

The Berean Christadelphian

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the exposition and defence of the Faith once for all delivered to the Saints, with the object of helping to make ready a People prepared for the coming of the Lord. Opposed to the unscriptural teachings of the papal and protestant churches of the world.

Edited and Published by:
G. A. Gibson, 919 Dufferin St., Apt. 1505, Toronto, Ont., Canada M6H 4B3

“They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many believed.”—Acts 17: 11.

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We are anxious to send the Berean FREE to any desiring it that way. Please do not hesitate to request it. If you know of any who might like it, please send us their names.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

ESPERANCE 6450, Western Australia—2 Emily Street—Memorial 11 am; Class Thursday 7:30 pm —Bro. Ray Hodges (same address).

LOVING Greetings to our brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus.

Each first day of the week brings us to the Memorial Table to remember the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Master in the way he requested. On Sunday, Jan. 9, we shared this strengthening and comforting joy with our sisters Hazel and Tina Quenby.

How pleasant to have them in our midst to partake of the emblems together in the bond of the Truth, and to have their voices added to ours in hymns of praise and thanks to our Heavenly Father.

We thank all the brethren and sisters for tapes and letters received during 1976. We do appreciate and have enjoyed them.

The year 1977 is with us. How quickly weeks and years appear to come and go! How appropriate for these days are the words of our hymn—

"The days are quickly flying, and Christ will come again . . ."

May it please our Heavenly Father to continue to bless and strengthen us, so that when we stand before Israel's Redeemer, our faith may be turned to sight.

Our love in the Truth to all our brethren and sisters,

—bro. Ray Hodges

DETROIT, Mich.—13308 Denver Circle West, Sterling Heights, Mich. 48077. Phone (313) 979-0209—Elpis Israel Class 10am; Memorial 11:30 am.

LOVE and Greetings to the Household of Faith.

Another year has passed into history with its opportunities of service to our Creator: days, weeks and months provided for the development of our characters in conformity to the standard shown by our Master, Christ Jesus. These moments have slipped into the past, and are inscribed upon the record of our lives, to be flashed upon our minds when we appear at the Judgment Seat.

Before us stretches an unknown measure of time, as we enter on a new year. Let us observe each new day as an extension of God's grace, and rejoice that we are spared to honour and serve Him. Psa. 118:24—

"This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it."

The extended time for service should be viewed as the longsuffering of God for us; that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is a glorious witness that His children are most precious in His sight, and that He is providing every possible means for them to stand before His Son with joy if yet with fear.

A broad review of world events in 1976 impresses us with the sureness of the Divine purpose, and that God is in complete control—that the proud waves of nations cannot pass their appointed bounds. The potsherds of the earth continue to strive together, and as history has proven for 1000s of years, they shall be cast aside, outside the walls of the Holy City community.

We observe the nation of Israel upon their mountains: the key witness of Divine prophecy in fulfilment. But they continue to experience agony at the hands of wicked nations. The Spirit of God has not enlivened their activity, for they boast yet of their own prowess. Humility and contrition of heart on their part are yet to come, as they behold their Messiah in grief preceding joy.

From the Gentile prospect, the "iniquity of the Amorites" is filling up the cup very rapidly. Wars, hatred, crime, corruption, violence and immorality spring up in hearts unexercised by the Word of God.

World events transpire so rapidly that it often is difficult to retain a clear focus on the way nations are tending. The theatre of hostilities in the divided camp of nations moves from one stage to another. We should see in these far flung happenings the truth that all nations shall drink of the cup which God has prepared for the wicked. And, as by a magnet force, irresistibly they shall be drawn to fight upon the mountains of Israel.

"Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conduct and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of the Lord"—2 Pet 3:11-12.

As if to warn the nations of impending disaster, the elements strive together repeatedly as time advances toward the most dramatic event of history: storms of great magnitude, sudden and extreme weather changes of heat, cold, rain and drought, upsetting the planned regulation proposed by man for his comfort and ungodly desires; violent earthquakes destroying 100s of 1000s in China, Turkey, Italy and South America; dormant volcanoes suddenly

springing to life with terrifying activity. These are further fearful signs on the sun, moon and stars, and in the earth, causing distress and perplexity. They are an evidence that God even now is fighting against them.

We can safely leave the world problems in the hands of God, for He sets up and removes according to His will. We therefore turn to events throughout the Brotherhood and find much to gladden our hearts, yet some which cause us to consider our days and ways more closely.

While we are few in number in this area of the Vineyard, we continue to rejoice in the mercies of God in providing associations with our brethren and sisters in U.S. and Canada. We are also united with those of the Body in Australia, New Zealand and England by letters: letters of strength and encouragement to remain constant in hope of life eternal.

Once again we have been able to visit with the ecclesias at Lampasas and Houston. The annual Texas Gathering at Hye was another event of great value for strength and faith, and for rejoicing in God's love with many from far and near. Through the efforts and labour of love of the brethren and sisters of Worcester, we marvelled at the glories of the Kingdom Age, with our minds focused on the Holy Land, blessed with Divine favour as the centre of world government, when all nations shall come to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

We were greatly encouraged by a visit to Canton in November, at which time a new member was added to their ecclesia: an events which has strengthened the hands that labour there. It has generated activity and interest on the part of others to search the Word of God for the Way of Life.

Our monthly visits to the London ecclesia have long provided that necessary sharpening of the countenance by association one with another. While not able to attend other ecclesias in person, we learn with comfort of the activities in many parts of the Body. The renewal of companionship with some at Portland is a source of strength to all. The efforts of the members in Western Canada in ecclesial activities comes as good news to our hearts. The labours of the little band at Winnipeg to weekly unite the elderly, the isolated, and the unwell by correspondence, to acquaint and remind of responsibilities to serve God by loving service to each other, is a most valuable enterprise, causing praise to our Heavenly Father.

While rejoicing with news of additions in the various ecclesias, our joy is tempered with sorrow as we recognize the nature of our constitution as prone to weakness, decay and death. Several of our companions have by divine wisdom been caused to lay down the mantle of service, to rest from their labours and await the trumpet sound of resurrection. Then shall all sorrow be turned to joy for those who have striven to serve the Creator in love and faithfulness.

Since our last communication we have enjoyed the visit of our sister Ruth Clubb of London, in our memorial observance. We continue with our consideration of Elpis Israel, the clear exposition of our Faith provided by the labours of our bro. John Thomas; while the daily readings of the Word by the order of the Bible Companion unites us with the Brotherhood throughout the earth.

With love in the Truth from the Detroit ecclesia, —bro. Fred Higham Sr.

EDITORIAL

He Created It Not in Vain **The Destiny of the Earth: Glorification, Not Destruction**

"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"—Habakkuk 2:14

SECOND PETER CHAPTER THREE

AT various times and in many ways, prominence has been given to the sensational subject known as "The End of the World." A casual reading of this chapter in Peter might well give encouragement to the supporters of this doctrine.

But is this really what the apostle means? And is this the consistent picture we find throughout the Scriptures—that this earth on which we live will some day be completely destroyed?

There are many answers offered: some religious, some scientific. The consensus of opinion in the religious world seems to be that the apostle intended it to be so understood. Yes, some say, the earth is really to be burned up and will disappear from the universe, resulting in the complete destruction of mankind and every living creature.

Some of us will doubtless recall the appearance of Halley's Comet in 1910, the most notable of all comets, appearing only once every 76 years. It is much larger than other comets, and its fiery tail spreads out in the heavens in great magnitude. It was a wonderful sight to behold. At first, some "scientists" believed that it would crash into the

earth; but as time passed careful calculations showed that this idea was erroneous. The next theory submitted was that the earth would pass through the tail of the comet and, if it did, all vegetation and every form of animal life including the human race, would be completely destroyed. However, in a few days it disappeared from view, and will not be seen again until 1986.

Early in 1919 another idea made headlines in many papers, when a prominent British clergyman predicted there would be a speedy end of the earth by burning. He stated that a close friend of his had completed a 10-year study of the Great Pyramid in Egypt, and had discovered absolute proof. Dates were fixed, he said, and the terrestrial system would positively come to an end near the close of the year 1919. That was 57 years ago.

There are many other forms of "scientific" speculation on this subject that have caught the public fancy, but further time on them would be wasted. We much prefer to direct attention to the rational and beautiful revelation concerning the future of the earth found in God's infallible Word, the Bible.

Now the Bible does speak of the "End of the World." In fact, Jesus mentions it several times. In Matt. 13:40 he says—

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world (*aion*)."

And in Matt. 24:3 the disciples asked Jesus—

"What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (*aion*)?"

The generally accepted idea appears to come from the notion that the word "world" in the Bible means exclusively the earth on which we dwell. But this is a mistaken concept. In John 15:18 we read—

"If the world (*kosmos*) hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you."

Again—

"The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world (*kosmos*) is gone after him" (John 12:19).

In the first case, the *earth* does not hate anyone; and in the 2nd, the *earth* did not follow Jesus. If possible, it's clearer in Acts 17:6—

"They drew Jason and certain brethren to the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world (*oikoumene*) upside down are come hither also."

In Rev. 13:3 we read—

"All the world (*gee*) wondered after the Beast."

This is the only place *gee* is translated 'world': it is usually translated 'land, earth, country or ground.' It is obvious that Jason and his friends did not turn the literal earth upside down, nor any literal part of it. And it is obvious that the literal ground or globe did not wonder after the Beast. If, then, *world* does not necessarily refer to the planet upon which we dwell, it is certainly manifest that the expression "End of the World" does not mean "End of the Earth."

What then does it mean? Well, as we see in the above examples, there are 4 Greek words translated "world" in the New Testament—*aion*, *kosmos*, *oikoumene*, and *gee*. *Aion* actually means 'age,' and is so translated in RSV, Diaglott, etc. *Kosmos* means arrangement or order of things during a given period of time. *Oikoumene* means 'inhabited region,' and *gee* means 'land or earth.' All 4 are at times applied to people or conditions, as seen above.

The Bible speaks of 4 successive 'worlds,' or great dispensational divisions of history—

1. In 2 Pet. 3: 6 the apostle speaks of "the World that was." World here is *kosmos*, and refers to the age before the Flood. In 2: 5 he calls it the "old world (*kosmos*).” The earth itself was not destroyed at that time, but the entire 'arrangement' or 'order of things' ended.

2. In 2 Pet. 3:7-10 the apostle refers to the then existing order of things as "the heaven and the earth which *are now*.” This is the age or dispensation relating to the nation of Israel. It began in Abraham and ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews to all parts of the earth. Jesus refers to this period and its termination when he speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem—

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

Here Jesus indicates the end of the Jewish or Israelitish world or age, and the beginning of another age—

3. The Gentile age or world, which was to continue till the "times of the Gentiles" be fulfilled. This word "times" comes from Greek *kairos*, meaning "a fixed time or period." This is an interim or interregnum period—the dark night of unrestrained evil when no divine political entity exists at all. The whole world is given over to the political power of sin. The end of this period of the Gentiles is described by Jesus in Luke 21:25-26—

"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars [note the use of the heavenly phenomena in a political sense]; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring [another clear political figure]; men's hearts failing for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

What words could better describe the present state of world affairs? There are 2 brilliant signs in view today in the political heavens indicating that the Gentile age is coming to a close. They are clearly seen in the above verses (Luke 21:24-26).

