 7)." (See Notes on 2 Pet. 2:6).

Their impious Ways—Three Historic Examples—Vv. 8-11

Having outlined the three basic errors of the false teachers, and illustrated their inevitable doom by three historic examples, Jude now draws upon the past to illustrate the full enormity of their ways. Cain, Balaam, and Korah are apt figures to show the character of false worship which Jude's contemporaries were attempting to introduce: Cain—an example of unbelief and repudiation of God's will; Balaam — a prophet speaking the words of Yahweh, yet descending to seduction and immorality to gain his ends; Korah—an example of personified pride, illustrating the inevitable end of those who refuse to submit to the authority of Yahweh's Word.

VERSE 8

"Likewise" — The word signifies "in like manner," and not merely "also." The false teachers were guilty of the same extremes of wickedness as had been illustrated in the examples advanced. They "defiled the flesh," like the Sodomites and therefore were guilty of immorality, destroying the principles of righteousness. They "despised dominion," like Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who despised their inheritance and became lifted

up in pride. They "spake evil of dignities" like the people of Israel in the wilderness who spake against Moses and incited rebellion.

The false teachers, therefore, were guilty of immorality, pride, and of inciting rebellion against God's word and His constituted authority.

"**Filthy dreamers**" — The word *filthy* is in italics and should be excluded from the text. A "dreamer" in Scriptural significance, is one who proclaims a Divine revelation (Acts 2:17), but the law warned against false prophets, or "dreamers" (Deut. 13:1-5), or against those who might claim to have a revelation from God to pass on to men, but whose real objective is to lead them away from God. Jeremiah warned against such claimants to Divine knowledge who would "cause My people to forget My name," and who "cause My people to err . . . by their lightness" (Jer. 23:27, 28, 32). These were the very things that the false teachers were doing in the days of Jude, and we need be on our guard against a repetition of such an attitude today. The prophets warned against "dreamers" who would put forth false teaching (Jer. 29:8; Zech. 10:2), and the Law pronounced that such should be silenced by death (Deut. 13:10).

"**Defile the flesh**" — They recognize no restrictions as to what they can do, and thus indulge in the grossest immorality, as did Sodom.

"**Despise dominion**" — They despise "lordship" (Diaglott), or authority, divine or otherwise, as did Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

"**Speak evil of dignities**"—Lit. they "blaspheme glories" (*doxas*) that which should be the subject to praise (see 2 Pet. 2:10). They follow the example of the murmurers in Israel who, on the very borders of the Land of Promise, raised their voices against Moses and against Yahweh (Num. 13:31;

14:2-3, 9-10). The glory of Yahweh relates to His manifestation, and inheritance. These heretics to which Jude refers, disgraced their call by their conduct (defiled the flesh) and despised their Lord, treating with contempt the glory (God manifestation) to which they had been called, and the inheritance unto which they could attain.

VERSE 9

"Michael the archangel" — Jude now proceeds to show that even angels, wielding great authority, do not act as these heretics did. When they could justly condemn, they did not descend to blasphemy, but rather left it to Yahweh to vindicate His name. The illustration he cites is drawn from Zechariah 3:1, which is built upon the record of Ezra, and provides an example of restrained conduct in the face of the greatest provocation. Who is Michael? His name means *Like Unto El* or *God*, and he was described to Daniel as "your prince," and "the first prince" (Dan. 10:21, 13). This identifies him with the angel whom Joshua saw with the drawn sword, and who introduced himself as the "Prince of Yahweh's host" or army (Josh. 5:14-15, mg.). His name also suggests identification with the Angel of Exod. 23:20-23, into whose care the nation of Israel was placed, and of whom Yahweh said: "My name is in him." This would account for the meaning of the name Michael, for, when speaking of the Angel who would accompany Israel in its journeyings, Yahweh declared: "My presence shall go with thee" (Exod. 33:14), for by His "presence," He meant, "the angel of His presence" (Isa. 63:9).

Michael the archangel, therefore, was the angel placed over the affairs of Israel, and constituted the real "prince" of the nation.

But Paul teaches that "unto the angels hath He (Yahweh) not put in subjection the world to come" (Heb. 2:5), so that their duties will be undertaken by a new race

of Divine beings (Luke 20:36, 2 Pet. 1:4). Among those to be supplanted is Michael the prince, for his status and work will be assumed by Israel's future Prince, even the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus, like Michael, will be *Like Unto El*, for he will be the representative of Yahweh on earth. Therefore, in Daniel 12:1, his "standing up" is described as the standing up of Michael, and the authority that he will wield at his coming is described as that "of the archangel," or the first of the princes (1 Thess. 4:16).

The Michael of Jude 9 refers to that angel who was chief over others, and in whose care the destiny of Israel was placed. Jude's illustration is drawn from Zechariah 3:1-2, which, in turn, was based upon the historical events of the day as recorded in Ezra Ch. 4 and 5. The adversaries of Joshua caused the work of building the temple to cease temporarily (Ezra 4:24). At the instigation of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, however, the people were later urged to commence rebuilding (Ezra 5:2). This aroused the bitter hostility of Israel's adversaries, their "satan" or opponents, but their antagonism availed nought, for "the eye of their God was upon the elders of Israel" (Ezra 5:5), and the work prospered.

