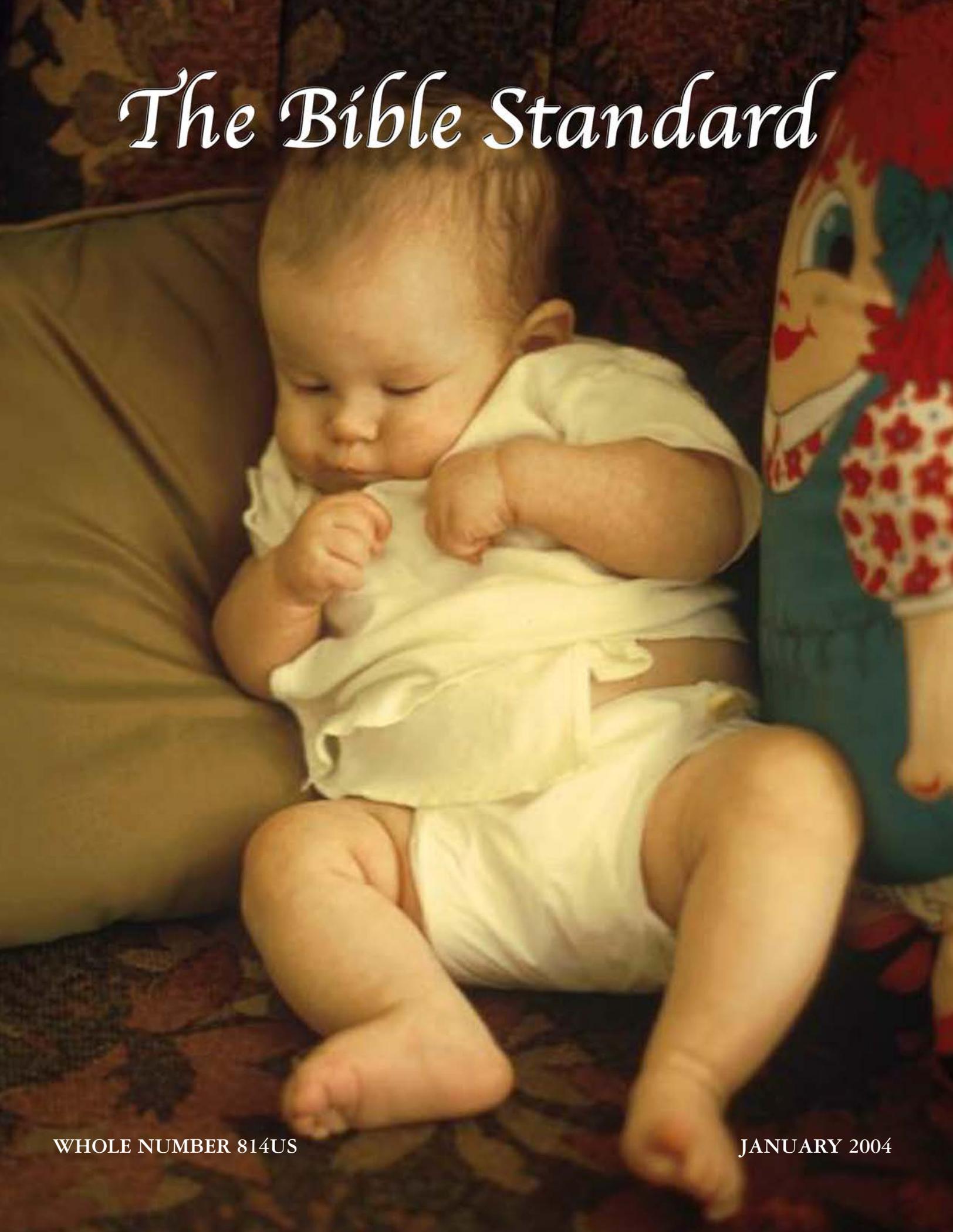


The Bible Standard



WHOLE NUMBER 814US

JANUARY 2004

“Thou crownest the year with thy goodness”

— PSALM 65: 11 —

AS WE REVIEW the leadings of Divine providence in our lives during the year that is past, let God’s goodness and mercy stimulate our faith and confidence in Him as respects the incoming year.

A proper retrospect on our part must surely prompt heartfelt thanks for past blessings, and also stir us to greater trust as to the future, realizing that our deliverance is nearer than when we first believed.

Reflection . . .

It is appropriate to make a personal assessment of our relationship with God at the turn of the year, and ask oneself: How do I stand, Lord? Did the past year draw me closer to you? Was I diligent in studying your Word?

Did I keep your holy will paramount in my life? Above all, did I seek your presence as often as I should — did I commit each day to your charge, and remember to thank you for every blessing at each day’s close? Is my love for you greater than a year ago? Do I love my companions in the faith more than I did a year ago? Are we closer? More understanding?

Less critical? Have I grown more sympathetic and loving even towards those in the world, remembering that Jesus died for them all? Have I been always simple and sincere toward all?

. . . and Renewal

Probably most of us have some cause for regret and feel we should have done better, but a new year is a new opportunity to walk in newness of life. “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12: 2).

As we wait for the establishment of the new heavens and new earth, let us resolve at the beginning of this new year to make it the best year thus far of our lives — the year of largest hopes, of greatest endeavors and, by the Lord’s grace, of largest successes in overcoming the world and its spirit, in conquering self, in glorifying God, and in blessing His people. May God bless us, one and all!

* * *



Bells over Bethlehem

All Scripture references are to the King James Version, unless otherwise stated.

“LIFT UP A STANDARD FOR THE PEOPLE” — ISA. 62: 10

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“Do all things without murmurings and disputings”

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS is one of the most loving of all the church letters written by the Apostle Paul. Apparently this little community of the Lord’s people loved him as fervently as he loved them, and his afflictions on their account bound their hearts to him in lasting gratitude. The letter was written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome, about A.D. 60-64, when circumstances indicated that his death was imminent.