February 1949 saw the first phase of the end of the down-treading of Jerusalem by the election of Dr. Weizmann as the first President of the new State of Israel: a nation reborn after 2000 years. We have seen further phases since, especially in 1967 when Jerusalem came entirely under Jewish control.

4. The 4th world, or "Age to Come," is indicated by Peter in v. 13—

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth (*gee*), wherein dwelleth righteousness."

The present world is dominated by sin, disease and death, but in the world to come it is testified that— (Psa. 37)—

1. *The righteous shall flourish, and the wicked shall be cut off;*
2. *The meek shall inherit the earth and dwell therein forever;*
3. *And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

Like the previous "worlds," it will be upon this earth, but unlike them it will be an age without end.

It may be said that this all sounds reasonable, but still in 2 Pet. 3 it is definitely stated that the earth is to be burned up. One writer says the words of Peter are unmistakable, and any attempt to explain them figuratively must prove fruitless. He is unmoved by all the testimony that says the earth will be filled with peace, righteousness and God's glory. He thinks all *that* has to be taken "figuratively." Well, let us see. Suppose we read v. 10 again—

"The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth (*gee*) also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

And now V. 12—

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Now V. 11—

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

All right, let us suppose just for a moment the earth is to be literally burned up. *What about the heavens?* Peter says they are to be dissolved with fire too. What do we have left? No earth and no heavens. There must be some more sensible explanation, especially in view of the multitude of testimony concerning the glorious destiny of the earth, and such definite declarations as Psa. 37—

9. "Evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall INHERIT THE EARTH.
10. "For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.
11. "But the meek shall INHERIT THE EARTH, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
20. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and *dwell therein forever.*"

Again we read in Eccl. 1:4—

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the *earth abideth for ever.*"

And finally in Isaiah 45:18—

"For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it. He hath established it: *He created it not in vain*; He formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and there is none else."

God's purpose with the earth is not failure, but glory: for many times He has declared—

"As truly as I live, all the earth SHALL be filled with My glory" (Num. 14:21; Psa. 72:19; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Mal. 1: 11).

It would certainly be failure if the present is the best it will ever be. It has never been filled with His glory: it is less so than ever today.

We have quoted from the prophets. Now let us go back to Peter—

"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were *spoken before by the holy prophets*, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Pet. 3:1-2).

And then his warning (vs. 16-17) where he speaks of the apostle Paul—

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

No! Let us not be carried away by a view that ignores the whole beautiful picture of the prophets, and thinks the literal earth is to be destroyed. We cannot believe that, and believe Jesus at the same time, for he declared—

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"(Matt. 5:5).

The earth is to be regenerated and glorified: not destroyed. Note carefully vs. 5-7 and you will see Peter was comparing the judgment that came upon the world in the days of Noah with the great judgment that was then soon to come on the Israelitish world—

"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water: whereby the world (*kosmos*) that THEN WAS, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which ARE NOW, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

The "world" that *then was* "perished" in divine judgment of water, but the planet itself did not perish. So the present "world" will perish in divine judgment of fire, but the globe will not perish, but will be cleansed and glorified.

Jesus made a similar comparison in Matt. 24:37-39—

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the Flood came and took them all away—*so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*"

Did you ever notice the general trend of Peter's 2nd epistle? In ch. 1 he speaks (v. 10-11) of the "everlasting Kingdom." In ch. 2 he warns (v. 1) against false teachers and (v. 5) speaks again about Noah. And in ch. 3 he stirs up their minds (vs. 1-2) by referring to the Prophets; and then again (v.13) he refers to the Kingdom. Peter knew exactly what the Prophets had said about the Kingdom and where it would be. It is the neglect of these things—the broad, overall scriptural picture—that causes people to twist passages to fit some theory.

Now look at v. 5 again, and see how he speaks of the "heavens and earth" of Noah's day; then in v. 7 he speaks of the "heavens and earth" of his own time. Does he mean the literal heavens and earth? How could he? They were the same in both cases, and still are. They were not destroyed in Noah's day.

Any who are familiar with the Old Testament know that "heavens and earth" are frequently used to represent people on the earth—rulers and ruled. Moses, addressing Israel, says (Deut. 32:1)—

"Give ear, O ye heavens [rulers of the people], and I will speak, and hear, O earth [the general body of the people], the words of my mouth."

And Isaiah begins his address to the nation the same way—

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken" (1:2).

And now we come back to Peter. In vs. 10-12 we have a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Romans. In v.13 he speaks of the "new heavens *and new earth.*" The objector never deals with the fact that there is to be a "NEW EARTH." He must take this too as a literal globe, so he is back where he started.

This "world to come wherein dwelleth righteousness" will be the fulfilment of the Word of God through Moses (Num. 14:21)—

"As truly as I live, all the EARTH shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

The earth is the handiwork of God, and was created with a definite, stated object in view, *not yet accomplished*. Psa. 19: 1—

"The heavens declare the glory of God, & the firmament showeth His handiwork."

And Rev.4: 11 states—

"Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created."

There is no *present* pleasure to God from the condition of things on the earth, nor ever has been since the first man sinned. At the very beginning, because of transgression of divine law and the entry of sin into the world, a curse was placed upon the earth (Gen. 3:17)—

"And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it—*cursed is the ground for thy sake*: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

Following this event, and up to the present, sin, disease and death have reigned. But when the earth shall—as God has solemnly sworn—be "filled with the glory of the Lord," a great change will take place—

"He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces. And the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off *all the earth*, for the Lord hath spoken it " (Isa. 25:7-8).

"When Thy judgments are *in the earth*, then will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9).

"He (God's Servant) shall not fail till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:4).

"I (God) will give thee (Christ) for a covenant of the people to establish *the earth*: to cause to inherit the desolate heritages" (Isa. 49:8).

"Give Him no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise *in the earth*" (Isa. 62:7).

This is confirmed by the New Testament in Rev. 21:4—

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

There is a similar beautiful prophecy in the next chapter—

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life. And the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations.

"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and His servants shall serve Him." (Rev. 22:1-3).

Yes, *on the earth*, but not under present conditions. Then a truly wise and righteous government will bring real peace to all peoples—

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and upon his Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:6-7).

God promised the same through Jeremiah (23:5)—

"I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice IN THE EARTH."

Then shall at last come to pass the prophetic song of the angels at the birth of Jesus—

"Glory, to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

How will this be accomplished? The prophet Micah tells us—

"In the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the House of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

"And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (4:1-3).

We have been invited by the gracious Gospel call of a loving Father to share freely in the inconceivable joys of the world to come. This is the glorious hope set before us in the Bible. This earth, now groaning under the burden of sin and evil, is to be renewed and glorified. And God will accomplish it the way He has revealed, and none other.

Peter was anxious for his friends to know these things, and bring them ever to remembrance. He therefore stirred them up that they might be mindful of what had been written by God's holy prophets of old. Among them are the words of Solomon (Eccl. 1:4)—

"One generation passeth away & another cometh, but *the earth abideth forever.*"

Of course, the question is not whether a doctrine is beautiful, but whether it is true. What we have presented is beautiful; but more importantly, it is THE TRUTH, because it is based entirely upon the revealed Word of God—that Word which He has "magnified above all His Name"—Psa. 138:2; that Word which is able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"—2 Tim.3: 15.

Never mind what others think or say! Use your own power of study and thought to learn and understand what God has revealed. Jesus said—

"Know the Truth: and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Yes, free from the superstition that surrounds us on every side; free from the veil that is spread over the world; free from the darkness that covers the people—so that we may walk in the Light of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God!

—Editor

The Adoption

The Present Brotherhood of Believers With Christ

"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, Abba Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son"—Galatians 4:6-7

Letter by Bro. Thomas — Continued from last month

BUT you deny that those believing into the Name (an operation which is transacted in the present flesh-and-blood constitution of things) are now the brethren of Christ; and affirm that they will not be such until they cease to be flesh and blood, and become of the same spirit nature or substance he now rejoices in.

If this were true (which it is not), then the Eternal Spirit was not the Father of Jesus, because Jesus was not of the same nature in the days of his flesh; nor is God now the Father of believers into His Name, for the same reason. And if He is not their Father now, they are not children, nor heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Do you not begin to see the gulf of Atheism and unbelief toward which your denial of present fraternal relationship to Jesus Christ is hurrying you? Our participation of the inheritance of the saints in light is predicated on our being children now of the Father in heaven: not on the principle of present identity of physical nature, but on that of present adoption through Christ *and identity of moral character evinced in the development of the fruit of "the Spirit which is the Truth"*—1 John 5:6.

"IF children, *then heirs*" (Rom.8:17).

But if not children, what then? Then not heirs of the Kingdom which God has promised.

To deny that believers into the Divine Name are now the sons of God is to deny that they are the brethren of Christ. And to deny that they are now his brethren is to deny that they are now children, or sons and daughters, of the Lord God Almighty. Sonship to Deity and brotherhood with Christ stand or fall together.

I have heard of professors in this country denying that "believers into the Name" are sons of God until they are born of the Spirit by resurrection from the dead, on the principle that they cannot be sons until they are of the same physical nature with God. This was agitated before the name Christadelphian was started by me. If any of these remain, they are unquestionably cousins of those who can only tolerate *Anti-Christadelphianism*.

But John the Apostle has settled the question of present sonship to God, and—in so doing—that other Anti-Christadelphian cognate hypothesis of no present brotherhood to Christ, in saying—

"Behold how great love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called sons of God. Beloved, we are NOW sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we (the sons of God) know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one (of the sons) having this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

Yes, "we *are* now sons of God," and therefore brethren of Christ, and joint-heirs with him of the promised Kingdom and glory.

You ask for *one* proof where the apostles and first Christians call Jesus "the Lord the Spirit" their "brother." This must be taken in connection with your words already quoted—

"I never find one of the apostles, after the resurrection and assumption, call Jesus their brother."

But if Jesus, *after* he becomes "the Lord the Spirit," calls the disciples his brethren, is not that a good and sufficient proof of his con-fraternity with them? Let us see: when it was told Jesus Herod would kill him, he replied:

"Go and tell that fox that I do cures today and tomorrow, and *the third day I shall be perfected*" (Luke 13:32).

And—

"Though a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And *being made perfect*, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

While, then, he was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, he was imperfect: not morally, but *as to flesh*, which was mortal flesh, and susceptible of disease, as evinced by the morbid condition of sweating blood in agony— Luke 22:44. In the 3rd year of his ministry, and on the 1st and 2nd days, the imperfection of crucified sin's flesh culminated in its death, and burial in the tomb.

But in the 3rd year, and on the 3rd day from the crucifixion thru weakness—2 Cor.13:4, it was made to live again, and come forth "by the power of the Deity." It was now in a condition *to be perfected* by the same power. What his flesh required now was ascent to the Father, exaltation to consubstantiality with Him; so that, on this raising of flesh to Spirit, he might be made "the Lord the Spirit," or "both Lord and Christ," upon the principle he had laid down to Nicodemus—

"That which hath been born of spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Now let us hear what the dead man "revived" and raised, or exalted, "the Lord the Spirit," said to Mary Magdalene *(John 20:17)—

"Go to *my brethren*, and say unto them, I do ascend to MY Father and YOUR Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20:17).