The illustration shows that Joshua had to await the rebuking of his adversaries by Yahweh, and this was the message that came from the Angel: "Yahweh rebuke thee." So faithful Joshua, ignoring the blasphemies hurled at him by his adversaries, proceeded with the work of building the Temple in spite of all efforts to prevent it, confident in the assurance that Yahweh would accomplish His design. Therefore, neither the angel nor the man descended to "railing accusation," but rather awaited the rebuke that they knew would surely come from Yahweh. Jude's illustration, therefore, not only brought into greater prominence the evil conduct of the heretics who were

blaspheming, but it also indicated the attitude of patient, faithful endurance that true followers should adopt, trusting in Yahweh to bless the work, and vindicate His name, in His due time.

"Contending with the devil"—In Zechariah 3:1 the word "satan" is used in place of the word "devil" here. Satan means "adversary," whereas devil means "false accuser." The adversaries of the Jews were not only adversaries (or satans) but also false accusers (or devils) because of the evil accusation they charged against Israel before the King of Persia (Ezra 5:3-5).

"He disputed"—The Greek word *dialegomai* means to "reason," "to speak to and fro." There were discussions between the Jews, their adversaries, and the Persians (Ezra Ch. 4 and 5), but, of course, Michael did not participate in these discussions personally. He did so, however, to the extent that he controlled the course of events. The record states: "The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease (building), till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter" (Ezra 5:5). The events that caused this discussion were angel-controlled, and therefore Jude represents Michael as actually participating therein. This is a form of language sometimes used to indicate that a person is responsible for that actually done by or through another. A similar use of language is observed in Dan. 10:13 where the prince of Persia is represented as withstanding the angels of Yahweh for twenty-one days; in fact, it took twenty-one days for the angels to so arrange matters as to bring the Persian prince into conformity with the Divine will in issuing the decree for the relief of Israel in Babylon. The Persian prince would be as unconscious of the fact that he was withstanding angels, as the Samaritans in the days of Zerubbabel would have been that they were disputing with

Michael over the disposal of the "body of Moses."

"The body of Moses"—As the ecclesia constitutes the "body of Christ" having been baptised into him (1 Cor. 12:27), so the nation of Israel constituted the "body of Moses" having been baptised into him (1 Cor. 10:1-2; Heb. 3:2). The dispute recorded in Ezra Chs. 4 and 5 related to the future of that corporate, national "body."

"A railing accusation" — The words really signify: "a blasphemous accusation," and "blasphemy" is claiming what one is not, or, is proclaiming slander against another (see Rev. 2:9). There was no slander, or blasphemy, in the rebuke levelled against the Samaritans (Ezra 4:3; 5:11-16), but the charge levelled by the Samaritans against the Jews (Ezra 4:13) was blasphemous.

"But said, The Lord rebuke thee"—These words are cited from Zech. 3:2, thus identifying Michael with the angel of Yahweh referred to in that place, who, to use the Diaglott rendering, "did not presume to bring against him a reviling judgment," but rather left it to Yahweh to judge and punish (Rom. 12:19; Ps. 7:11).

VERSE 10

"These speak evil of those things which they know not" — They blaspheme against the Truth, lacking understanding of the significant and fundamental doctrines relating to God manifestation; the Atone-ment; and the true Liberty of the Gospel.

"But what they know naturally, as brute beasts" — They reason upon the things of God only from the standpoint of the flesh, and cannot rise in thought above their own natural instincts. The glorious doctrine of God manifestation was entirely beyond them. Paul comments: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto

him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14-15. See also notes on 2 Pet. 2:22).

The difference between man and the lower creation is the former's ability to understand and reason upon divine principles. Man was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Whereas image has relation to shape, likeness denotes mental capacity. It is mainly in the mind where man differs from the animals. When he does not use his mind as God intended, he becomes a mere animal. Hence the term "brutish" is used of such people. See Psa. 49:10; 92:6; 94:8; Prov. 12:1; Jer. 10:8; 5:17.

"They corrupt themselves"—The words literally mean, "they destroy by corrupting themselves." Jude is constantly making the point that wrong doctrine leads to wrong thinking, and that, in turn, is followed by wrong conduct. Corrupted by their fleshly minds, false teachers are themselves responsible for the destruction they shall reap (Gal. 6:8).

VERSE 11

"Woe unto them" — They had no hope: divine judgment and condemnation awaits them. See Matt. 11:21.

"They have gone in the way of Cain" — Cain (his name means "Gain") was driven from the face of Yahweh to wander without hope in the land of exile (Nod). He was a worshipper, but a faithless one, refusing to submit to the requirements of God; he did not recognise the need for the shedding of blood in sacrifice, and thus rejected the concept of the Atonement. The history of Cain (Gen. Ch. 4) is a salutary reminder that more than worship is required, namely, worship in understanding and faith. Cain's lack of faith led him to manifest jealousy against his brother. His obstinate refusal to submit to the exhortation of God (Gen. 4:7), eventually made him a murderer—one banished into the way of death (1 John 3:12). When Abel was murdered, there was shed the first blood in religious controversy; and even as Eve types the ecclesia (2 Cor. 11:

3), so Cain types the Apostasy "full of the blood of the saints" (Rev. 18:24), whilst Abel stands for the woman's seed "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev. 12:17). Jude saw the uprising of the Cain class in his day.

"Ran greedily after the error of Balaam"—Cain manifested unbelief in worship, denying the principles of the atonement. Balaam converted "the grace of God into lasciviousness" (v. 4), and that for a reward. He seduced the men of Israel through the daughters of Moab, and was slain by Divine judgment (Num. 31:8. 16; see also 2 Pet. 2:15, notes).

"Perished in the gainsaying of Core"—In Korah there is given an example of unbelief in attitude. Like the errorists, he refused to submit to the Divinely appointed authority, and perished in the pit (Num. Ch. 16). He showed no respect for either Moses or the Word, as the errorists showed no respect for their Lord or his Word.