The church at Philippi was the first one established in Europe and had a very humble beginning. Divinely guided to leave Asia and go to Macedonia (Acts 16: 6-10), Paul and Silas looked for opportunities to serve the Lord in this important city. It was not the eminent leaders that welcomed the Gospel message, but a few folk who gathered out of town by a river-side, where a prayer meeting was usually held.

Lydia, a godly woman

A worshipper of God even before Paul arrived at Philippi, Lydia was one who received the Gospel of Christ gladly. Her home town was Thyatira, a city on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea, noted for the production of dyes. She had evidently moved to Philippi to make her living as a “seller of purple.” The Lord opened her heart, and she and her household were baptized, forming the nucleus of the first European Christian congregation.

A strong bond of love was established during those early days between St. Paul and the brethren at Philippi. Danger always attended the missionary efforts of the Apostle and his companions, and on this first occasion he and Silas were arrested and imprisoned on trumped-up charges. On being released and required by the authorities to leave the city, they first went to Lydia’s home and comforted the friends gathered there, before departing.

Practical help to the Apostle Paul

The Scriptures tell of at least four occasions when this church gave not only words of sympathy and cheer, but also financial assistance to support the work of preaching the Gospel. They sent gifts while Paul ministered in Thessalonica and in Corinth. When he was a prisoner in Rome, this loving church did not forget the Apostle, and it was their messenger, Epaphroditus, who brought to him the last touching memorial of their love (Phil. 4: 18).

This dear fellow-servant had been brought “nigh unto death” for the Gospel’s sake, but on his recovery the Apostle Paul sent by him to the church at Philippi the beautiful letter known to us as the Epistle to the Philippians.

“The scope of the epistle is to confirm them in the faith, to encourage them to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, to caution them against judaizing teachers, and to

express gratitude for their Christian bounty. This epistle is the only one, among those written by St. Paul, in which no censures are implied or expressed. Full commendation and confidence are in every part, and the Philippians are addressed with a peculiar affection, which every serious reader will perceive.” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*)

Not to the Philippians only

Paul’s loving letter to the church at Philippi might appear to be no more than the product of circumstance, intended for their blessing only. Its preservation through the centuries is indeed a testimony to the high esteem in which it was held by those early Christians. But their generosity of spirit is also seen, in that the inspiring message, penned by the divinely appointed Apostle of Christ, was cherished and shared with other churches, that its valuable instruction might be spread abroad to bring much-needed comfort and encouragement to the growing household of faith.

And when we consider further how the writings of the Apostles have been preserved from generation to generation, sometimes in the hands of those who devotedly appreciated them, but for a long time — in the “dark ages” — hidden away in the sackcloth of dead languages, we recognize also the beneficent hand of Divine Providence.

Paul speaks to us also

Our circumstances are rather different from those of the early church, yet in principle Paul says to us, as to them, “I have you in my heart” (Phil. 1: 7). He lovingly exhorts us: “Now if your experience of Christ’s encouragement and love means anything to you . . . make my best hopes for you come true! Live together in harmony, live together in love. . . . Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. . . . Learn to see things from other people’s point of view. Let Christ Himself be your example” (Phil. 2: 1-5, *Letters to Young Churches*, J.B. Phillips).

MURMURINGS¹

That the Apostle Paul should speak to the Philippian church of rivalry or personal vanity does not imply that they were guilty of such conduct. Nor does his exhortation that they should “do all things without murmurings and disputings,” suggest that there was a spirit of discontent among them. Rather, they would value this counsel, followed as it was by the best of reasons for observing it: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2: 15).

¹ Greek, *goggusmos*, denotes grumbling, grudging.

Yet the danger was as real then, as it is today. Paul had firsthand experience of the tendency of his own countrymen to *murmur*. The word means to complain, to grumble, to rebel. A *murmuring* is often a continuous, low, indistinct sound, suggesting an undercurrent of discontent. It may amount to little more than a tendency to tolerate a situation with less than good grace and good cheer. Or it may be more active and vocal, as when, delivered from slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel soon grumbled resentfully at the hardships attending their new-found freedom.

Murmuring against the Lord

The people of God, who accept Him as their Guide and Leader, should never complain, and Paul reminds us that the murmuring of the Israelites on that occasion carries a lesson for us. Their complaint was on account of the manna, for which they had at first been so thankful. This divinely provided “bread from heaven” (Ex. 16: 4) had become their staple diet. It could be crushed into flour, boiled or baked, made into pancakes with a honey-like flavor and a suggestion of olive oil. Inventive and resourceful as the women might have been in varying the manna-based diet for their families, it was inevitable that many would weary of it and hanker after the “flesh pots” of Egypt.

The grumbling started among the mixed multitude who had thrown in their lot with the Israelites and come away from Egyptian oppression. “Oh, for a few bites of meat! Oh, that we had some of the delicious fish we enjoyed so much in Egypt, and the wonderful cucumbers and melons, leeks, onions and garlic! . . . and day after day we have to face this manna!” (Num. 11: 5, 6, *Living Bible*). The discontent was contagious and the people of Israel allowed their minds to grow so vexed that they wept like children as they thought of what they had left behind. It was with them, as it often is with us, that “distance lends enchant-

ment to the view.” Looking backward, they forgot the trials and difficulties of their bondage in Egypt, and like peevish children allowed their fancies to affect their reason.

Their daily bread

The “wilderness of wandering” was not entirely a barren desert. It was, rather, a wild, uncultivated region with extensive rocky mountainous areas, and deep valleys where water courses, varying in abundance with the changing seasons, supported the growth of herbs and shrubs, adequate to provide pasture for the flocks and herds — “very much cattle” (Ex. 12: 38) — brought from Egypt. But it was the scarcity of water and food for humankind that resulted in the Lord’s miraculous provision of water from the smitten rock (Ex. 17: 6), and the constant supply of manna from heaven. And so He gave them their daily bread.