* Lest there be any quibble that he had not "ascended to the Father" when he spoke to Mary, note that he said the same thing to the other women (who touched him, showing the change had occurred): "Be not afraid: go tell my BRETHREN . . ." (Matt. 28:10).

Is not this sufficiently plain? After being revived and perfected, he avows himself to be the Son of a Father Who was common to himself and his disciples. And when he visited his brethren later, he addresses them saying—

"*Children*, have ye any meat?" (John 21:5).

Whose *children* were they? What other answer can be given than that they were the children of his Father, therefore *his brethren*. And this is in strict accordance with the testimony of Paul concerning "the Lord the Spirit" after his assumption, saying—

"Both he that sanctifieth [Jesus is the Sanctifier] and they who are sanctified [the saints] are all of one (Father); for which cause he (Christ) is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, saying, I will declare Thy Name to *my brethren*" (Heb.2:11-13).

—the "children" God hath "given him" for brethren (v.13).

Christ Jesus is the—

"IMAGE of the invisible God, the FIRSTBORN of every creature" (Colos. 1:15).

He is the intellectual, moral, and material image of the Deity—

"Whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:16).

—to which image, as the model man, all foreknown of the Father are predestinated to be conformed in character and substance. His intellectual and moral image is delineated in the simple records of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The

pre-existent Word, by whom all things were made, manifested Himself *in the nature that transgressed in Eden*, because the "many sons" to be "led to glory"—Heb. 2:10 are partakers of the same. The divine purpose to be accomplished in regard to them made it necessary that the Captain of salvation be—

"Made in ALL things like to *his brethren*" (Heb.2:17).

—in the *first stage* of divine manifestation. He partook with them in this imperfect state; and they will partake with him in the perfect state of divine manifestation in glory because of their having been—in this evil world—conformed to his moral image. Being like him here in *character*, being *in* him, and he being in them, they will be like what he is now in *substance*. And thus being conformed to him as the central figure of the group, he will be fully manifested, both in character and in substance, as:

"Firstborn among many *brethren*" (Rom.8:29).

When the divine family of sons and daughters shall be perfected in all its members, they will be images of the invisible Father, developed upon the principle of knowledge, faith, obedience, love, and power, by which all things are subdued. Flesh first, and spirit afterwards—divine *moral* nature primarily manifested in flesh of the first man from the earth; and secondarily manifested in the flesh and bones of the second man, the Lord from heaven—

"Christ who is over all, Deity blessed for the ages" (Rom.9:5).

This is the FIRSTBORN among *many Firstborns*, who aggregately constitute a—

"General assembly and Ecclesia of Firstborns in heavens"

—or "heavenlies in Christ"—Heb.12:23; Eph. 1:3. The Christ-Deity is the head of these, on whom he will write the Name of his own Deity when he makes them "equal to the angels" and like unto himself—Rev.3: 12; 14: 1.

Nature is the essence, essential qualities, or attributes of a thing which constitute it *what it is*. The "divine" nature of which believers into the Name are—by faith in the "exceeding great and precious promises"—partakers now, is *what exists* in the person and character styled "Jesus"—in the day of his weakness, probation and suffering; and in the day of his present strength and future glory.

All who have "escaped the corruption which is in the world" thru His knowledge Who has called or invited them "thru the foolishness of preaching" to glory and virtue, are—

"Partakers of the Divine Nature"

—manifested in weakness because of the weakness of the flesh thru which the manifestation was exhibited. They who have thru knowledge escaped from the corruption which is in the world thru lust, and *add* to this faith, goodness, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, affection and love—exhibit in character and intelligence the image of Christ. They show they are in him, and that—

"He dwells in their heart by faith" (Eph. 3:17).

—and thus they follow in the steps of the example he has left—1 Pet. 2:21.

This is fellowship, or having a community of intelligence and character with Christ under difficulties. It is the common union of fellows or equals—equals in the sense of all being like one another in their special society; all of *like relation* to the Eternal Father—all Firstborns, with One among them pre-eminent in whom all fulness dwells—Col. 1:15-19. This fellowship is a noble and dignified companionship—not of such knight-companions of the Bath and Garter as Queen Victoria manufactures by her letters patent—but a companionship of Living Stones, holy and royal Priests, of people purchased by the precious blood of the Man who is Yahweh's fellow or equal—Zech.13:7; John 5:18; Phil. 2: 6, a companionship of kings who shall reign on earth—Rev. 1: 5-6;5:9-10, every one of whom is a son of the eternal Father, and a *brother* of "HIS FELLOW." This is the: "Fellowship of the Apostles" (Acts 2:42) —whose—

"Fellowship was with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1: 3).

And they declared what they had seen, heard and handled of the Word of Life—

"The true Deity and the Eternal Life" (1 John 5:20).

—that those who received it, the little children, young men, and fathers in Christ—1 John 2:12-14—

"Might also have fellowship with them" (1 John 1:3).

What shall we say to these things? Will you still persist in saying that "believers into the Name" are not now partakers of the Divine Nature; that they are not now the *brethren of Christ*, but "only the bondservants of Jesus"? Or will you not rather exclaim with Paul—

"O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of the Deity! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33-34).

His ways are undiscoverable; and only to be known by revelation of—

"The mystery of the Deity, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col.2: 2).

—kept secret from the institution of the Mosaic times until manifested by the preaching of Jesus Christ by the apostles.

But—how do believers become Sons of the Eternal Spirit and Brothers of Christ? The answer is, in general terms, *through the Adoption which pertains to Israelites*—Rom.9: 4; 8: 15. What is adoption? It is—

"An action whereby a man takes a person into his family that he may be part of it, acknowledges him for his son, receives him into the number, and gives him a right to the privileges of his children."

The Israelitish Adoption is that divinely appointed institution whereby modern Athenians, Englishmen, Americans, and other Gentiles— all of them by nature of their 'father the devil,' mere sons and daughters of Sin's flesh and therefore constitutionally sinners or the Serpent's seed—may obtain entrance into the family of Deity; be acknowledge by Him as sons, fellow-citizens with the saints of Israel's commonwealth, sons of Zion, and of His household; and be entitled to all the privileges of children.

As children by this Adoption, they constitute the Israel of God not because they are any of them flesh-and-blood descendants of Abraham, for 'the flesh profits nothing'—but because *they are Christ's by purchase*, who was—

"Sent forth in the fulness of the time" (Gal.4:4; Dan.9:26).

—to give himself for our sins that he might redeem us, and deliver us from this present evil world; and that we might receive the adoption of sons—Titus 2: 14; Gal. 1:4; 4: 5. This adoption is received *now*; and all who have received it receive also its spirit—Rom. 8: 15, by which they can now say '*Abba Father*', and rejoice as brethren of Christ. Hence Paul says—

"*Because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, *Abba Father*. Wherefore thou art no more a bond-servant (*doulos*), but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God thru Christ" (Gal. 4:6-7).

But, tho now sons of the Eternal Father and brethren of His Son Jesus, the Adoption is not perfected. The Sin-devil still holds possession of our flesh. This is evinced by the "motions of sins" within us, "the law of sin in our members," the law of our nature, or "the law of sin and death"—Rom.7:5, 23; 8:2, by disease, decay and death. We are in the bondage of corporeal corruption, groaning and travailing in pain. We are waiting for the Captain of our salvation from heaven to—

"Change our vile body that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body."

—by his all-subduing power—Phil. 3:20-21. The result of this powerful operation will be "the redemption of our body"—Rom. 8: 23 from all the evil it needs to be redeemed from. This redemption of the body of his brethren, individually and collectively, is the *perfecting of the Adoption*; when the sons of God and brethren of Christ will be made manifest, or apparent, to the world that *knows them not now* "because it knew him not"—1 John 3: 1.

"We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

"Ye are all the *sons of God in Jesus Christ* thru the Faith" (Gal.3:26)

If, then, it be understood how Jewish and Gentile sons of the devil, or sinners, get into Christ, it will be known wherein consists the adoption pertaining to this imperfect state. Paul gives us to understand upon what principle they become sons thru the Faith: namely, upon *the principle of obedience* finding expression in subjection to the divinely-appointed ordinance of baptism (Gal. 3:26-29)—

"As many of you as have been *baptized into Christ* have PUT ON CHRIST. There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female (in Christ), for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the Promise."

Thus the 'obedience of faith' puts a sinner into Christ, the Holy and Just One, the Son of God, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of David, the King of Israel, the High Priest, the Sanctifier, the Altar, the First-born, the Circumcised Jew, the First-fruits, and so forth. In all these things they share who put him on.

By adoption, they are holy, sons of God, and of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, kings, priests, sanctified, justified, in the altar and partakers of it, firstborns and Jews circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, first-fruits and *brethren* of the King of kings.

Such are the high honours to which they are admitted *in this imperfect state*, as the earnest of their position in the glory to be revealed. The world doth not know them in these divine relations, but that matters not to them—

"Having this seal: *the Lord knoweth* them that are His."

—by the Adoption.

Now, dear brother, I think I have given testimony and reason enough to establish the true believer's right to the honourable title of *a brother of Christ*. CHRISTADELPHIAN is the word of 5 euphonious syllables expressive of this exalted privilege. The privilege of being a brother of the Sun of righteousness transcends in honour and dignity any title borne by the most ancient and proud nobles of the world. The Emperor of China would be, if he could, "brother of the sun and moon"; but there is no *adoption* to place him in that celestial rank!

Not so with the believer into the Christ-Name. There *is* an Adoption for him which makes him a son and a brother of the Word by Whom the sun and moon were created.

But the word that reminds the intelligent believer of this marvellous truth is an offence to you; and you prefer to glory in a name which signified something honourable and distinctive in the days of the apostles, but now means anything you please, and nothing definite. You say—

"I find that Peter says, If ye suffer as a Christian, happy are ye, and glorify God *in this name*"

(Your emphasis).

Now, I find no such saying of Peter in his epistles. He says—

"If ye be reproached for the *Name of Christ*, happy are ye . . . If anyone suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God for this portion" (1 Peter 4: 4,16).

The recent editors would substitute "in this name" for "on this behalf" as an equally good if not better reading. But *Christian* is not the name of the Word-flesh. His Name is *Yah, the Anointed Saviour*, or Jesus Christ the Deity manifested in sin's flesh by holy spirit.

"If in (*this*) the Name of Christ ye be reproached, happy are ye."

In early times they who renounced the idols were styled by the pagans "Christians," or *followers of Christ*; and multitudes rushed to martyrdom calling themselves Christians who were no more the followers of Christ than the worshipers of the Beast now who style themselves Christians, while they blaspheme that worthy name by which are called those who put it on—mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. "Christian" does not *now* signify a follower of Christ, but the very reverse. It does not indicate a man in Christ, nor one bearing any relation to him; but simply one who happens to have first inhaled the breath of life in Europe or America, absurdly enough styled "christian countries"!

The name Christadelphian has never been desecrated and prostituted to the cloaking of every species of crime, hypocrisy and abomination, as hath what you term 'the good old scriptural name of Christian.' It is neither better nor more scriptural than Christadelphian. 'Satan' is as 'scriptural' a name as 'Christian,' and older, too: but what of that? The idol-worshipping children of Satan called the sons of God 'Christians.' They gave this name reproachfully, but the spirit of the Eternal Father styles them *the brethren of His Son*.