Their utter Depravity: Six terrible Metaphors — Vv. 12-13

The depraving effect of false doctrine is now illustrated by the metaphors selected by Jude. These illustrations must have come as a shock to his readers, as they do to us. But we must remember that false doctrine and wordly ways are regarded as spiritual fornication and adultery in God's eyes. He sees sin in all its awful deformity and wickedness; we do not see it in quite that light, even though we might have been enlightened by Yahweh. We look aghast at terrible punishment, but do not shrink back at sin. Rather do we excuse it because we ourselves are encompassed with iniquity. These metaphors very graphically illustrate how God looks upon sin.

VERSE 12

"These are spots" — The best texts give *spilas*, "hidden rocks"

(see Diagl.). Hidden from view, their real menace is not apparent, but like the hidden rocks covered over by the blue, smiling ocean, these suave, false teachers could make "shipwreck of faith" as some of them did (1 Tim. 1:19-20). This is the first metaphor.

"Your feasts of charity"—Gr. *agapai*, or love-feasts. As Christ partook of supper before celebrating communion with his disciples (Luke 22:19-20), so the early ecclesiastical did likewise. They had their "love-feasts," a communal meal that preceded the breaking of bread and drinking of wine. Unfortunately these feasts deteriorated into feasts of rivalry, the wealthy flaunting their lavish displays of food and drink before the scanty provisions of the poor, so that these feasts, instead of uniting brethren, drove them apart; and gave cause for schisms to arise among them. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for this fault (1 Cor. 11:20-22), and recommended that the practise of these so-called "love-feasts" be abandoned. Now Jude warns of the same fault, claiming that they had deteriorated into mere orgies.

"When they feast with you" — The RSV renders: "They boldly carouse together," thus indicating into what these "love-feasts" had degenerated.

"Feeding themselves without fear"—"Feeding" is literally "shepherding." Like the greedy, ignorant "shepherds" of Israel, these false teachers fed themselves but not the flock; they consumed the well-fed of the flock (Ezek. 34:1-3) by gross commercialisation of religion, "making merchandise" of the wealthy among the ecclesia (2 Pet. 2:3). They did this "without fear," seeking not the mere necessities of life, but its luxuries also. What a contrast to the example set by Peter as a true shepherd of the flock! What disregard for the exhortation he had delivered to his fellow-shepherds who are to give account to the Chief-shepherd (1

Pet. 5:1-3)! This picture of greedy shepherds gorging themselves without any true care for the flock, is the second metaphor.

"Clouds without water" — They give all the promise of refreshing showers, but no performance; they raise the hopes of those who see the parched soil and recognise the need of rain, but they do not fulfil these expectations. All they succeed in doing is to blot out the sun, and make the day dismal. How true to false teachers is this, the third of the six terrible metaphors!

"Carried about of winds"—Paul uses a similar term in Eph. 4:14, when he describes certain "winds of doctrine." These false teachers carefully select their words and teaching to conform to popular desires, thus pandering to the flesh. In arid countries the very appearance of a cloud is delightful, because of its promise of refreshing showers; but when sudden winds arise, and disperse these clouds, the hope of the husbandman and the shepherd is cut off. This is an apt illustration of the hopes that some teachers may arouse with their promise of refreshing rain (see Deut. 32:2); hopes that are deferred in such a way as to make the heart of the weary thoroughly sick.

"Trees whose fruit withereth"—This is literally rendered: "Trees in late autumn," that is, a tree which passes right through the cycle of the year without showing fruit. There is all the promise of fruit, seen in the abundant growth of leaves, but no fruit forms, no harvest ripens. Soon autumn comes and the leaves themselves fall off. All the labor of the previous months has proved fruitless, all the expectation has been in vain. The Diaglott renders: "Bare autumn trees, unfruitful for two seasons, dead, rooted up." In the light of this translation, consider the parable of the fig tree in Luke 13:6-8; it was condemned to be cut down, because it "cumbered the ground."

"Without fruit" — This statement should be joined to the previous clause: *"Trees in late autumn without fruit"*. The A. V. rendition is contradictory. It first states that the trees have fruit, though it is withered; then adds *"without fruit"*. When properly rendered the statement describes the trees in late autumn when the fruit should have appeared and ripened, as being entirely devoid of fruit.

"Plucked up by the roots" — A tree cannot be standing and be plucked up at the same time, and some have suggested that these words, being in the aorist, indefinite tense, should be rendered: *"They shall be plucked up."* Barren fruit trees only cumber the ground, and are ultimately plucked up by the roots. In the antitype this answers to the second death (Rev. 2:11). These fruitless trees, full of leaves, are illustrative of the verbose false teachers, with their "great swelling words of vanity" (2 Pet. 2:18), who preach without practising, and who, lacking fruit, shall be cut down. These trees provide the fourth metaphor. How different to the righteous who are destined to constitute "the wood of life for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2).

VERSE 13

"Raging waves of the sea"—The fifth metaphor describes these teachers as arrogant boasters, whose headstrong, unruly words produce only error and unrighteousness. The same metaphor is used by Isaiah in Ch. 57:20, where he describes the wicked as a troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. As the turbulent waves of the mighty deep, roaring like thunder, stir the very depths to bring to the surface the muddy sediment, and deposit it in foam upon the shore; or as these same unruly mountains of water stave in vessels that come in their path, to contemptuously toss the wreckage on the beach, so the false teachers of Jude's day scandalised the reputation of those who clung to truth, and made

shipwreck of the faith of those who ceased to remember that "Yahweh on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Ps. 93).