Yet, the Apostle Paul tells us, some complained — and “with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness” (1 Cor. 10: 5, 10). He describes their experience of 40 years wandering as “the provocation, the day of temptation in the wilderness,” the Lord saying: “I was grieved with that generation, . . . They . . . err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. . . . They shall not enter into my rest” (Heb. 3: 8, 10, 11).

WHAT IS DISCONTENT?¹

Many of us may have in our natural dispositions a tendency to grumble, to complain, to repine — to be *discontented*. Appalling thought! That we, of all people, who have been carried so carefully through the wilderness of this present evil world, attended by the daily providences of our loving Lord — that we should *murmur* must surely grieve Him!

Of course there are times when we chafe at life’s adversities, perhaps failing to remember that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8: 28). Our discontent may be little more than an occasional spell of low

THE MANNA

Heb. *man-hu*, “What is that?” — the name given by the Israelites to the food miraculously supplied to them during their wanderings in the wilderness (Ex. 16: 15-35). The name is commonly taken as derived from *man*, an expression of surprise, “What is it?” but more probably it is derived from *manan*, meaning “to allot,” and hence denoting an “allotment” or a “gift.” This gift from God is described as “a small round thing,” like the “hoar-frost on the ground,” and “like coriander seed,” “of the colour of bdellium,” and in taste “like wafers made with honey.” It was capable of being baked and boiled, ground in mills, or beaten in a mortar (Ex. 16: 23; Num. 11: 7).

If any was kept over till the following morning, it became corrupt with worms; but as on the Sabbath none fell, on the preceding day a double portion was given, and that could be kept over to supply the wants of the Sabbath without becoming corrupt. Directions concerning the gathering of it are fully given (Ex. 16: 16-18, 33; Deut. 8: 3, 16). It fell for the first time after the eighth encampment in the desert of Sin, and was daily furnished, except on the Sabbath, for all the years of the wanderings, till they encamped at Gilgal, after crossing the Jordan, when it suddenly ceased, and where they “did eat of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more” (Josh. 5: 12).

This manna was evidently altogether a miraculous gift, wholly different from any natural product with which we are acquainted, and which bears this name. The manna of European commerce comes chiefly from Calabria and Sicily. It drops from the twigs of a species of ash during the months of June and July. At night it is fluid and resembles dew, but in the morning it begins to harden. The manna of the Sinaitic peninsula is an exudation from the “manna-tamarisk” tree (*Tamarix mannifera*), the *el-tarfah* of the Arabs. This tree is found at the present day in certain well-watered valleys in the peninsula of Sinai.

The manna with which the people of Israel were fed for forty years differs in many particulars from all these natural products. Our Lord refers to the manna when he calls Himself the “true bread from heaven” (John 6: 31-35; 48-51). — *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*

spirits, possibly born of boredom, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy, and often resulting from an awareness of our own faults and failings.

Even the saintly Paul was afflicted. “The good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7: 19, 24). Yet this kind of dissatisfaction may have a salutary effect, in spurring us to greater efforts to overcome character defects. Certainly Paul, near the end of his life, could say with assurance: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day” (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8).

And as an understanding parent comforts a fretful child, so our loving Heavenly Father forgives our human failings and restores our reason. With the psalmist, we can say: “I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee” (Psa. 116: 6, 7).

He helped me! God is ever merciful to forgive our lapses through human weakness, and lifts us up out of our despondency, if we only allow Him to do so.

The dangers of becoming a malcontent

Persisted in, however, the spirit of discontent must be regarded as a serious character fault, totally unbecoming to any who consider themselves to be followers of the Lord Jesus. It is a *dangerous condition* which abuses the goodness of God and threatens its possessor’s eternal destiny: “They shall not enter into my rest.”

Murmuring — whether audibly, or in the secret thoughts of the heart, is an unmistakable indication that all is not well with us in our relationship to our Lord and Savior, and to our brethren in the faith. What are the implications?

- If we are dissatisfied with what we have, we are telling the Lord — Who reads our hearts — that we are ungrateful for His provision for our needs. Are we questioning His goodness? Are we doubting His wisdom? Are we *grieving* Him, as He was grieved with that generation in the wilderness? Can it be that — without realizing it — we are hurting our loving Heavenly Father?

- The person with a perpetual gripe is usually quite vocal about it, although the simmering-under-the-surface kind of discontent is also sensed by others. There is often an element of accusation in such an attitude, as if to say: Why are *you* so favored? Why does God smile on you but let me suffer? Others are thus made to feel guilty about their own good fortune and happiness, and it is painful to them. Such an atmosphere can ruin family harmony, destroy friendships, and disturb the blessed peace of Christian fellowship within a congregation of the Lord’s people. They are all hurt.

- Discontentment hurts *ourselves*, if we harbor it. Our complaint may relate to material things. Are we being tested as to the genuineness of our consecration to sacrifice

earthly interests and give our all to God’s will? Or perhaps it is our situation as to family, work colleagues, neighbors, that we find too irksome? Or maybe there are privileges of service we covet, but which are denied us, and we are aggrieved, we complain. Having acquired a reputation as a *malcontent*, we alienate even our Christian friends, and find ourselves lonely. Worst of all, we lose that rest of heart and mind that is the inheritance of God’s faithful people (Heb. 3: 18). If we are chronically discontented, then by our own ingratitude we too are deeply hurt.

Little wonder that the Apostle Paul, having the Philippian brethren in his heart, desired their continued peace and harmony, and thought it not unwise to exhort them to “Do all things without murmurings.”

And our Lord Jesus assuredly has us in His heart: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. . . . I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15: 9, 17). Like our Lord, we are to be peacemakers, keeping “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4: 3). Doing all things without murmuring, we shall find “How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psa. 133: 1).

CONTENT— BUT NOT COMPLACENT

There is a sense in which it might be argued that the Lord’s people should not be *too contented* with present conditions. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines discontent as:

- (a) Absence of contentment; dissatisfaction.
- (b) A restless longing for better circumstances.