You style the brethren of Christ, "this new sect Christadelphian," with which, say you—

"I have no sympathy. I like *Eureka* very much, would you only keep away this crotchet *sectarianism*. This new creation of Christadelphianism has done great mischief among your friends, having become such a bone of contention among them."

Permit me to remark that the Brethren of Christ are not *now* a new sect. They *were* a new sect in the last days of the Mosaic Law—the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes being the old and 'orthodox denominations.' Christ's Brethren, the then new sect of Christadelphians, were few, poor, despised, and 'everywhere spoken against'—Acts 28:22.

Their opponents charged them with doing great mischief among their friends and neighbours, to the extent of raising up foes against people in their own houses, and of turning the world upside down, and everywhere introducing bones of contention, and making them bonds and tests of fellowship. If Christ's Brethren, in those early times of their history, would only have kept away their crotchet sectarianism, and have suppressed all concerning the Name they preached about so persistently, contentiously, and annoyingly, the 'good old scriptural names' to whom Judas sold 'the Truth' would have liberally received the new sect into the established orthodox fellowship.

But Christ's brethren would accept no compromise. They would accept nothing short of unconditional and absolute surrender. They would tolerate no rivals without, nor any heretics and schismatics within, without bearing testimony against them. This caused their opponents to object, and to say that "they did nothing but quarrel and fight," not perceiving that it is the opponents—and not the earnest advocates—of truth that make all the trouble and great mischief.

So long as the then new sect of the Jews was 'sound in the Faith,' its members were of one mind, one mouth, one heart, one spirit, one Soul, and one judgment—Acts 4:32; Rom. 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13: 11; Phil. 1:27; 2:2. God has called them into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ—1 Cor. 1: 9. They knew therefore that they were the brethren of His Son; and consequently upon that point they spoke the same thing, and were "perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment."

The contrary cannot for a moment be entertained. No one could be called or invited into fellowship, fraternity or brotherhood with the Son of God and—when he had accepted the invitation in becoming the subject of the Adoption—be ignorant that he was a brother of that Son.

But when the Pseudadelphians got into the new sect, their admirable unanimity was broken and 'quarrelling and fighting,' to the great delight of their adversaries, became the characteristic of the situation; so that—

"Without were fightings, and within were fears" (2 Cor. 7:5).

The genuine believers of the distracted fellowship however, tho troubled and perplexed, were not distressed nor in despair. They knew that in an evil world like this, the Truth could neither be planted, nor maintained in its purity, without constant vigilance, and conflict with error. They knew opposition was a means promotive of the Truth.

But the brethren of Christ, tho a sect among hostile sects, as they always have been and will be till Christ comes and reduces all mankind into subjection to it, are not a *new* sect, or a new creation of today as you assert. No, they are the old 'detestable' sect revived. Its mission is to turn this dark, infatuated, self-conceited, modern world upside down. The present situation is that of preparation for entrance upon this mission when Christ appears to place himself in command of the hosts of heaven.

I very much question if he will acknowledge *them* as his brethren who deny they are such. When the King shall say to those who have 'no sympathy with' the members of the old sect new revived, and who declare they will not tolerate it—

"I was a stranger in modern Athens [Edinburgh] and ye took me not in; saying that I had come to 'foster and build up Christadelphianism, with which you will have nothing to do'."

—will he not address certain upon his left hand? And if so, may they not be expected to attempt self-justification by saying—

"Lord, when saw we thee a stranger and did not minister to thee?"

But the King's reply to all such pleas is—

"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these MY BRETHREN, ye did it not to me."

In conclusion I would remark that the man does not know me who thinks I am to be deterred by any consideration from setting forth what I believe to be the Truth. I have stood apparently alone in the world, without dismay, and if the necessities of the Truth demand it, I can do so again. It is not pleasant to lose one's old friends, but if they are determined that we shall teach what we do not believe, or suppress what we do, to please them; or forfeit their goodwill and be turned adrift, we accept the latter alternative, and adrift we go.

The work of Christ's *brethren* is to prepare themselves, and as many others as possible with them, to meet the King at his appearing. This work will of necessity develop *a sect*, which when duly harnessed with the whole armour of God, offensive and defensive, will be the apparition in the present century of that sturdy, valiant old soldier of the Faith who sallied forth with his bow against the Roman, conquering until he cast the great red devil and his angels out of the heaven into the earth.

This is the old sect new revived, now as then "everywhere spoken against," to which I belong, and for whose development I devote all my time and energies. I ask no quarter, favour, cooperation or fellowship from those whose heart is not with Christ's brethren in this admirable enterprise, which will soon be crowned with the presence of the Sun of Righteousness shining brightly in their midst.

That you, dear brother, and all the *bond-servants* you prefer to CHRISTADELPHIANS for brethren, before it be too late may attain to "the glorious *liberty of the children of the Deity*"—Rom. 8: 21 is the devout, earnest prayer of your true and faithful friend, John Thomas.

DECEMBER ANSWERS: Genesis chapters

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Six days' work | 13. Abraham, Lot part |
| 2. Eden—Woman | 14. Melchizedek |
| 3. Serpent—Fall | 15. Horror of darkness |
| 4. Cain & Abel | 16. Hagar runs away |

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 25. Jacob, Esau born | 38. Judah & Tamar |
| 26. Abimelech/Rebekah | 39. Joseph & Potiphar |
| 27. Isaac deceived | 40. Butler & baker |
| 28. Dream at Bethel | 41. Pharaoh dreams |
| 29. Jacob meets Rachel | 42. Money in sacks |

5. Enoch translated	17. Circumcision	30. Joseph born	43. Benjamin to Egypt
6. Noah makes ark	18. For 10's sake	31. Jacob flees Laban	44. Cup in sack
7. All flesh dies	19. Sodom destroyed	32. Wrestle with angel	45. Joseph made known
8. Raven & dove	20. Abimelech & Sarah	33. Esau meets Jacob	46. Jacob to Egypt
9. Rainbow covenant	21. Isaac born	34. Dinah & Shechem	47.1/5 part for Pharaoh
10. Table of nations	22. Ram in thicket	35. Rachel dies	48. Crossed hands
11. Tower of Babel	23. Sarah dies	36. Esau generations	49. Jacob blesses sons
12. Call of Abraham	24. Rebekah brought	37. Joseph sold	50. Joseph dies

THE READING OF THE WORD STANDS FIRST

The reading of the Word stands *first* in the process of spiritual horticulture. We are told to "desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may GROW thereby." *Apart from the Word there will be no growth.* You cannot see a tree grow while you stand and look at it, nor during many visits. Would a gardener be wise in stopping the cultivation because of this?— **Bro. Roberts**

Let Him Have Thy Cloak Also

The Commands of Christ Concerning Suing at Law

"It hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"—Matt. 5:38-9

BY BROTHER ROBERT ROBERTS

WE believe it will be interesting and useful to have a compilation of bro. Roberts' writings on Suing at Law, especially so in view of the fact that he quotes in full (and then scripturally refutes) many specious arguments that have been periodically used in an attempt to undermine and weaken this vital scriptural principle. It will be noted that bro. Roberts never gives the slightest hint that there may be "exceptions" (which is such a popular argument today); and he specifically rules out one of the most commonly-argued-for exceptions. The unsound arguments he is answering are all printed in *italic (this type)*. Our explanatory notes and comments are in the same type as this paragraph. The rest is bro. R.

"Is it lawful for a saint to sue at the law those who may owe him money?"

IT would be hard to answer Yes in the face of the following scriptures: Matt.5:39-45; 1 Cor.6:1-7; 2 Cor. 11:20; Luke 6:27-35. —JULY, 1872

* * *

"Are brethren at liberty to going to law against another?"

HOW could going to law be consistent with submission to precepts requiring us to accept evil, and vindicate not ourselves. What is going to law but resorting to the utmost extremity of personal violence and coercion? Those who look on the surface may not see this, but they would feel it readily enough if directed against themselves.

Here bro. Roberts substantially repeats his remarks in Christendom Astray quoted in the Berean, August 1976, p. 241, which we omit for brevity. Then he continues—

The fact that a man does not *personally* employ the violence only makes the matter worse, as far as the nature of his act is concerned. For which is worse: to do the deed honestly and bravely yourself, or to stand behind a curtain and whisper words that set a lot of heartless ruffians to do it? If you were the personal actor, your debtor might have some chance of mercy by personal appeal. But when you set the law in motion, you hand him over to the tender mercies of men with hearts of stone, and without the power to be merciful even if they had the mind.

It is generally conceded that a brother has no right to resort to law against a brother, because of Paul's express words in 1 Cor. 6, but some conceive they may do so against a stranger. The first thought upon such a proposition is, that it is contrary to the entire spirit of Christ's teaching to suppose we are at liberty to apply any process of hurt to strangers which we are not to apply to brethren. His command to be *absolutely harmless* extends even to an enemy, still more to a debtor who may not necessarily be an enemy. The supposed distinction in favour of brethren in this matter would be a return to the spirit of things that said:

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour & hate thine enemy."

—which Christ expressly superseded.

How then comes it that Paul mentions a 'brother' at all, in connection with law-going in 1 Cor. 6? Is it to intimate that a brother may go to law with a stranger, while not at liberty to do so with a brother? There's no such hint in the context. It is rather to illustrate the *great extent* to which the Corinthians had gone in their disobedience—

"*Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers!*"

He commands the brethren to judge, if there is anything wrong between brother and brother. But does he *recommend* a resort to even this judicature? On the contrary, he says—

"Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (v. 7).

The command to be *passive* in relation to evil is an ordinance for the present probation merely. In due time, the saints will "trample the wicked as ashes under the soles of their feet"—Mal.4: 3, *if* they prove themselves worthy of the honour by a *faithful submission to what God requires of them now*. It is—

"He that overcometh, and keepeth the words and works of Christ . . ."

—that is to—

"Have power over the nations, and to break them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Rev. 2:26-27).

In this view, it is of paramount importance that the saints remain true to the commandments of Christ; and not to suffer themselves to be led into the path of disobedience by glosses on his word which, while making the way smoother to the flesh, will have the effect of depriving us of the crown in the day of glory to be revealed.—OCT. 1872

* * *

We are permitted to accept the protection of the constituted authorities, as when Paul sent word to the Roman captain of Jerusalem of a plot against his (Paul's) life—Acts23:17, or to avail ourselves of the law where it affords shelter without hurting our enemies, as when Paul, uncondemned, made use of his Roman citizenship to escape scourging—Acts 22:25. An objector submits the following points—

"*In suing a debtor, the party suing simply acts on the defensive. To buy goods & refuse to pay is committing plunder, & surely it would not be right to see a man rob us of goods and make no effort to prevent him by calling in the police if remonstrance failed. In the latter case, we might be required by the law to give evidence, or appear as an accuser, which would lead to the thief's punishment.*"

The suing party is aggressive, not defensive. The sued has the goods, and you make legal war upon him to make him disgorge. Very right, too, you say. No doubt, in the abstract. So would 12 legions of angels have been, to the discomfiture of Pilate and his coadjutors. It is a question of what is the Father's will in this our trial. This is expressed in the precept—

"Resist not. . . if any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matt. 5:39-40).