"Foaming out their own shame"

—The mighty, roaring billows, end as filthy foam upon the shore, depositing thereon the mire and debris they have conveyed there. In like manner, whatever these false teachers expressed in their unruly words originated from the depth of their own fleshly mind, and was both useless and defiling (Mark 7:20-23; cp. James 3:16-18).

"Wandering stars"—The normal stars and planets have fixed places in the heavens, being held there by the mysterious power of gravity. For example, the planets that have their revolutions around the sun are kept in position by its influence, and reflect its light. "Fixed stars" have their set positions in the sky. These teachers, however, were like wandering stars, or meteors, appearing at different places in the darkened heavens, or shooting momentarily across the sky, only to be swallowed up in complete obscurity. They startle men for a time, but then are gone for good; they cast a light, but it is only a momentary flash of no true value. The significance of this, the sixth metaphor, is even better appreciated when it is recalled that in ancient times navigators depended upon the stars for guidance. Where would these "wandering stars" lead those who selected to follow them, but off the true course, and into great danger! To these stars is "reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Their lot is complete obscurity at a time when "they that be true teachers shall shine as the firmament, and those that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). Contrast the fallacy of such erring stars with the permanence of Yahweh, the Divine lightgiver (James 1:17). They are certainly not His children.

Thus, these six metaphors de-

scribe the work and doctrine of false teachers in the midst of the ecclesia. They (1) make shipwreck of faith, as hidden rocks; (2) they claim to be shepherds, but consume the flock; (3) they, like waterless clouds, raise hopes with all the promise of refreshment, but disappoint all expectations; (4) they are like fruitless, barren trees, never applying the principles they profess to teach; (5) they are like unruly waves, roaring in their boastful scandalising; (6) they are as wandering stars drawing their dupes into the eternal darkness of obscurity and despair.

Their Final Destruction: Enoch's Testimony—Vv. 14-16

Jude quotes a prophecy of Enoch which proclaimed the inevitable destruction of false teachers. But from where did he learn of this prophecy? It was either a revelation that he received concerning Enoch through the Spirit, or a record of the teaching of the patriarch carefully preserved throughout the ages. It is not likely that he was quoting from the so-called "Book of Enoch" which is apocryphal, and of no authority. It is true that this book contains the statement found in Jude, but it could well have drawn its statement from Jude's Epistle itself. Jude's words are authoritative; the "Book of Enoch" is not.

VERSE 14

"Enoch also"—His name means "dedicated" or "initiated," and he evidently received a revelation from God concerning the impending Judgment which formed the basis of his message to his contemporaries. But Enoch not only proclaimed the message of salvation, he dramatised it also, for he "was translated that he should not see death" (Heb. 11:5), and Paul declares that this was a witness to the antediluvians (v. 6). Genesis Ch. 5 shows that he was translated only 57 years after Adam died, and before the death of Seth, so that within the compass of a few

years, the antediluvians had clearly set before them that in Adam there is death, but by "walking with God" there is the prospect of life.

Enoch's contemporary, in the line of Cain, was Lamech, a man who introduced polygamy (Gen. 4:19), and whose three sons became noted for profit (v. 20), pleasure (v. 21), and power (v. 22). Lamech himself composed a song which breathes the fierce, implacable spirit of revenge, and seems to commemorate the perfection of Tubal-cain's weapons (Vv. 23-24). The song proclaimed that he had no longer need of Divine protection as did Cain (v. 15), but would effect his own protection and vengeance if need be.

Enoch, therefore, lived in times similar to those of Jude, and to those of today. It was an age of materialism and immorality, a time when men became dedicated to pleasure, profit, and power, and in confidence of their fleshly ability, indulged in boastful threats against any who might dare threaten their supremacy. It was an epoch when this ungodly environment was beginning to adversely affect the "sons of God," and forthright unswerving testimony of warning was required. Enoch was provided with the message, and proceeded to proclaim it. He reminded his listeners that they were at the end of the age, for he called his son's name, Methuselah, a name that means: "When he dieth it shall be sent"—and the Flood came within the year of Methuselah's death.

"The seventh from Adam"—Paul comments concerning the translation of Enoch, that "he was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11:5). One day Enoch was busy proclaiming his warning message, and the next day he could not be found. This implies that a search was made for him, and by this means his translation was impressed upon his contemporaries. As the "seventh" from Adam, he is typical of those who shall be living at the seventh millenium

from Adam, when Christ will return to raise the dead, and change the living righteous, for, of those righteous saints, living at that epoch, Paul declares: "We shall not all sleep . . ." (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15).

"Propheied of these"—Enoch's preaching would have application primarily to the epoch leading to the Flood, but as the circumstances were typical of those existing in Jude's day, as well as of today (Matt. 24: 36-43), it can be said, that he preached of false teachers extant at all epochs, because their essential characteristics do not change.

"The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints"—Here is predicted the inevitable judgment of the Lord upon the ungodly. The words in Greek are *en hagiain mustiasin autou*, which literally signifies, "in holy myriads of himself" (see Diaglott interlinear translation). This is the doctrine of God manifestation which was denied by the errorists (V.4). The basic meaning of the word *hagios*—saint cp. V.3—is separation, that is, to be different Here the separation stressed is not only from the world, but also from merely nominal or apostate believers. Jude warns that there is a need to stand aside from such. But for what purpose is the separation? That Christ may be glorified in his saints! In 2 Thess. 1:7-12, Paul stresses the same principle as Jude does here, but more in detail. He declares that Christ is coming with vengeance against those who obey him not, but also to be "glorified in his saints." Saints are therefore separated from the world, that they might build into their lives the glorious Divine characteristics manifested by the Lord Jesus in thought, speech, and action.