The grumbling kind of discontent or dissatisfaction we have described above. But the restless longing for better things is an inherent feature of the Christian hope. It is no idle dream. It is no Utopian fantasy quite impossible of realization. How often have the Lord’s people been mocked for preaching “pie in the sky” — accused of unrealistically clinging to an illusory promise of some future good!

Utopia was the title of the book by Sir Thomas More (1516) that described an imaginary island representing the perfect society. Its literal meaning from the Greek is *no place*.

Conversely, the Scriptures teach that *every place* — the whole earth — shall be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Psa. 72: 19; Hab. 2: 14). Peter echoes the declaration of God’s intention given through the prophet Isaiah (65: 17), and says that “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3: 13).

This will be the perfect society. It is indeed visionary, but it is founded on the sure Word of the Lord, and the establishment of such conditions has been the substance of our prayers from generation to generation: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6: 10).

The Apostle Paul also extends the vision to include heaven: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . hath purposed . . . that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all

*These things shall be: a loftier race
Than e'er the world hath known shall rise,
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of knowledge in their eyes.
Nation with nation, land with land,
Unarmed shall live as comrades free;
In every heart and brain shall throb
The pulse of one fraternity.*

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS, 1840-1893

things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph. 1: 3, 9, 10).

Israel's experiences were our examples

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul recounts the events of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness, and tells us that these things were our examples. They prefigured the experiences of a world of mankind that would lose its way, lose hope, and lose life, until God would send a deliverer to lead them to their place of eternal rest and happiness.

The rebellious generation that died in the wilderness, never seeing the promised land, were succeeded by a somewhat humbler people who, under the leadership of Joshua, took possession of their rightful inheritance. The progress of Israel from conditions of slavery to the status of full nationhood, while divinely ordained, owed much to the vision of the few among them who trusted in the promises of God, desired their freedom and their dignity, and stirred themselves to respond to His leadings.

This is an example of a quite proper dissatisfaction with servitude to sin and all its oppressive task-masters. It reveals the latent — or not so latent — nobility in some of humankind, that desires to stem the tide of degradation and lift the human race to a better relationship with their Creator and with one another. Such men and women cannot but be discontented with evil conditions, and they see in our Lord Jesus the Deliverer — a greater than Joshua — to show us the way.

From discontent to achievement

Thomas Edison said: "Restlessness is discontent, and discontent is the first necessity of progress. Show me a thoroughly satisfied man and I will show you a failure." It was Oscar Wilde's opinion also that "Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation."

The spirit of this present age is the spirit of restlessness, which, taken to extremes, can blind one to the joys of life — mercifully, still to be found — and destroy peace of mind. Yet that restless longing which desires better things is a spur to activity, and history records the efforts and the

achievements of many noble characters whose discontent with prevailing poverty, oppression, and injustice, has brought relief to their fellow men and women.

Such discontent may arise purely out of humanitarian motives, or it may be based on Scriptural ideals of love for one's neighbor. It has nothing in it of peevish complaint, but is a genuine urge to rise above the conditions of this "present evil world" and a willingness to strive to that end.

DISPUTINGS²

The Scriptures record occasions when the disciples "disputed" in the sense of contending for the faith. Stephen entered into discussion with men of certain Jewish sects, "and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6: 9, 10). So they put him to death.

Paul disputed — reasoned — with the many philosophers, students, and others who gathered daily in the market place at Athens. They gave him a hearing for a while, but his witness as to the resurrection of the dead was more than they could swallow, and eventually he left them to their false theories and fancies. But Paul's ministry there was not without fruit, and a nucleus of believers was founded in that great city (Acts 17: 17-34).

At Ephesus, the Apostle Paul spent three months *reasoning and persuading* — disputing — in the synagogue. When fierce opposition put a stop to this witness, Paul withdrew, taking many believers with him, and they continued their debating at a schoolroom made available by one named Tyrannus (Acts 19: 8, 9). *Disputation* is defined in *The American Heritage Dictionary* as:

"debate; an academic exercise consisting of a formal debate or an oral defense of a thesis."

As we have seen, it is somewhat along these lines that disputing is proper for the Lord's people. It is a means of earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

Contentious argument

In the modern world a dispute is generally understood to be a disagreement or a quarrel, as between workers and their employers, or concerning boundaries, property rights, racist problems, and a multitude of other grievances.

The exhortation to do all things without disputings evidently warns against permitting a disagreeable, quarrelsome spirit to arise among the Christian congregation. Even the most well developed of the Lord's people can find themselves, almost unawares, over-zealous in clinging to some privilege or status, contentious in defending some point of view, and unwilling to resolve differences by the process of godly reason.

Our Lord Jesus Himself had occasion to administer a gentle rebuke to the disciples. When in Capernaum He asked them, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for . . . they

² Greek, *dialogismos*, denotes discussion, debate, dispute.

had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest" (Mark 9: 33, 34).

Of course He was quite aware of their argument, and impressed upon them that anyone wishing to be the greatest must be the least — the servant of all. Illustrating His lesson, He took a young child in His arms and explained that whoever humbled himself and became as a little child, would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Privileges of service

It was natural, humanly speaking, that those who had forsaken their earthly careers and parted from family and friends to follow the Master, should wish for some assurance as to their future reward. And it was not surprising if they betrayed at times a trace of proprietorial protectiveness, as when they found a stranger casting out demons in Jesus' name, and forbad him (Mark 9: 37-40). Again, the Master put the matter in the proper perspective and showed a breadth of love and generosity that would take His disciples a lifetime to develop.

Many centuries earlier, Moses had occasion to teach a similar lesson. It was reported to him that of the 70 elders appointed to relieve him of some of the burden of his work, all of whom received the Lord's spirit to guide them, two were apparently prophesying independently in the camp of Israel. Urged by Joshua, then a young man, to forbid them, Moses' reaction was unexpected: "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Num. 11: 24-29).