And let us remember he said—

"Ye are my friends, IF ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

As to looking on the robbery and making no effort, we are allowed to accept the protection of Caesar *where it is a mere case of being screened from harm*; but not to set Caesar in motion to inflict harm on others, even if the harm would be justly inflicted. We should be allowed to ask the police to stand between us and robbery, but not to set the police after the robbers to punish them. The law compels no man to appear as an accuser. A brother would simply refuse to prosecute. What? Encourage thieves to steal and bring disorder on society? There is a God in heaven, dear friend, Who rules in the kingdoms of men. Let us obey His commandments, and He will see to the rest. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear.

* * *

"*Christ's words in the Gospels about presenting the other cheek to him who smites, cannot be taken literally. There are cases where literal compliance with these injunctions would show a worse spirit than taking no further notice. When Christ was spit on, he did not turn the other cheek: he calmly submitted.*"

There is doubtless a strong element of figure in these sayings; but the *principle* expressed in the figure is only made the plainer: that is, *non-resistance of evil*. Christ's own example is doubtless an illustration of his meaning. He was smitten on the cheek. We do not read of his turning the other, but we do read of his *absolute non-resistance*. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. Being reviled, he reviled not again. When he suffered, he threatened not—Isa. 53:7; 1 Pet.2:23.

* * *

"*The words of Jesus are not fully applicable to the present day, because they were spoken to Jews, who were like the members of one family.*"

The words of Christ were truly addressed to the Jews; but his precepts were afterwards made co-extensive with the mission of the apostles, in the words—

"Teach them (all nations) to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:20).

They are therefore equally applicable to us as them and, if there could be a difference, *more* applicable. For if the disciples were commanded to submit to evil at the hands of the Jews who were under the Law and *responsible*, it is much more likely that the precept applies where there is no (divine) law to hold offenders amenable to.

* * *

"To abstain from suing for what is justly due may prove an injustice to others. This is not simply a question of consequences. It is one of principle. Is it right to allow creditors to be unpaid simply thru not appealing to the law for payment of that which is owing by unscrupulous debtors? Such a course might eventually lead a brother to bankruptcy court; then the law would compel debtors to pay."

We must pay our own debts, of course; but not with money illegitimately obtained. If suing at law be illegitimate, a plea of indebtedness to others would have no force in its favour. Consequences can never make a wrong course right. As for what the law would do to debtors in a contingency not to be contemplated in the case of a careful, obedient brother, we are not responsible.

* * *

"If it be absolutely wrong to sue debtors, every brother in business ought to sell only for cash. And no brother ought to be in partnership with one outside the Truth, because the latter would never consent to forgo his legal rights."

These consequences to some extent grow out of the position. The precepts certainly impose great care on in both items. —NOV. 1872

* * *

At the Birmingham Assizes, held at the end of March, an action was brought by one of the editors of the *Fraternal Visitor*¹ (alas for the discrepancy of names and things!) against a Birmingham townsman, to recover the price of a sugar share which the said townsman had covenanted to buy, but which he refused to pay for when the character of the enterprise became apparent. The court decided against the defendant, of course. The reason for mentioning the matter lies here. The editor of the *Christadelphian* had to appear in the case, much to his mortification, and the supposition has been entertained that he was a concurring party to the proceedings, notwithstanding their unscriptural character on the part of such as *profess* subjection to the law of Christ.

It is much the reverse. He refused to attend, on the ground that he could not even appear to countenance such a proceeding as the compulsory exaction of a debt. But a subpoena was issued, and he was obliged to attend and give evidence. What his evidence was wanted for was this: to prove to the Court that there was a genuine sugar company with factory, plant, etc., and that there was no fraud as between the parties in the transaction that was the subject of action.

It was a curious irony that the editor of the *Christadelphian* should be coerced into attendance in a court of law to prove the reality of a company on behalf of one of the editors of a paper which has laboured to create the impression that it was bogus. —MAY, 1889

1. The Fraternal Visitor was the official organ of the Partial Inspirationists (later called Suffolk Street), from whom the faithful had recently had to separate. It appears from various indications in the Christadelphian Magazine that the issue of Suing at Law was part of the background of this separation of fellowship.

* * *

In the following, bro. Roberts is answering an objector. The letter's remarks are too long to give, but their line of argument will be clear from bro. Roberts' answers. It is a very smooth piece of plausible sophistry, trying to make black white.

First of all, the writer lays it down that what the Lord was aiming at in Matt. 5-7 was to inculcate "different motives" from what had previously prevailed. To begin with, this is out of harmony with the fact. The motives inculcated by the Law of Moses were the same as those enjoined by Christ. They are summarily expressed in the words—

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, & thy neighbour as thyself."

It is not the *motive* that is different, but the *form* of the commandments delivered for our obedience. What Christ does in the discourse in question is to *give commandments*. He tells us what we are to do and not to do. It is a legitimate question to ask what commandment he means to convey by a given form of words. But it is not legitimate to go behind the commandment and ask his reason for enjoining it, with any view of *getting away from the*

commandment itself. Obedience is the only part. The Pharisees went behind the commandment about 'father and mother,' and having formed a theory of their own about the 'motive' of it, they used the theory to destroy the commandment, and—

"Made void the Word of God through their tradition" (Matt. 15:6).

There is quite a danger of the same sort in this matter.

There is, doubtless, much of figure in Christ's mode of teaching. At the same time, we must not allow our perception of the figure to obscure discernment of the thing figured. Turning the other cheek, as a figure, cannot mean smiting your neighbour's cheek, as a figure. As a figure, it must mean *submitting to further injury* instead of inflicting injury on your neighbour in return. The 'context,' to which our friend appeals, is conclusive on this point. The context is—

"It hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I (in contrast to this) say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

To whom, by whom, and for what purpose, had it been said—

"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"?

It was said by Moses to Israel as the principle that was to regulate *proceedings at law*, as will be apparent on reference to Ex. 21:22-24. A man suffering an injury was at liberty to see that the same injury was inflicted on his neighbour who caused it to him. But Jesus said it would not be so under his law. Rather turn the smitten cheek.

If it is a 'figure,' it figures the principle of submission to evil, and not the principle of asserting your rights to the detriment of the evildoer, as when you (figuratively) take him by the throat in legal process, and say—

"Pay me that thou owest!"

Paul's assertion of his Roman citizenship when about to be scourged in one case, and after being imprisoned in another, was a purely defensive act, and passive at that. He based no coercion of any kind upon it. He did not bring action to recover penalties, or to enforce his rights. To say that at Philippi he—

"Demanded open restitution and reparation, as far as possible."

—is to misdescribe his action. He asked the magistrates to personally set him at liberty, as his Roman citizenship required. To let him out of prison was not to 'make restitution or reparation.' If he had cited the magistrates to the bar of Caesar (as his political status entitled him to do), if he had asked compensation or demanded their punishment, *then* his action might have been used in justification of that resort to legal compulsions which our friend pleads for.

To say that he 'resisted the evil' by pleading his Roman citizenship is not a correct use of language. To resist evil in the sense forbidden by Christ is to do what 'they of old' did—exact an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. To state a fact (such as that you are a British subject); to ask a question (such as whether it is lawful to arrest a British subject without a warrant, or why the smiter smites) is not resisting evil in the sense forbidden. And this was as far as Paul or Jesus went; and as far as we may go. To *bring an offender to the judges* is what 'they of old time' did, and what Jesus forbids.

Our writer tries to lessen the force of those more circumstantial words of Christ—

"If any man will *sue thee at the law.*"

—by suggesting a milder translation. He says—

"The words 'at the law' are not expressed in the original."

But are the words *signified* in the original? If so, why object? That they are signified in the original our writer himself recognizes in his remarks on 1 Cor. 6:1 further on, where he freely uses the expression 'go to law' as in that case the sense of the original, in which case there is just as much reason for objecting to the translation as in the other (the original is same in both cases). Our writer does not object in the second case, because his argument does not require it. In neither case have we a word-for-word equivalent of the English phrase 'go to law,' but the *idea* is there—compressed into one verb, and that is enough. To what a singular precept does the suggested milder translation reduce the words of Christ!—

"If any man will enquire judgingly of thee concerning the ownership of a coat or other property, if thy title be not clear, give it up; yea, rather give twice as much, rather than detain anything to which thy title is a matter of doubt!"

What is the natural corollary of such a version? Why this—

"If thy title BE clear, do not tamely submit. And if thy neighbour take thy property from thee, use the powers that be to get full restitution of thy rights, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth."

Wherein, in such case, did Christ's precept differ from the practice of 'them of old time'? Were 'they of old time' in the habit of sticking to things to which their title was not clear? Did not the Law make provision for righteous judgment in cases of disputed title?

Nothing but reprehension will be excited in every scripturally enlightened mind by the writer's conclusion that—

"We are at liberty to make use of all the powers that be ordained for our own protection and self-defence (going to law to compel restitution)."

There could not be a more illogical sequence to premises laid down. That:

"The Powers-that-be are ordained of God . . . for the punishment of the evil doer and the protection of those who do well" (Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2).

—is a fact in which scriptural enlightenment has much reason to rejoice; for without the legal institutions of a country, violence would soon run riot, and decent life become an impossibility. But we may thankfully *accept* the protection of these institutions *without using them in the way Christ has forbidden*. We may allow the army to fight the invaders of the country without using the sword which he has forbidden. We may allow the police to guard our houses, or the law to secure us in the possession of what may belong to us, without using the law as an instrument of personal vindication in case of suffering wrongfully.

God rules in the kingdoms of men, and turns them into what shape He pleases. In *this* sense, all their institutions are His instruments, just as Nebuchadnezzar was His 'servant' —Jer. 25:9. But He uses different instruments for different purposes: it is for us to discern our relation to them as defined by the law of Christ. This law does not permit us to resist evil in the sense in which these instruments do. It commands us to submit to evil; to suffer ourselves to be defrauded; to avenge not ourselves; and to do to others as we should like them to do to us. *To go to law is to break ALL these commandments*.

The Corinthians offended so much in the matter as even to go to law with brethren. Paul, condemning the greater crime, needs not to mention the lesser one of bringing lawsuits against the unbeliever. To argue from his silence about going to law with strangers, that he *sanctioned* it, is to ignore all the precepts given to us for our guidance in our intercourse with both men and brethren. 'Sheep in the midst of wolves' defines the whole business. Sheep don't fight wolves.

It is often very inconvenient in business. Still, we *must obey*. And as to the inconvenience, we must labour to minimize it by being careful whom we trust. Saints are in a difficult position in the present evil world. They must not ease the difficulty thru glosses that make void the commandment. It would remove difficulty now, but how about the solemn moment when Christ asks: "Did you do as I commanded?"

—June '89

* * *

"I do feel at liberty to enforce payment of a stranger who is able to pay and won't, nor asks forgiveness of debt I find no command that forbids it, except by inference which is open to question; but I find many explicit commands which cannot be obeyed if just debts are not paid. Besides, I do worse than return evil for evil to those who have lent me money: I must return evil for good.

"What is condemned is 'brother going to law with brother.' The alternative is, submit to the arbitrament of a wise brother. But in the case of a stranger, the only arbitrament is the law of the land to which we are all subject.