The word "cometh" is *erchomai* and denotes the act of coming, and not merely the presence of a person such as is indicated by the use of the word *parousia*. A similar picture of Christ in multitudinous glory, accompanied by a like num-

ber of attendants, is drawn in Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Dan. 7:10, etc., all of which portray a theophany of glory in multitudinous manifestation. But why are the saints limited to ten thousand? Will only ten thousand be with Christ in this work of judgment? Not necessarily. The number, ten thousand, is used figuratively in Scripture for a large undisclosed number, as in the statement: "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." (See the figurative use of this number in the following places: 1 Sam. 29:5; Ps. 3:6; Song 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:15; 14:19.) Thus a large undisclosed number of saints will associate with Christ in executing the judgment written, for "this honour have all his saints" (Ps. 149).

Enoch's warning, of course, had prior reference to the judgment of the Flood, which Christ warned was typical of the future judgment. The Noahic judgment was administered by the angels as the future will be by the resurrected and glorified saints (Psa. 149:4-9).

VERSE 15

"To execute judgment"—See 2 Thess. 1:6-10.

"Upon all" — The judgments of the Flood involved all: both the sons of God, or the line of Seth, as well as the arrogant and blasphemous line of Cain. Christ's judgment will do likewise. He will judge both the household and the world at large (Rom. 2:5-16; 2 Thess. 1:5-10), but it is a Divine principle that "judgment must begin at the household of God" before moving out to the world at large (1 Pet. 4:17-18). Christ will be assisted in the resurrection, gathering together, and judgment of the household (2 Thess. 2:1), by the angels of heaven over whom he exercises authority (1 Pet. 3:22; Matt. 13:21; 25:31); but in the execution of "the judgments written" upon the Gentile world, he will be assisted by the glorified saints (Psa. 149:5-8), then made "equal unto the angels" (Luke 20:36). In confirmation of this, Paul taught: "For unto the angels (i.e. of heaven) hath he not put into subjection the world to come of which we speak" (Heb. 2:5). At present, they are

"ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). However, their work as such will cease when the saints are glorified, and are able to assist Christ in the outpouring of the judgments written. Accordingly, Zechariah pictures them as being with Christ at Armageddon: "The Lord thy God shall come and all the saints with him" (Zech. 14:5). Divine judgment, therefore, shall be poured out "upon all" on the principle of to the household first, and afterwards to the world.

"To convince"—Gr. *exelencho*, an intensive form of the Greek word "to convict," and thus "to convict thoroughly." The folly and wickedness of the false teachers and their flock will be brought home to them with a thoroughness that they will not be able to resist.

"Ungodly"—The term "ungodly" signifies one defiant of God, and not merely one who sins through weakness (see note V.4). It here describes the impious, rebellious, defiant character of their persons, deeds and teaching.

"Of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed" — This statement refers to the wickedness of Enoch's contemporaries. He lived in a morally corrupt age. The family of Lamech, who was the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain, as Enoch was the seventh in the line of Abel through Seth, was given over to the pursuit of profit, pleasure and power without restraint. The family led the way in permissiveness. Lamech introduced polygamy, and his daughter, Naamah, asserted herself in such a way as to force her name into the genealogy (a most unusual thing — even Noah's wife is not named). She evidently sponsored the *Women's Liberation Movement* of the times (see Gen. 4:19-22), and probably was foremost in flaunting herself with others of her ilk seductively before the Sons of God. This had the disastrous result of the moral pollution that led to the Flood (Gen. 6:1-2). Enoch warned of the inevitable consequences of such ungodliness, as also did Paul in regard to the future (2 Thess. 1:5-10).

"Hard speeches" — The word

"speeches" has been supplied by the translators, as is indicated by it being printed in italics, and some prefer to replace it by the word "things." In any case, these are harsh, vehement, violent, grievous, and stubborn utterances against Christ, spoken by those who have murmured against his precepts like Israel did in the wilderness (V.5), or disputed his authority like Korah (V.6), or have indulged themselves without restraint like Sodom (V.7). Harsh, evil things have been spoken against Christ, and many will be judged upon the pernicious words they have uttered (Matt. 12:36-Diaglott).

"Which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" — It is significant that the hard, blasphemous and arrogantly defiant speech of Lamech against God is outlined in Gen. 4:23-24. It is set in poetic lines in the Hebrew and represents the earliest poem or song recorded. In this *Song of the Sword*, that Lamech boastfully recited to his admiring wives, he declared that he would slay anyone who stood in his way, ruthlessly destroying anybody who attempted to hinder or hurt him. He concludes by saying:

*If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Truly Lamech seventy and seven fold!*

It was God Who promised to avenge Cain, but in his statement, Lamech declared that he did not need the protection of God: he would avenge himself seventy times seven.

Thus the "days of Noah" (see Luke 17:26-30) were noted for the hard, blasphemous boasts, and the threats of violence of the godless multitude — similar to modern times.

It is significant, that Lamech's boast is cited by the Lord, but in reverse. When Peter asked him whether he should forgive his brother seven times, the Lord replied: "Not seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

In the course of his preaching of the Gospel, Enoch made reference to Lamech's boast in order to proclaim that Divine judgment would sweep such arrogance away — as it did in the Flood, and will do at the coming of Christ.