There is a lesson here for us also. While the Christian message has been variously interpreted through the centuries and still goes out in all its simplicity and in all its complexity to a largely unheeding world, none of us has any proprietary right in preaching the Gospel. If we should consider our understanding as being more complete, more reasoned and enlightened, it is not our prerogative to assume any superiority over the ministry of others who bring men and women to Christ, who bring practical and spiritual comfort to others, and who lay down their own lives in the service of the Savior.

DO ALL THINGS . . .

The church at Philippi did not neglect their privileges of serving the Lord's cause, either directly, or by supporting Paul and other prominent ministers with prayer, hospitality, and money. Such was the bond of love between them, that they would hunger for news of Paul, and take great comfort from his words of commendation and exhortation. *Do all things* — be diligent, be watchful, not idle Christians, content to leave the labor to others, but earnestly working together in peace and harmony for the common cause.

With such generosity of spirit, our Philippian brethren would not begrudge our sharing in their joy, taking to ourselves the Apostle's wise counsel, and making it our special concern for the year ahead.

The Way Forward

An ungrateful, complaining heart manifests itself in a spirit of altercation. Such a disposition damages our relationship with God and our fellows. Conversely, our gratitude to God and a happy resignation to His will and pleasure at His dealings with us, overflows into all of our relationships. We will be kinder, more merciful, more generous, and less contentious with our brethren as a result. Here, then, is a formula we can use for the coming year. Let us strengthen our resolve along these lines.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless . . . without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2: 14, 15, 13).

* * *

The hymn for the year is 324 in Hymns of the Millennial Dawn, "When all thy mercies, O my God, My rising soul surveys."

1. When all thy mer - cies, O my God, My ris - ing
soul sur - veys,..... Trans - port - ed with the
view I'm lost In won - der, love and praise.....

1. When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise.
2. O, how can words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare
That glows within my inmost heart?
But thou canst read it there.
3. Through all eternity, to thee
A grateful song I'll raise.
And my eternal joy shall be
To herald wide thy praise.

— Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

JEOPARDY

THE YEAR THAT HAS JUST CLOSED saw the anniversary of the achievements by three important risk-takers whose bravery shaped the face of the modern world.

Sir George Cayley (1773-1857) and the Wright Brothers, Wilbur (1867-1912) and Orville (1871-1948), who made it possible for man to fulfill his ancient dream of flight. Cayley, now regarded as “the father of flight,” developed the first fixed-wing aircraft, a glider, in 1853. However, it was his unwilling coachman who became airborne in Cayley’s glider. After the brief but anxious flight over Brompton Dale, Yorkshire, he is reported to have said, “Please, Sir George, I wish to give notice. I was hired to drive and not to fly.”

The industrious Wright Brothers, sons of a bishop, studied Cayley’s theories, and after several years of experimentation added a 12 horse-power engine to their airframe and in 1903 flew a distance of 120 feet.

We tip our hats to the trailblazers of all sorts — the climbers of mountains, the explorers of oceans, the innovators of new technologies — those whose determination in the face of dangers and difficulties has opened up grand and new horizons. We owe much that is interesting, useful, and pleasant in this world of ours to their efforts.

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained”

This old adage speaks to the risk-taker in all of us. But in practice, for most of us, peace and safety is the order of the day. Unlike the sturdy adventurer, we do not enthusiastically put ourselves in harm’s way. We prefer to play it safe, to get our excitement vicariously by watching others take chances. And yet the tales of these bold pioneers hold great fascination for us — of such individuals are legends made. Triumph over adversity — any story worth reading must contain conflict, the hero or heroine up against great danger, chased by the possibility of defeat in death. It is this sort of tension which makes for a gripping read, and is the component of all great novels and worthwhile biographies.

The Hero of Heroes

But no one ventured more or *risked* more than Christ Jesus. Leaving the security of His heavenly home He divested Himself of His glorious creative powers, and the happy fellowship of His Father, and took on human nature.

The certainty of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy can obscure the uncertainties which present themselves before the fulfillment occurs. That Jesus was in prophecy assured a

victorious outcome did not by any means lessen the jeopardy He was in during His ministry.

The doctrine of the Divinity of Christ while on earth obscures this fact. If Jesus were God — the Second Person of the Godhead — there would, of course, be no risk at all in the undertaking. In such a case He could not help but be victorious. And His suffering and dying would be only an elaborate drama — a mere fiction. But in the light of Scripture we may safely assume that His victory was *not* assured, and that there was the real and present danger that

He might . . . *fail*.

Hazards for the Son of Man

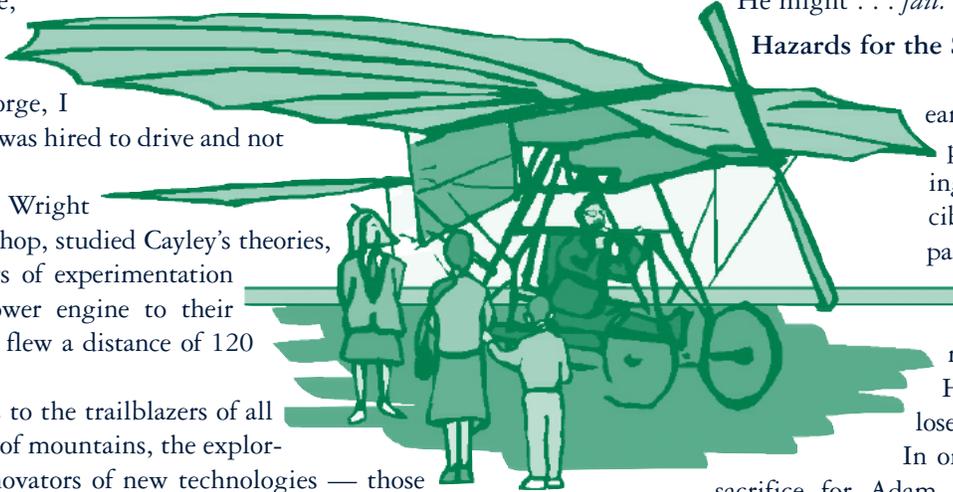
Jesus while on earth was not all-powerful or all-knowing. He was not invincible nor immune to pain and suffering. Nor was He free from the fear that He might disappoint His Heavenly Father and lose His life.