"I could easily, as many have done, free myself from my present embarrassments and great anxiety by means of the bankruptcy law. Taking advantage of this law is worse than using the law to help you pay just debts.

"My conscience does not upbraid me for what I have done with law. It has not been out of revenge, nor returning evil for evil, as I understand it."

I admit that Paul's interdict in 1 Cor. 6 has reference to brethren, and that the alternative he recommends is, as you express it, the 'arbitration of a wise brother.' But I cannot admit that in the case of a stranger he allows 'the arbitration of the law of the land,' which *you know is not arbitration* but use of compulsion in its extremest form, for who can resist the law with the army in the background?

There was a reason for his prescribing the judgment by brethren in the case of brethren, because brethren are by profession subject to the law of right; and if they refuse submission to it, Christ has appointed withdrawal by their brethren as the only remedy. This is a passive remedy: it enforces nothing against the offender in the matter of his offence. We have no authority to hand him over to the legal tribunals. We can only stand aside from him as one who refuses that compliance with the law of Christ on which all fellowship is based.

How is it in the case of a stranger? You say 'Use the law.' It is impossible for you to cite precept or command from Christ or the apostles in support of this view. Both the general principles they lay down and the specific directions they give are all against it. The general principles require us to be 'harmless,' to 'do to others as they should do to us,' and to be 'as lambs in the midst of wolves.'

I may appeal to your experience when a writ or summons or any legal process is served upon you, if you do not feel that a bad thing is done to you that distresses you exceedingly, and that your enemy could not take a course that would more grievously afflict you. This being undoubtedly so, you are precluded from employing such a course. It's a course in which you are harmful, not harmless; in which you do to your neighbour what you don't like done to you; in which you act as a wolf among wolves, and not a lamb.

The specific commandments are even more clear—

"It hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth . . ."

This was legal process, as you may see by referring to Exo. 21:22-24.

"BUT I SAY unto you that ye *resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also*" (Matt. 5:38-9).

Is it *possible* that this could mean going to law for redress? It is figurative, but does it not mean the *reverse* of the figure of getting an eye for an eye? Does it not mean "Suffer yourselves to be defrauded rather than employ coercion"? If there's any doubt, Christ's plainer words in Luke settle it—

"If any take away thy goods, *ask them not again.*"

The case is also settled by Christ's own example—

"Who when he suffered threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23).

You know that his example is our law. He said—

"He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be as a man who built his house on the sand"
(Matt. 7:26).

Your argument about the default of others disqualifying you for doing your duty in other lines will not be pressed, I am sure, if it is recognized that coercion is unlawful. It can never be right to do evil that good may come.

NOVEMBER, 1889

* * *

"Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39)

The words are Christ's, and they are plain. The attempt to restrict them to circumstances of persecution for the Truth's sake will not be maintained by those who realize the significance of the context. Christ was not speaking of persecution at all. He was speaking of the legal maxims and practices of the nation. He says (v. 38)—

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

By whom, to whom, and for what purpose had this been said? It was said by Moses to Israel as the principle that was to regulate *proceedings at law*. This will be apparent by referring to Exo. 21:22-24—

"He (the offender) shall pay as THE JUDGES determine; and if any mischief follow, thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc."

When, therefore, Jesus enjoins non-resistance of evil, it is not with reference to persecutors, but with reference to *legal proceedings*, and the ordinary relations of man with man. This is perhaps more evident in the next verse—

"If any man *sue thee at the law*, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (v. 40).

Here is no persecutor but a man who simply wants your property, and tries to dispossess you by legal process.
V.42—

"Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow turn not away."

Surely this is no persecutor, who would take without your leave! The commands may be difficult, but *they are binding upon all who would find Christ's approbation in the day of his great work*. This great work requires great instruments: therefore they are prepared, like well-tempered blades, in furnace heat. —DECEMBER, 1897

* * *

MELBOURNE ECCLESIAL NEWS: We regret that we have had occasion to withdraw from bro. Middleton on account of *his maintaining the principle that he was justified in petitioning before a Gentile court of law for divorce from his wife*. Bro. & sis. Roberts sailed for New Zealand on May 25th. —AUGUST, 1898

Note the specific ground of disfellowship, worded very carefully. Brother Roberts was a member of the Melbourne ecclesia at this time. The notice of his sailing from Melbourne runs right in from the previous item, just as shown above. He was fully in favour of the action, as the following shows—

DIARY OF A VOYAGE: We returned to Melbourne on May 6. The Melbourne meetings are well maintained. Some pain has been caused by the shocking misbehaviour of one brother, and the *highly unscriptural action of another in connection with it, in seeking redress in the Divorce Court*. The incident has discouraged the brethren somewhat. They have not, however, the *cause for shame* that they would have if they tolerated or countenanced *such infractions of the divine law*. When brethren confess their sins and forsake them, they are entitled to forgiveness. But when they defend and vindicate them, they stand in the way of their own mercy.

—SEPTEMBER, 1898

The last 2 items above are a repetition from our August issue, but they are necessarily included here to give a full and balanced picture of bro. Roberts' convictions on this issue; to show that he made no exceptions to the basic law of Christ concerning Going to Law Against Another; and to illustrate the practical, faithful application of this law when a specific case arose.

My Sin Is Ever Before Me **The Failures and Successes of the Man After God's Own Heart**

"Wash thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice"—Psalm 51:2-8

OUR thoughts this morning concern sin. The present is a dispensation of sin. Anything contrary to God's will, or anything out of harmony with His perfect holiness and purity, is sin.

We are here this morning because of sin. The love and sacrifice we commemorate was because of sin—the great Sin Offering—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We have read together 2 Sam. 24. It tells us of David's sin in numbering Israel. Why was it sin just to take a census? Because it was of the flesh and contrary to the will of God.

"God moved David to number Israel" (v. 1).

There is much to be learned from this. God did not *tempt* David, nor move him against his own inclination. How then did He 'move' him to do what otherwise he possibly would not have done?

Here lies the deep lesson. If we toy with sin, if we allow our minds to dwell on the desire for that which is sinful, then God may judicially contrive that our footing may give way, and we may find it impossible to scramble back to safety. God is not mocked. He knows the hearts, and He typically causes the sinner to punish himself.

If we choose evil, even in a small degree, God can and well may blind and confuse us that we go deeper and deeper into the evil, for our own fitting punishment and training, as when Israel lusted for flesh, and God gave them flesh until it nauseated them and caused a plague, and 1000s died, and the place was called *the Graves of Lust*.

This is doubtless the explanation of many of the apparently inexplicable and stupid sins that men stumble into to their own distress. There is no more fitting punishment than to be forced to accept in full and sickening abundance that which we planned to just dabble lightly with, and then pull back—

"As a man sows, so shall he reap."

If only we had the plain, simple common-sense to really *believe* it!

If we have any part in God's purpose at all, then whatever we do wrong, be it large or small, we shall inevitably pay for it in some very unpleasant and appropriate way, usually—as we see in David's case, in the way that hurts us most, and that mocks us with our sin.

Joab was very strongly against the numbering. This was one time where, strangely, the fleshly Joab was right, and the godly David was wrong. We can at times learn wisdom from anyone, however more spiritually-minded than they we think ourselves to be. The practical Joab could see no sense in sinning *unnecessarily*, with no gain from it.

The result was the most destructive plague ever visited on Israel: 70,000 died. But it is beautifully appropriate, and fully in harmony with the deep wisdom of the ways of God, that this sin is made the foundation of future blessing, and is turned into a stepping-stone in the eternal purpose of God.

The scene of the plague, in God's marvellous transmutation, becomes the scene of forgiveness and mercy. The plague was halted when the avenging angel was at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, about to destroy the city. David, in thanksgiving and for an atoning sacrifice of reconciliation, bought the threshing-floor, built an altar, and offered a burnt offering. And God answered by fire from heaven, and the plague was stayed.

This, by all-foreseeing divine providence, happened to be on Mt. Moriah, where Abraham had typically offered his only son, where the Temple was later built, and finally where the one great sacrificial offering for all time was made, that was to halt the raging plague of sin and death, and deliver the Holy City. In the fulness of the appointed time of God's wisdom and purpose, the avenging Death-Angel's hand was turned back, on behalf of all mankind. David said on this occasion—

"This is the House of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chron. 22:1).

And consequently we read (2 Chron. 3:1)—

"Then Solomon began to build the House of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mt. Moriah ... in the place David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite."

* * *

David was a "man after God's Own heart"—a major element of His eternal purpose. Therefore we see the same merciful pattern—divine good out of human evil—in David's other and greater sin: but at terrible cost in suffering and sorrow.

The usual, natural reaction to David's great sin with Bathsheba is that we "just cannot understand how David could do such a thing." Whenever there is anything in Scripture we "cannot understand," it should flash a warning: why cannot we understand? Wherein have we failed in preparing ourselves to understand? Let us in humility examine ourselves and confess our fleshly inadequacies, and not unconsciously assume that our natural capacity to understand is the ultimate standard of judgment.

Paul bluntly told the Hebrew and Corinthian brethren and sisters that there were marvels and glories and beauties and mysteries of God and the Scriptures that he longed to impart to them for their joy and upbuilding, and their deeper and richer communion together—but that they were utterly incapable of comprehending them. Because of lazy spiritual slothfulness, they were dull of understanding; they were mentally retarded in spiritual things—1 Cor. 3: 1-3; Heb. 7:11-14.

When they, thru ample opportunity, should have been teaching these deep things to others, they were—because of sloth & negligence needing to be retaught the first principles themselves. Instead of giving their whole life and energy to divine things as commanded, they gave them to present things; saying of the wonders of God's Word: "It is too deep for us" (meaning, rather, "We are too shallow for it.")

Our natural shallow reaction that we "just cannot understand how David could do such a thing" should open our eyes to many things. It should show us that *we have much to learn*, and perhaps vital to our salvation. If we understood sin and human nature as God understands it, we could clearly understand all instances of sin, and we would be wiser and sadder men.

"We just cannot understand how David could do that!" This is usually a *moral judgment*, also. Translated into what we really mean, we are saying: "*I could never do such a thing! It is unthinkable!*" This is what Peter said: "*I could never deny thee!*" We loudly proclaim our pious shock, which is just a backhanded way of giving ourselves a lift in self-esteem. It's unconscious self-glorification.

Perhaps it would be more profitable to turn the light inward on ourselves: *why* cannot we "understand" how poor weak human beings can grievously stumble? Are *we* so perfect? Our difficulty—our marvel—should be to understand the greatness of God's mercy and patience and love toward constantly-erring man.

But our unconsciously self-satisfied inability to understand the great sin of David—while partly due doubtless to the physical limits of our basic understanding capacity—is principally due to our need for learning and instruction from the Word of God. The more we understand the Word, its message of sin and righteousness, of death & life, then the more our shallow "cannot understand" will change from self-congratulation to a humble, sympathetic fellowship with David in his weakness.

Can we understand why the mighty, fearless Elijah should suddenly flee for his life? Why the great John the Baptist should question and doubt? Why James and John should seek the pre-eminence? And why Peter should curse and swear and deny?

We must look upon David's great sin—as upon the trials of Job, and indeed as upon all the sufferings of Christ—as the necessary fire of affliction to develop them to the highest beauty in God's sight.