VERSE 16

"Murmurers" — The word in Greek *gongustes* signifies to mutter,

murmur, or grumble. In the LXX it is used in Exod. 15:24; 17:3; Num. 14:29 of the murmuring of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the first example that Jude advanced (V.5). The very sound of the word suggests the low mutter of resentful discontent such as arises from a sullenly rebellious people. Such grumblers weaken any cause, and spread the feeling of depression and discontent to others. They do not come openly with their complaints, but whisper them in undertones, in secretive fashion that breeds suspicion and ill-feeling.

"Complainers"—The Greek word *mempsimoiros* is compounded of *mephomai*, "to blame," and *moira*, a fate, or lot, hence, "blamers of fate," or people who find fault with life as ordered by God. Korah was of this class, desiring something better than that to which he had been allotted (V.6). These are people who are never satisfied, and are always full of complaints. Paul warned against them, declaring that "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6), and in another place he declares that whatsoever state he found himself in, he had learned to be content (Phil. 4:11). We need to accept with thankfulness the privileges that we have received from Yahweh, and be content with our circumstances and our status before men.

"Walking after their own lusts"

—This third characteristic links with the third example: Sodom and Gomorrah (V.7). We do not have to be as immoral as the people of those cities, to qualify for "walking after our own lusts," for everyone who is not prepared to subordinate his will to that of Christ, falls into this category, for, he is moved by the impulses of the flesh in all that he does.

"Speaking great swelling words" —These are people who rule by words, who say "our lips are our own, who is Lord over us" (Ps. 12:2-4). They speak with boastful arrogance, but are ready to toady to the great and the important if it means they will gain something out of it. The RSV renders: "loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage." Peter makes reference to this characteristic of the false teachers (see 2 Pet. 2:18, and notes thereon).

"Having men's persons in admiration" — For all their bold bombastic speech, they are nothing but time-servers, fawning and flattering those whom they think to be important, a sin condemned by both Old and New Testament (Lev. 19:15; James 2:1, 9).

"Because of advantage" — The Diaglott renders: "For the sake of gain." They are prepared to defer to others if it means that they themselves will benefit.

The Way to Contend - Available Resources

(Vv. 17-25)

This is the most important section of the little Epistle, for whilst it is important to be awake to the fact that danger threatens a Cause, it is even more important to know how to meet it, and what weapons are available to counter it. When these are clearly in mind, we know what equipment is available, and are able to use it to our need. There are vitally important principles outlined by Jude in this section of his Epistle which we should ever heed in times of ecclesial controversy or when the Truth is being challenged. There are weapons both of offence and defence that we can use both to attack and protect.

Recognise That Apostasy Has Been Foretold — Vv. 17-18

To be forewarned is to be forearmed, for when we know that danger is about to threaten in a certain direction, we can strengthen the means to resist it. Hence, the first duty of believers is to ascertain what the Scripture itself has to say upon the matter.

VERSE 17

"But beloved" — This title separated and classified those to whom Jude wrote in contrast to blasphemers both within and without the Body of Christ.

"Remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles" — Both Peter and Paul had clearly warned of the danger that now threatened every believer (see 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-9; 4:1-2). By heeding their words Jude's readers would be fortified in preparing to meet the trouble when it came.

VERSE 18

"Mockers in the last times" — Jude is quoting from 2 Pet. 3:3, and pointing to the confirmation of Peter's words in the troubles that were then sweeping the ecclesia. Notice that scoffing is described particularly as a "time of the end" characteristic. Evidence of the fact is not wanting today, both inside and outside the ecclesial circle.

"Who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" — The manner in which they would do this is preached by Peter in his second Epistle. See particularly ch. 2,3.

Analyse Actions and Fruit — V. 19

Where Truth is held firmly and without compromise the fruits are seen in the peace and unity that pervades the Body of Christ; but the false teachers of Jude's day demonstrated their error of doctrine by their attitude in practice.

VERSE 19

"These be they who separate themselves" — The Greek word *apodiorize* signifies to "set up bounds," "establish lines of demarcation," "create sects or cliques." Jude does not mean that they separate themselves in the sense of withdrawing fellowship from an erring party, but rather they constituted a class that formed sects and cliques within the Ecclesia through the murmuring and complaining in which they indulged. The Diaglott renders: "These are they marking out boundaries." Rather than "separate" in the sense of withdrawing fellowship, they secretly insinuated their ideas within the Ecclesia (see V.4), and then proceeded to divide it up with

their false ideas. They marked out boundaries where they could establish their spheres of influence. The word "themselves" should be omitted.

"Sensual"—They were moved by the motions of sin found in the flesh; so the flesh governed their thinking and actions (Rom. 7:5; 8:5-6).

"Having not the spirit"—The "spirit" is a term used to define the power of the Truth believed, so that to be "led of the Spirit" is to be led of the Truth (Gal. 5:18). Jesus declared that his words constituted "spirit" or power (John 6:63), and John described the Spirit as the truth (1 John 5:6). Paul declared the sword of the spirit is the "word of God" (Eph. 6:17). These errorists "who were sensual, and had not the spirit," were nominal Christians who allowed the flesh to govern them, and gave merely lip service to the Truth which they pretended to follow.

Draw upon Divine Resources — Vv. 20-21

The negative initial preparations for spiritual warfare have so far been considered, in which Jude invites his readers to act as scouts plotting out the ways of the enemy before bringing to bear the weapons of faith. Having considered the forces that oppose the Truth, he now calls upon its adherents to draw upon the divine resources available to them.