In order to be a ransom-sacrifice for Adam and all the human family which sprang from Adam, Jesus not only had to be a perfect man, He had to *live* perfectly. Additionally, as a Jew He had to comply with the Mosaic Law. He bore the prospect of the cross with steady joy, so fully immersed in God’s will was He. And He rejoiced at the prospect of returning to fellowship with the Father in Heaven when His mission was accomplished. But there was much for Him to do before that could be realized.

The possibility of failure was too awful to contemplate. And yet He must taste of the bitterest dregs of sorrow before being adjudged worthy of the office of Savior. He confronted the horrifying prospect of failure in the Garden of Gethsemane when He gave way to doubt, and questioned His own faithfulness. In His anxiety He sweated blood. It was not the fear of the suffering which gripped Him, but the trepidation that He might fail to maintain His integrity through the experience, and spoil His sacrifice. Heb. 5: 7 tells us that He was heard in His fear, and God sent an angel to reassure Him.

We may . . . adore him with silence whose grief had nothing in common in it to that of other men, and is not to be estimated according to the measures of human miseries. It was ‘a weight of wo, more than whole worlds could bear.’

— Adam Clarke, Commentary on Heb. 5: 7



Learning Obedience

Verse 8 of the same chapter reads:

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

Here we see the necessity of Christ's sufferings — that if He would be the Savior of all, He must be an understanding and compassionate Savior (Heb. 2: 17). It is evidently in God's scheme of things that character must be developed and faithfulness demonstrated by courage under pressure. In this Christ was victorious and was elevated to the royal right hand of His Heavenly Father.

How Much Are You Willing to Risk?

What hardship would we be prepared to endure for the Master's cause? Would we, as the hymn says, "blush to speak his name"? Do we hide our Christian testimony to avoid ridicule or persecution? Do we fear being seen as "too religious" or fanatical?

In this world in which Christian standards are being swept aside and relegated to the margins of society, it is

especially important that we hold fast our integrity and uphold the principles and teachings of the Scriptures. Few of us will be persecuted as in olden days, but we may be called upon to resist or denounce ungodly conversation or behavior in our local sphere of influence, wherever that may be — in the workplace, in our community, and, yes, even in our family.

The heart of the Christian should be as the heart of Christ Himself: dedicated to the will of the Heavenly Father and joyful in the privilege of being accepted as His own, of being His children.

We may never hear our name called among the ranks of the great and accomplished and the brave of this world. But we have a living Savior Who suffered and died and rose that we might have peace with God now and the promise of eternal life to come. We have the One who hazarded all for us. Let us be diligent in repaying Him with our little all.

* * *

of interest . . .

The Anglican Church in Southeast Asia has announced that it will suspend ties with its sister church in the United States following its appointment of the first openly homosexual bishop.

Last month, the Primates of the Global South, the leaders of an estimated fifty million Anglicans in the developing world, issued a statement deploring the appointment. But the Anglican province of Southeast Asia, which is known for its conservative outlook, has now gone further.

Church leaders from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Nepal voted unanimously for the suspension of ties at a special meeting in Malaysia last month. The leader of the province, Archbishop Yong Ping Chung, says same sex unions are against nature, Biblical teaching, and church doctrine. He says Anglicans in Southeast Asia will remain in fellowship with those in the United States who oppose Bishop Robinson's appointment, but official links with Episcopalian churches in America will be broken until the bishop is either removed from office or steps down.

— *British Broadcasting Corporation*

The Catholic Church commissioned its first survey on sexual child abuse among its own. Having taken two years to complete, its findings are found in a 332-page report entitled *Time to Listen*. Nearly 1,300 people were interviewed, all from the Irish Republic, including seven abuse victims and eight clergymen convicted of sexual abuse crimes. More than 75% felt that the Church has not dealt properly with the sexual abuse issue. 72% said they believed priests had been unfairly judged, but public satisfaction with the Church as an institution stood at just 44%.

The report says that 3% of convicted sex abuse offenders in Ireland are clerics and that most abuse is carried out within the home. However, victims' groups believe the incidence of abuse carried out by priests is higher. The report also found that the Church's response often lacked compassion, and legal concerns had taken priority over pastoral care. A number of bishops admitted that anxiety about the scandal which might ensue sometimes took precedence over compassion when abuse cases were reported to them.

One of the report's authors, Helen Goode, said a standardized approach, such as a code of conduct, was needed to deal with any complaints of abuse. She also said it was important that all clergy have some management training in relation to dealing with complaints.

— *British Broadcasting Corporation*



“IN MEEKNESS CORRECTING THE OPPOSERS”

Q Please explain the phrase: “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (2 Tim. 2: 25).

A The context of this verse (vs. 24-26) reads: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

The above translation from the King James Version does not portray the Apostle Paul’s thought quite as well as other translations. The *Emphatic Diaglott* by Benjamin Wilson renders it: “In meekness correcting the opposers.” The Apostle here addresses the Lord’s servants and gives them advice on how to deal with those who oppose them and the Gospel message they preach.

When the Lord’s servants are opposed, Paul does not advise that they respond with bitterness, wrath, sarcasm, combativeness, strife, or pride. On the contrary, he encourages them to instruct and correct the opposers in meekness.

We may define meekness as mild submissiveness of mind, heart, and will. A meek individual is humble and teachable, but not necessarily a weak person. The Scriptures show that Jesus and Moses possessed a high degree of meekness, yet both were anything but weak (Matt 11: 29; Num. 12: 3). For more insight on meekness as it applies to 2 Tim. 2: 25, please see *The Bible Standard*, September 2003, pp. 101, 102.

The Benefits of Meekness

Why does the Apostle stress that one should respond to opposition with meekness? The answer is in the last part of verse 25 and in verse 26:

If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

The Christian’s attitude toward opposers should be one of helpfulness, the object being to help them to recover themselves, to an acceptance of God’s Word, and to freedom from the influence of the Adversary. Though some opposition may be more or less wilful, most of it is in the nature of blindness or ignorance, something that the Apostles Peter and Paul recognized (Acts 3: 17; 2 Cor. 4: 4).