We cannot begin to compare ourselves with Job and David—rare giants in the eternal purpose of God—but in our small way we can learn from their experiences the basic lessons of godliness. Job, when his trial was over said "I abhor myself in dust and ashes." So did David.

Sin permeates the constitution of all mankind. It must be burnt out by suffering. And the greater the man, the greater the required suffering—and the greater the resultant beauty of the vessel for God.

David's great sin, and also his lesser ones, were necessary to his development. He had weaknesses to overcome by bitter experience. He had to be tried to the utmost, to learn his own weaknesses, and the mighty power and terrible evil of sin. He had to be taught, by the bitterest experiences, that man—however noble, however capable, however devoted to God, however blessed and used in the purpose of God—is still a very weak, flimsy, erring, precarious creature of flesh, laden with the latent leprosy of sin.

To him was the great promise that the Saviour of mankind should come from his loins, and be known for eternity as his Son. And looking back at his incredible record of faith and courage and suffering, and patience and kindness to his enemies, and his tremendous accomplishments for God in war and government and music and praise, he could almost be entitled to feel that he had *earned* this high distinction in the purpose of God.

And in a limited sense—in a relative, comparative sense—he had. He alone, a boy, had stood in perfect faith when all Israel's mighty men had cowered and trembled before the huge man of the flesh. And from that point on he had served God with unswerving devotion and preeminent distinction; and had been made the medium of the Spirit's deepest and most beautiful songs of praise and holiness.

But he must learn to the fullest and bitterest depths the natural depravity and deceptiveness of the human heart, and the great need for that Saviour who, by the grace of God, was to come thru him—not only to eternally establish his (David's) kingdom, but to conquer and destroy his sin, and the sin that lies at the root of all mankind's sorrow and suffering and evil.

David was not *caused* to sin—either in the numbering or in the case of Bathsheba. But he was *permitted* to sin. He was put in a position where his weakness would be exposed and tested. God could again have sent an Abigail to stop him, if He had so chosen, but this time he was allowed to fall.

Comparing himself with all around him—his faith, his accomplishments, his sufferings, his fortitude and obedience under the extremities of totally unjust persecution by the king and people he had selflessly served; and then his great public honour and recognition by God—he could well feel natural confidence, even complacency, as he settled into his later years: could easily be tempted to relax his guard against the untiring assaults and subtle deceptiveness of sin.

A balance was needed: a thorn in the flesh: something to ever remind him of the pitiful weakness and insecurity of the best and strongest of human nature. This sin changed the whole course and pattern of David's subsequent life, both internally within himself, and externally in his experiences and circumstances—

"My sin is ever before me . . . The sword shall never depart from thine house."

For the eternal future, this bitter experience of failure was a vital stepping stone to greater perfection of character. For the present, it was the end of all joy and comfort and satisfaction in natural things:

'The sword shall never depart': Tamar, Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah: on & on & on.

David's sins tied his hands in dealing with the sins of others, as he had responsibility to do. This is one of sin's worst aspects: it is self-breeding. It hurts others in a continuing chain. He could not deal properly with Amnon, or Absalom, or Shimei, or Joab. How could he punish his sons for what he knew were judgments on his own sin?

David's secret sin is recorded in full sordid detail for all future generations of sinners to leer and mock at. It was necessary in God's purpose and wisdom that it be so. The great men of God in Scripture lived out for us the

realities of life, in both strengths and weaknesses. And all is recorded without concealment or modification, that we may be inspired by the strengths and warned by the weaknesses.

The point is not: how could such a man do such a thing? The point is: *if* such a man *could* do such a thing, how vigilant must we be to constantly strengthen our defences against the deceptiveness of sin. Jesus said to Peter—
"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."
—and Jesus himself, strong as he was, constantly followed this course. But Peter did not see the urgent need. He overestimated himself. "I could never do that!" David may have done the same.

Contemplation of David's sin should carry us deeper and deeper into a comprehension of the hopeless sinfulness of all mankind, and the wonderful wisdom and love of God in the plan of redemption whereby man is—all at the same time—purified, humbled, glorified, and filled with the effulgence of thanksgiving and reciprocal love. That love is in proportion to our recognition of forgiveness—
"To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much" (Luke 7:47).

Then we shall more and more understand how it could happen to such a man, and we shall feel a deep fellow-feeling with him in it all, and we shall be increasingly kind and compassionate and understanding to the sins and failures and weaknesses of all.

We shall not increase our tolerance toward sin. Much the reverse. We shall more and more realize its terrible, destructive evil power; we shall recognize it more and more as the great, common, implacable enemy of us all. And we shall perceive that if a man is sincerely struggling against it, only God can judge the seriousness of his failures, and the victory of his successes. And the more concerned and anxious we shall be, by prayer and study, to fortify ourselves—

"Watch and pray, lest YE enter into temptation."

We say this was a terrible sin—a major sin. When is a sin large or small? Who is to say? Any sin is sin. Any conscious, deliberate sin, even the most trivial, is a complete break in our lifeline of love that unites us to God, and upon which everything depends.

The magnitude of a sin is no direct measure of the heart, or of a man's relative wickedness. A small, mean sin, done consciously and deliberately, and brushed off with a belittling of its seriousness, and with excuses and self-justification when pointed out—can reveal a far more sordid and poverty-stricken state of heart than a great failure that is sincerely and bitterly and openly repented of.

We cannot judge degrees of guilt, or magnitudes of sin. We do not know how severely God is testing a man, or what great work God is preparing him for. We can, and must, determine between factual right and wrong. And we must follow the scripturally-required course in relation to it. But we cannot judge or condemn, we cannot discern motives, or relative degrees of guilt. That is God's prerogative.

It is quite likely, and far more in keeping with his character, that David had no intention of going as far as adultery when he first sent for Bathsheba to visit him. The deadly, downward course had begun, and God was watching and controlling. But David, presuming on his own strength and goodness, *may* have intended to go only so far.

There is much greater pertinence and significance in the lesson for us if it were a matter of presumption on his strength, and of foolish playing with fire, rather than the cold, deliberate, premeditated commission of a vile and despicable sin. Surely few, if any, claiming to be Christ's brethren would deliberately set out to commit a deadly sin. But any could very easily be trapped in a self-made net that began with a very small act of folly.

David doubtless repented, or thought he repented, of the adultery into which he had stumbled. But it is clear that he must have had a completely perverted and self-justifying, concept of the sordid sequence of events that followed, as he struggled to break out of the net that was gradually tightening upon him.

David's whole motive in the subsequent terrible chain of events may have sincerely been to save Bathsheba from shame and Uriah from sorrow—or he may have convinced himself that was his motive.

Or he may have, in his heart, excused himself by blaming Bathsheba, as Adam blamed Eve. And it is quite conceivable that in the development of the events, there was some justification for him so doing, tho we have no reason to assume so. Clearly the *responsibility* was David's. He was the one exclusively called to account and judged.

David was not a deliberate hypocrite. This is the least possible thing we could believe. *Somehow* he was able to square his conscience. He had to have some way of living with himself for that long, dark year before he was exposed. Here is the deceitfulness of sin. It may have been a combination of self-deception on his part with judicial blinding on God's part. And the more time passed without anything terrible happening, or any condemnation from God, the more his conscience would be lulled, and his self-justification confirmed.

But the day of account, tho long delayed, came inexorably at last, just as it always does, and always will.

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Whenever we consider David's sin, we must keep the whole picture of his life in true balance and perspective. It is a glorious picture of a "man after God's Own heart." Habitual uprightness, service, zeal, faith: occasional failings: intense repentance. His subjection to temptation gives more meaning to his tremendous record of faith, for he was a weak mortal man, just like us.

Patently he submitted for weary years to Saul's wicked and ungrateful persecution. He never fought back. He always left the issue in God's hands, content to wait God's good time. God had appointed Saul, and he was the "Lord's anointed." Even in the extremity of self-defence against murderous persecution, he would not harm him.

In assessing David's life, let us try to picture and realize the perils and hardships he endured. During his 20's, when he was hardly yet a man, he was hunted and chased like a criminal from place to place for a period of several years, never knowing where to go or whom to trust, with wives and children to care for, and 600 very difficult and quarrelsome men, with their families, to provide for.

David was a giant: one of the few really great men of all history. He was great in both strength and sweetness: in physical courage, and in spiritual discernment, poetry, music, and psalms.

David is The Psalms, and The Psalms are David. David was privileged to write the songs of praise for the people of God for the whole 3000 year period from his day to the establishment of the Kingdom, and doubtless for the endless ages beyond. Truly the Psalms are prophetically and inspirationally the mind of the Spirit of Christ, but David's own heart and mind were the Spirit's chosen medium.

David is pre-eminently the "sweet Psalmist of Israel"—Israel both natural and spiritual. Clearly the great love and ambition of David's life was the pure service and worship of the God of Israel. He found that worship broken down, scattered, almost non-existent: the neglected Tabernacle in one obscure place, the forgotten Ark in another.

He left it firmly established and thoroughly arranged in careful, organized depth and detail: with a numerous and orderly course of priests, singers and Levites; the Ark brought lovingly to a place of honour at Jerusalem; a magnificent Temple completely planned and designed; and a vast wealth of materials for it assembled. And it would have been built too, if God had permitted him.

The spirit of David was the spirit of song: of praise, worship, supplication, prayer, thanksgiving, adoration. This was his greatest gift to his own generation, and to all subsequent generations of the sons of God. The Psalms of David have ever been the cherished Hymnal of God's people. They express all the joys and sufferings, hopes and fears, praises and supplications, of the children of God of all time.

The Psalms would lose much beauty and power and value for us without the deep spirit of repentance and supplication, and joy in forgiveness and reconciliation, that David's bitter experiences added to them.

David gave life and power to the worship of God in Israel by giving it song. He gave Israel all the necessary exterior framework for faithfulness and inspiration and unity and holiness. We cannot help but think of bro. Roberts' similar vast labours and accomplishments for the people of God in these last days, now all but forgotten in many quarters. And the preparation of our Hymn Book, containing 50 of the Psalms, is one of the most powerful works bro. Roberts did for the Truth and the Brotherhood.

The national provision David set up, the splendid Temple and the impressive worship and service, failed for the majority, and failed soon and miserably. But this has not lessened its value and power for the remnant of grace that has always existed thru the ages. In the providence of God, no one can take from His children the priceless treasure of the Psalms of David.

If we would understand the sad sins of David, their bitter consequences and their glorious aftermath; if we would truly learn their deep lessons for sinners everywhere—let us read and read and reread the Psalms. We have no right to attempt any conclusions concerning David without taking his psalms fully into account. Here he states his case

and bares his heart in terms that should put us all to shame. Let us get the spirit of David, which is the Spirit of Christ—

"O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (119:97).

"My heart and my flesh cry out for the Living God" (84:2).

"My soul thirsteth for Thee: my flesh longeth for Thee" (63:1).

"All my desire is before Thee" (38:9).

"My soul fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (84:2)

"My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments" (119:20).

"One thing have I desired: that I may behold the beauty of the Lord" (27:4).

"With my whole heart have I sought Thee" (119:10).

David's sin manifests the wise and loving working of God—both in the punishment and in the mercy. For His people, God has always combined punishment with hope and reconciliation.