VERSE 20

"But ye beloved"—Jude appealed to the brethren by the use of this significant title. It was calculated to remind them of their unique status, and what was expected of them.

"Building up yourselves on your most holy faith"—Jude could have written: Strengthen yourselves by studying the Word, for, faith comes by "hearing the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). This is the first of four steps to successful spiritual living in Christ Jesus. We will accomplish nothing without the power

of the Word to "build us up," or strengthen us. Notice the four means he gives to successful living: Building, Praying, Keeping, Looking!

"Praying in the Holy Spirit"—Prayer is the next step, but the prayer must be in accordance with the will of God. How can we make our prayers more acceptable with the Father? Jude replies: "By praying in the Holy Spirit." We have already pointed out that the terms "Spirit" and "Holy Spirit" are frequently used for the power of the Word of God, when it finds lodgment in a receptive heart. The Word can guide us as to how, and for what, we should pray. The Lord Jesus described the Holy Spirit, even the spirit of truth, as "another Comforter, that may abide with you" (John 14:16). The word "Comforter" is rendered "Advocate" in 1 John 2:1, so that the spirit is "another Advocate" that can help us in our approach to the Father. Because of this Paul taught that "through him (Christ) we both have access by one Spirit (the truth) unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). The Spirit-Word leads us to Christ, and through Christ we have access to the Father, so that the Truth becomes the unifying factor, an advocate on earth co-operating with the heavenly Advocate, even the Lord Jesus Christ. This Spirit of Truth can help our prayers.

Paul wrote: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not (the) what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession with groaning which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). Paul is here defining a common failure in prayer, and is guiding us to overcome it. We know not for what we should pray, but the Word of Truth will help us, for it will reveal to us our weakness, and will show us where we need strength. Thus we will know "the what" (the definite article is given in the Greek) we should pray for, that is, the particular need for which we should seek Divine guidance and strength. The Spirit will help

us in this direction through the Word. It will reveal to us Divine ideals and thoughts, and will enable us to bring our thoughts and desires into harmony with Yahweh's. Then we are assured that all our prayers will be fulfilled, for we will only request that which has been purposed of God (Joh. 15:7). How much we need this Divine tuition is evident when we consider Christ's statement: "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). A follower of Christ will make the speedy fulfilment of Yahweh's purpose with this earth the prime object of his prayer, namely: "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done" (Matth. 6:10). A mind, dominated by such desires, will be fully equipped to neutralise the defiling influence of the world. Such is prayer "in the Holy Spirit."

VERSE 21

"Keep yourselves in the love of God"—The word "keep" in the Greek is *tereo* and signifies to "keep an eye upon," "to watch," and so to guard or preserve. It is significant that we have to keep ourselves within the circle of this divine love. Jude's words are in complete harmony with the Lord's teaching: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: CONTINUE YE IN MY LOVE. IF ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." (Joh. 15: 9-10). Thus Jude defines obedience, or the application of the spirit word, as the third step to successful spiritual living.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ"—"Looking" is the Greek *prosdchomai*, also rendered "to expect" (as Luke 2:38; Titus 2:13). This fourth step brings us to Hope. Paul's spiritual vision was ever fixed on the reality of the future (2 Cor. 4:18), and this acted as an incentive to him, enabling him to surmount the trials and problems that beset him daily. To the brethren in Rome, he wrote: "Hope maketh not ashamed; be-

cause the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

Here, then, are four steps, or exercises, that will fortify and strengthen the spiritual warrior to wage a good warfare in the cause of Christ: building on Faith, praying in the Spirit, keeping in the Love of God, and ever looking for the relief that Christ's coming will bring. These are the Divine resources that are available to us in time of need.

"Unto eternal life"—Though eternal life is offered to believers now, it is only in promise (1 John 2:25) and in hope (Tit. 1:1). It is to be realised in fact at the coming of the Lord for which we wait. Hence Jude's exhortation.

**Seek to reclaim where possible —
Vv. 22-23**

And now, having called upon his readers to "look to themselves," Jude treats with the manner in which they should conduct themselves in time of ecclesial contention. First consider carefully those who are opposed to you, and if possible reclaim those who may be amenable to reason.

VERSE 22

"And of some have compassion"—Some mss read "rebuke," "argue," and thus the RSV renders: "Convince some who doubt." Whether this reading be accepted or that of the AV, the principle remains the same: act with discretion, carefully discriminate between those who can be won over to Truth, and those who are hopeless cases of sheer obstinacy. In the case of the former, allow the power of the Word to convert, by "contending earnestly for the faith" (V.3).

"Making a difference" — The Greek is in the accusative case, and is so rendered by the R.V.: "who are in doubt." Thus, Jude would have us to carefully discriminate between those who are genuinely in doubt, and others who are

hardened in error or wickedness; between those who are amenable to reason, and those who are arrogantly stubborn and lifted up with fleshly pride. Seek out the waverers reason with them with the Word in hand; but avoid the other class.

VERSE 23

“And others save with fear”—

Jude would have us go about the work of converting with fear, lest we be adversely affected by the controversy. There is always a danger with contention that those who would save, can themselves be influenced and overcome, unless they are strong enough to effectively fight without danger of succumbing. Jesus had to first save himself, that he might be equipped to save others. We must be strong if we would help the weak. The doctor who would cure an infectious disease always runs the risk of personal infection (cp. Gal. 6:1; Prov. 6:27). Ecclesial contention is no different. Only those skilful in the Word, firm in the Faith, and fully assured of the things they believe, should engage in polemics. Weaker brethren should not be urged to do so, since they run the risk of being won over to the cause of error.