To respond to opposition in a belligerent manner has the natural tendency to make the opposer more firm in opposition and can thwart our effort to be of help. On the other hand, a

gentle response often has the opposite effect. The end result is greater fruitfulness in serving the Lord, His Word, and one’s fellow man.

One thing that should help us to remain meek and humble is to remember that we ourselves may have, at one time, been in opposition to the Lord, His Word, and His people. Even if this is not the case, there are Biblical and historical examples of opposers who, because of the Lord’s grace and mercy, have been transformed from enemies and opposers to friends and supporters. The Apostle Paul is perhaps the classic example, and his experience assuredly helped qualify him to address the Lord’s servants in this way.

IS THE SOUL A SEPARATE ENTITY?

Q Matt. 10: 28 reads: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Does this Scripture prove the soul to be a separate entity?

A A surface reading of this verse might seem to support the commonly accepted belief that the soul is a separate entity which resides within every human being, that the soul is the real essence of intelligent being, whereas the body is merely its covering or shell. Most people believe that at death the soul is freed from the body, and goes to heaven or a place of suffering or torment.

It is held by many that the soul is immortal — undying. The text under consideration, however, disproves that thought, for it plainly states that God can destroy both body and soul.

The True Meaning of the Soul

Gen. 2: 7 sheds light on the matter: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

God’s creation of man is described here. The combination of the body with the vitalizing breath made man a *living soul* — a sentient being. (The Old Testament Hebrew word *neh-plesh*, often translated soul as it is in Gen. 2: 7, and its corresponding New Testament Greek word *psuche*, both mean sentient being.) From this verse, and based on the general context, we recognize that man does not *have* a soul, but that he *is* a soul, and that it consists of two parts: a body and the breath of life.

When the breath of life is separated from the body from any cause, the sentient being (soul) dies — stopping thoughts and feelings of every kind. The body returns to the dust, while the spirit, or breath of life — which man holds in common with all air-breathing creatures — returns to God who imparted it to Adam in the first place (Eccl. 12: 7).

Had God made no provision for man's future life by a Ransom, our Lord Jesus, and a promised resurrection, death would have been the end of all hope for humanity (1 Cor. 15: 12-18). His Plan, however, provides for the resurrection of the Church (at the end of the Gospel Age) and the world (in Christ's coming Kingdom).

The Soul as Applied to Matt. 10: 28

In Matt. 10: 28, our Lord uses the word "body" in the sense of our present life, and the word "soul" in the sense of our future life. He is saying that we are not to fear man, who at most can take away only our present life, which is already under sentence of death. On the other hand, no man could take away or endanger our opportunity for eternal life. Conversely, we are to fear God, Who could destroy our hope for eternal life if we were to prove unworthy of life.

The word "hell" in our text is the translation of the Greek word *Gebenna*, defined here by Jesus as a place of destruction, not a place of torment. In a larger sense it refers to the Second Death: utter and everlasting destruction, with no hope of a resurrection.

The *Emphatic Diaglott* by Benjamin Wilson offers a good translation for Matt. 10: 28: "Be not afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot destroy the life; but rather fear Him who can utterly destroy both life and body in Gehenna."

For further information on the soul, please request our free booklet, *What is the Soul?*

ADVOCATE OR MEDIATOR ?

Q In the Scriptures, Jesus is sometimes spoken of as an *advocate* (1 John 2: 1) and other times as a *mediator* (Heb. 8: 6). Is there a difference?

A According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, the three definitions for the noun *advocate* are:

1. One that argues for a cause; a supporter or defender
2. One that pleads in another's behalf; an intercessor
3. A lawyer

These definitions accurately describe Jesus' office as an Advocate, an office He has exercised during the Gospel Age. This office has not been directed toward the world in general, but only toward the *faith class* — those who have sought to draw near to God. This class has taken the steps of repentance for sin, faith in Christ, and consecration to God.

In the eyes of God, however, the entire world of mankind, including the *faith class*, is viewed as law-sentenced convicts, under condemnation to death, due to father Adam's sin and subsequent condemnation to death, which all mankind has inherited (Rom. 5: 12).

This is where Jesus' office as Advocate comes in (1 John 2: 1). We can think of it as a court scene: God is the infallible Judge, Divine Justice is the Law, and the convict has already been sentenced to death. Jesus enters the High Court of the Universe and, standing before the Judge, pleads forgiveness for the repentant, believing, and consecrated convict. He agrees that the sentence of the Law was just, but He also presents to Divine Justice His perfect human merit as sufficient to meet the Law-condemned convict's penalty. By imputing His merit on behalf

Had God made no provision for man's future life by a Ransom (our Lord Jesus) and a promised resurrection, death would have been the end of all hope for humanity (1 Cor. 15: 12-18).

of the believer, He satisfies the Law against the convict, enabling him to go free.

Jesus' Office as Mediator is Future

A *mediator* is one who steps in between two parties who distrust each other, but who desire to enter into a mutually beneficial contract. The mediator guarantees each party that the other will live up to its side of the agreement.

With this definition in mind, we can see that Jesus' office as a Mediator is quite different from His office as an Advocate. He has not exercised His office as Mediator during the Gospel Age, but will do so during His Kingdom on the earth. The Mediator office functions between the *unbelief class* — those who, since Adam's fall, have remained enemies of God (1 Tim. 2: 4-6) — and God.

When the race of mankind comes back from the dead in the Kingdom they will be imperfect. God will offer to give eternal life to the *unbelief class*, if they will obey Him perfectly; the *unbelief class*, on the other hand, will avail themselves of the offer if He will give them that blessing — on fulfillment of certain conditions.

The problem is that neither party will trust the other to keep its side of the contract. God, knowing that fallen man cannot obey His Law, will distrust their promise of obedience; the *unbelief class*, because of their unbelief, will not believe that God will keep His promise.