God loved Solomon, and called him Jedidiah, *Beloved of Yahweh*, from the same root as David, *Beloved*. Why, of all David's sons, did God specially choose and love Solomon, son of Bathsheba, apparently the first surviving child of this sin-founded union—choose him for the throne of Israel, as the great royal type of Christ and his Kingdom, and first link in the royal chain to Christ?

We would think it much more in keeping with the principles of holiness to carefully avoid any connection with—and seeming approval of—this questionable union, rooted in sin and lust, and stained with adultery and murder; and rather choose the next king and subsequent lineage from one of David's legitimate and faithfully-acquired wives. Certainly God had a deep purpose and lesson in this for us. And certainly it was not to condone or belittle the dreadfulness of David's sin, which God terribly condemned and terribly punished.

Perhaps it was another beautiful illustration of the divine principle that if there is true repentance, God will bring good out of the evil, after there has been appropriate punishment, *humbly and faithfully submitted to*. When God must punish heavily, He compensates.

Contrast these 2 children of Bathsheba. The first manifested His wrath: it must die, because of David's sin. But Solomon it is especially recorded that God *loved*, and personally named him to commemorate that love. Would it not be to show the fulness of God's forgiveness—the fulness of the restored communion and fellowship?

The fellowship of God was the most important thing in the world to David. It was life itself—

"There is none on earth I desire before Thee."

The especial choice and favouring of Solomon would be a gracious and greatly needed gesture of love from God that reconciliation was now complete. As the wise woman of Tekoah said to David, in words that—like those of Caiaphas—go far beyond the meaning and understanding of the original speaker, even to encompass the whole sweep of God's purpose—

"Neither doth God respect any person: yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him."

God hath, in His love, devised the means: and we meet this morning in worshipful commemoration of it. Let us ever thank Him for it—thank Him with the offering He asks: a living sacrifice. —G.V.G.

WHOM CHRIST WILL ACCEPT—BE NOT DECEIVED

ALL who are called will not be chosen. Those who are to be chosen are distinguished by zeal in the things of the Spirit created within them by the Word *constantly read and thought about*. They are afraid to break the least commandment. They make their individual temporal interests subservient to the will of Christ *in all things*. They are a "peculiar people, *zealous* of good works. Their zeal is not a spasmodic or selfish enthusiasm, but a quiet, steady, inflexible purpose to do the will of God in their short day and generation. —Bro. Roberts, 1875

Current Events Fulfilling Prophecy

U.S. MORALITY: CANAANITES & SODOMITES: The Episcopal Church, which has just begun ordaining women as priests, added a new twist last week: New York's Bishop Moore ordained the Rev. Ellen Barrett, the denomination's first openly committed homosexual priest of either sex. Moore said "Many persons with homosexual tendencies are presently in the ordained ministry" and that Barrett was "highly qualified morally & spiritually to be a

priest." Barrett says her relationship with her lesbian lover is "what feeds the strength and compassion I bring to the ministry." She says "homosexuality can be a good and creative thing." (Tm 1:24).

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The number of unmarried couples living together in U.S. is 8 times what it was 15 years ago. (Nwk 1:10)

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As the TV networks scramble for audiences, they contribute to the coarsening of American life by edging ever closer to pornography of violence and sex. They are pulled along, downward, by movies. TV increases the dosages of shocking material in order to grab the attention of audiences that have become blasé about mayhem in movies.

(Nwk 1:10).

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Young Americans in unprecedented numbers are running away from home to escape a growing epidemic of once unspeakable crimes—incest & child abuse. The number of runaways has doubled in 5 yrs. Incest & other abuse are cited by 40 to 60% of runaways. Because most young girls are afraid to turn in their fathers & brothers as molesters, female victims frequently run away. (USN1:17)

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By the end of January, 43 women will have been ordained priests in the Episcopal Church, as authorized by the church's General Convention. (Tm 1:17)

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1/3 of all U.S. marriages now end in divorce. (Nwk 1:17)

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Whether for profit or, increasingly, for revenge, arson now US's fastest-growing crime: over 100,000 arson fires a year, triple the rate 10 years ago. Arson accounts for 1/2 of all fire damage. Arson for revenge is more & more common. Conviction rate is 1%: that's lower than any other crime. (Nwk 1:24).

It is a dreadful picture, and it would be both frightening & terribly distressing were it not such a wonderful sign of the times: "As it was in the days of Noah." For 2000 years, in the Western world (which has run the whole world), the Bible, though misunderstood has been a check on the worst excesses of the flesh. Now they have cast it aside, and the church is leading the downward trend to depths of corruption we never expected to see.

ANGLICANS OK POPE'S SUPREMACY. Significant step toward overcoming obstacle of papal supremacy was taken last week when official commission of Anglicans & Roman Catholics announced agreement that "in any future union a universal primacy" should be held by the "see of Rome." Split began 4 1/2 centuries ago when King Henry VIII rejected authority of Pope Clement VII so Church of England could grant annulment of his marriage.

It is traditional Catholic doctrine that Christ appointed Peter as the first Pope, & that the papal succession has continued unbroken ever since. The Commission's main conclusion: To unite all Christians, primacy "needs to be realized at the universal level. The only See which makes any claim to universal primacy, and which has exercised it and still exercises it is Rome!" (Tm 1:31)

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Around the world, early reaction to the document underlined its hopeful character. In U.S., Lutheran George Lindbeck noted that the Anglican-Roman Catholic statement is "more advanced" than a similar agreement issued in '74 by a Lutheran-Catholic panel, which had affirmed that "Papal primacy, renewed in the light of the gospel, need not be barrier to reconciliation." The movement toward reconciliation has clearly come further already than any would have predicted a decade ago. (Nwk 1:31)

Now that many of the major Protestant churches accept women as ministers, expectations have been aroused that the Catholic Church might also abandon its tradition of an exclusively male priesthood. Pope Paul chilled those hopes in '75 when he declared such a change would not be "in accordance with God's plan for His church." Nevertheless, delegations of priests, nuns & laity meeting in Detroit last October appealed publicly for ordination of women. Last week the Vatican formally declared that no matter what other churches may do, the Catholic Church "does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination." The decision will endure thru Paul's lifetime, and probably for years beyond. The decision relied heavily on tradition. (Tm 2:7)

The Harlot Daughters are drifting back to Mystery, the Mother of Harlots, just as they must. The Papacy is arrogantly holding its ground, and the now rudderless Daughters must—and are—falling into line. Thru the centuries, the Protestant Churches have held to the divinity and authority of the Bible as their impregnable defence and weapon against the dreadful Papal abomination that has drenched the earth with righteous blood. But now they have cast that defence aside, & have no excuse or argument for rejecting the papal claims. They used to be able to point to their (at least surface) morality and decency, against the priestly corruptions of Rome, but now the pots are blacker than the kettle.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT. Egypt's peasants & hard-pressed middle class who make up 90% of an exploding population of 40 million—had for months grown increasingly bitter over continuing "sacrifice" demanded by their govt. They chafed under commodity shortages, and inflation rising at rate of 37% a year. While they suffered, the other 10% prospered. The rich grew richer under Sadat, who returned property confiscated by Nasser, and made private investment easier in a vain attempt to persuade upper-class Egyptians to put their money into productive enterprises rather than real estate which gives better returns.

Last week the festering resentment broke into the worst riots Egypt has seen since Farouk was dethroned 25 years ago. It was triggered by announcement of up to 50% food price increases. Students and workers in Cairo set fire to police stations, buses and trucks, and attacked govt. buildings. Riot police & the Army finally brought the mobs under control. The official toll was 47 dead and 630 injured, but true count assumed to be higher. Govt. rescinded price increases.

The unrest upset the battered Egyptian economy—the root of the trouble even more. While other Arab nations prosper on oil, Egypt is too poor & too overpopulated to help itself. Uncertainty, & the Arab boycott, has frightened off foreign investment. Agriculture is so feeble that Egypt must import 2/3 of its food at a cost of \$1½ billion a year. (Tm 1:31)

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The riots posed a serious challenge to Sadat's 6-yr.-old govt., weakening him gravely just as he was leading the campaign by moderate Arabs for an over-all peace settlement in the Mideast. The people are well aware that a new breed of fat cats—many of them middlemen in deals with Western firms—were making fortunes; while others grow rich by renting apartments to foreigners for inflated sums. Signs of corruption are everywhere. (Nwk 1:31)

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Riots in Cairo over official food-price increases dealt a heavy blow to Sadat's moderate regime, forcing him to impose a curfew, call out the Army, & rescind vital economic austerity measures. Trouble could not have come at worse time. Under Sadat's direction, a rare Arab unity on peace strategy toward Israel was taking shape. Date for Arab summit in Cairo had been set.

The turmoil frightens conservative Arab regimes that want Egypt to remain in moderate hands. Other Arab leaders, as Assad, may be less certain of Sadat's power & less willing to follow his lead. (USN 1:31)

Sadat has blamed Moscow for stirring up the turmoil, & further alienated himself from his former bosom friend who was so happy to sell him weapons on usury. US promises massive aid to prop him up. He will be tied even more firmly to the West, & may have to bring in much more Western technical assistance. A large part of his problem is a \$10 billion foreign debt, mostly owed to Russia for arms to fight Israel in past wars. The army takes 1/3 of the national budget, while millions exist on the raw edge of starvation. Sadat has tried to rebuild Egypt's economy by moving away from Nasser's socialism toward capitalism & democracy, but "democracy"—especially in poorer countries unaccustomed to it—inevitably breeds corruption, & a widening gap between rich & poor.

The weakness of both Sadat & Egypt have been glaringly exposed, & Israel will now be less likely to feel a need to compromise in the coming negotiations. But we feel Israel and Egypt must become more closely associated. The "treasures of Egypt" (Dan. 11:43) that fall prey to the King of the North may truly be more strategic than economic—but many things could change in the coming year or years. We believe '77 will be very interesting.

RHODESIA PEACE HOPES DIM. Bleak outlook for all southern Africa: bloodshed, chaos, racial violence. Months of unprecedented racial violence inside So. Africa, & rising tide of Black-White confrontation along its borders. Blacks lining up for concerted attack on apartheid: demand right to walk on streets without passbooks, right to vote, buy land, get equal education, organize own unions, take jobs now barred to them. Evidence of White fear is everywhere. Gun sales booming; so are classes in how to use them. (USN 12:20)

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Cuba's Moscow-financed Africa corps, far from shrinking as Castro promised, has grown to almost 20,000, with alarming indications of permanent residence. A Cuban military force, highly trained in use of sophisticated weapons, residing in Angola, available for use anywhere in southern Africa, could tip the balance of power toward the anti-Western, pro-Communist side in one of world's major regions of political competition—the vast tip of the continent which controls the strategic tanker routes for the West's supply of oil. (DetNws 12:29)

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"The deal is off!" With that terse announcement, British negotiator Richard last week formally acknowledged what was already apparent. Rhodesia's Smith had rejected a British proposal for achieving Black rule in 14 months, under a interim British Commissioner. Since the Commissioner would have broad powers to alter the racial makeup of the transition govt., Smith rejected it as "political suicide." He insisted on Kissinger's original proposal of a balanced Black-White Council operating over a 2-yr. period. Richard called Smith's decision "tragic & fateful." Without