“Pulling them out of the fire”—

Rotherham links with V.22: “Such as are in doubt be saving, out of the fire snatching them.” The Spirit in Amos used a similar figure of speech, calling Israel “A firebrand plucked out of the burning,” indicating how close they had been to consumption (Amos 4:11; see also Zech. 3:2).

“Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”—Note the instructions of the Law in regard to the garments of a leper (Lev. 13:47-52). Jude warns his readers to recognise the enormity of sin and of error, and realise that the influence of these evils can pollute those who come too close thereto. There are dire dangers in ecclesial contention, those engaging in it should recognise such, and avoid the pitfalls.

Rest upon the Help of Yahweh — Vv. 24-25

No warfare will be victorious without Yahweh's help, and that is readily available to all who seek Him. So Jude concludes by directing his readers to the great Source of Comfort, Power, and Victory.

VERSE 24

“Now unto him”—In spite of all the dangers that are connected with the propagation and defence of Truth against error, reliance upon Yahweh will ensure ultimate victory.

“That is able to keep you”—

The word “keep” is *phulazai*, and signifies “to guard” by keeping watch,” and thus to preserve. Yahweh can preserve us from the contagion of sin, and from the possibility of defeat; His eyes are upon us, and He will help us if we seek His assistance.

“From falling”—The word signifies “without stumbling or slipping,” and therefore surefooted (see Ps. 121:3; Heb. 12:13). An allusion to Peter's words, who had given detailed advice of how to attain unto such surefootedness (2 Pet. 1:10).

“Present you faultless” — The Greek word *amomos* signifies “without blemish,” and is a sacrificial term. In Rev. 14:5, it is appropriately used for those who follow the lamb” (V.4), for in doing so they must learn to sacrifice their self-will. The purpose of Christ, in giving himself for his bride, is that she might appear “without spot or blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This is only possible through the forgiveness of personal transgressions, so that it is only Yahweh who can present us faultless.

“Before the presence of his glory”—The Lord Jesus will return in the glory of his Father (Matth. 16:27; 25:31), and these unblemished ones will then be united with him that they might reflect the same glory (Matth. 13:43).

"With exceeding joy" — How great will be the exultation, the joy and relief when the Lord does come, and himself takes charge of all the trials and problems that we find so difficult to handle now! All opposition will be destroyed, all the troubles of the present will be swallowed up in the wonderful triumph of the victory, and in the glorious illumination that he shall bring to bear upon man's affairs, the present shall seem like a dark, evil night of troublesome dreams that has past for ever!

VERSE 25

"To the only wise God our Saviour"—The word "wise" should be omitted. The Diaglott renders: "To God alone our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (For God as Saviour, see notes on 2 Pet. 1:1.)

"Be glory"—The Greek word *doxo* signifies that which is worthy of praise.

"Majesty"—Let that dignity, elevation and greatness that is becoming to Yahweh as the Supreme Creator be acknowledged by all mankind.

"Dominion"—The word in the Greek is *kratos* and signifies manifested or exerted power, power that He manifests through others. By this He rules, and thus exercises dominion.

"Power"—Gr. *exousia*, signifies delegated authority, the authority that Yahweh has delivered into the hands of His son, and which shall be shared by the saints in

the Age to come (Rev. 3:21).

"Both now"—Yahweh's power is available now, and we can draw it into our lives if we use the means that Jude has outlined. If we do so, we will not engage in the fight of Faith in vain, nor will ultimate victory be with the enemies of Truth and Righteousness. Let us ever bear in mind that we have access to a Reservoir of Power of which the world knows nothing, and which is not available to those who stand for error and evil.

"And ever"—The word is in the plural, thus, "for the ages." Yahweh's authority will never cease, His power will never wane. At the end of the millenium, when the perfected Kingdom will be delivered unto Him, He will continue to be "all and in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

"Amen"—So be it! This is the confident declaration of faith. It is as though Jude declared, Victory is ours! The triumph of Yahweh will be ultimately manifested in the earth, and then, notwithstanding the issues in the meantime, the full measure of true success in our contending for the Faith will be seen. This word, Amen, is a Hebrew word, transliterated into Greek, and signifying "faithful". It is also used as a title for the Lord Jesus Christ, and significantly so, in addressing the Laodicean Ecclesia: "These things saith the Amen!" (Rev. 3:14). He is the "Amen," because all that has been promised will be fulfilled through him, and he is the confirmation of it all (Rom. 15:8).

Conclusion



Our consideration of these short epistles is concluded, and what shall we say to sum it all up? We can say this, that the experience of the Truth reveals much that is fine, and noble, and good, but intermixed with it there is that which is evil, and wrong, and sad. There are manifested many griefs, many errors, but also a continual experience of the love and mercy of God. Thus we take both comfort and courage.

Our duty remains clear: To contend earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered to the saints; to preserve in its purity that which is our most precious possession. Both Peter and Jude have instructed us not to be carried away with the absurd outcry against "contention" and the "fighting spirit". That spirit, properly controlled, as these brethren have taught us to control it, is a constructive spirit, and very little constructive or helpful work has been done by the smooth speaking and placid contentment school.

Admittedly, a mere fighting man is useless; he destroys without creating — and there are such. But we do not have to be among their number. We can be creative as we contend; we can show favour as we fight; we can manifest love as we labor in the doctrine; and if we do it all under the guidance of the Spirit-word, we will do it with the prospect of ultimate victory ever before us. Let that be our aim, and to God alone, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for the ages. Amen!



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