This is where the Mediator (Jesus, the Head and the Church, His Body) will step in. The Mediator will guarantee the *unbelief class* to God by:

1. presenting Jesus' perfect human merit to God, making good mankind's Adamic imperfections; and
2. by promising to bring the willing of the world up to perfect obedience and destroying the unwilling among them.

The Mediator will also guarantee God to the *unbelief class* by gradually restoring them to Adamic perfection as they obey.

This process will result in two blessings by the end of the Millennial Age:

1. it will cure the mistrust that God and the *unbelief class* have had toward each other; and
2. it will introduce God and man into the New Covenant relations with each other, each side trusting the other to keep their respective conditional covenant promises.

* * *

LORD, EVERMORE GIVE US THIS BREAD

WHEN JESUS FED THE MULTITUDE THAT DAY, He demonstrated what great things can result from the smallest beginnings: one small boy, five small loaves, two small fishes — and 5,000 hungry people were more than satisfied (John 6: 5-13).

No wonder Philip reacted with amazement at Jesus' question, "How can we get all these folk a meal?" Why — as much as 200 *denarium* would not cover the cost — the earnings of a farm worker for more than half a year! Then a young lad tugging at Andrew's sleeve and offering to share his own lunch with the Preacher, gained for himself a permanent place in the scenario of the drama that followed.

Much out of Little

Jesus could have performed the miracle without the boy's contribution. He could have turned *stones* into bread, and the disciples had already witnessed the Master's amazing powers. Jesus did not reject the little supply offered as insignificant, but used it to impress upon His followers the importance of the little things. The barley cakes and dried fish which our Lord blessed and used as the nucleus for this miracle did not provide a sumptuous feast, but a simple meal which met the immediate needs of those people gathered at Galilee. They were fed.



A Famine for the Word of God

Some eight centuries earlier, 75 miles south of Galilee, near Bethlehem, an obscure and humble Judean herdsman named Amos was called to prophesy to Israel of God's judgment on a disobedient people. They did not heed his warning and were taken captive to Assyria.

Among Israel's elite, material prosperity had bred selfishness, a love of ease and luxury, increasing moral laxity and an impatient disregard for religious observance. The poor of the nation were likewise corrupted, disillusioned, losing desire for knowledge of God, looking rather for worldly gratification.

Amos foretold "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8: 11). Abandoned to their fate as reprobates, search as they might for relief, for some message from their God, none would be found.

As slaves to the Assyrian conqueror, no longer could they maintain even the lip service they had paid to their God-given Law. In captivity, no Atonement Day sacrifices could be made and no basis remained for the forgiveness of sin and the hope of Divine protection or favor.

Great Want, in a Land of Plenty

In many ways such conditions are reflected in our own times, but the present famine for the Word of God is *self-inflicted*. On the one hand, there is a vast abundance of spiritual food available, and never before in human experience has access to the Word of God been so easy to obtain. Bibles by the billion, books uncountable, dedicated radio and television channels, web sites offering non-stop free counsel for the aching heart and free instruction for the reasoning mind, all evidence the overflowing bounty of the Lord in providing for an unresponsive people, mostly unaware of their own spiritual poverty.

And so the vast majority of mankind, while harboring vague, unsatisfied feelings, go unfed. As in the days of Amos, many in the so-called prosperous nations of today put their trust in earthly riches. The luxury of home and material possessions, the importance of personal prestige and appearance, obsession with self, and the blatant indulgence in every personal gratification at the expense of honor and decency, mark the society of the Western world. The Gospel of Christ is not to their taste, and they are spiritually starved. Even good-living intellectuals take a superior stand, dismissing God's Word as the immature superstitions of earlier generations.

Christendom Under Judgment

Sadly, the world's standards often become the standards of churchgoers. Modern permissive behavior is excused. It is more comfortable to be "open-minded" and tolerant than to uphold the principles of justice and right living as laid down in the Word of God. The old concepts of right and wrong, of truth and justice, have become outdated, and modern men and women are substituting a more merciful, "live and let live" approach. Consequently, it becomes inconvenient to look closely at the Biblically defined rules for holy living, lest the true self is revealed too clearly: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4: 12).

By choice, therefore, many have placed themselves in famine conditions. They are like the ones addressed in Rev. 3: 17 who think they are well off, but are in fact miserable and pitiful, poor, naked, and blind. They have spurned the riches of Divine grace, the robe of Christ's righteousness is no longer their covering, and their spiritual discernment is quite gone. And the Lord says: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3: 19).

“Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.”

This prayer of David must be our prayer also, because *our integrity is under attack*. Many fall prey to temptation, and even the common trials of life overwhelm them. New Christians come along, but fail to find the support they need, and they fall away. Pastors and elders may become discouraged and lack the moral fiber looked for in a leader. With such a handicap they can provide no real spiritual food for the flock, who are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4: 6).

“Let integrity and uprightness preserve me . . . O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee” (Psa. 25: 21, 20). Just as we preserve our physical bodies with the best natural food we can find, without extravagant indulgence, so the inner spiritual life needs the best possible sustenance in order to thrive. “Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deut. 8: 3).

The true Christian’s Bible does not, therefore, gather dust. Nor is it mislaid beneath a pile of newspapers and magazines. It provides that precious daily portion of Divine information, instruction, support and sustenance without which our real life would wither and die. It is the table the Lord prepares for us in the midst of a hostile world, a soul-restoring resource for all the faithful. To such, there is no famine for the Word of the Lord!



But how are the multitude to be fed?

Ordinary men and women — and doubtless many children — were the ones to share that occasion at the Sea of Galilee, and smile at the boy’s happy thoughtfulness. They had been drawn irresistibly to hear this remarkable Preacher, and He had compassion on them. Our Lord’s ministry was marked by His concern for those of humbler station, the meek ones who, He promised, would inherit the earth. And as the Apostle Paul later observed of those called to be disciples, there were: “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, . . . But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; . . . and the weak . . . to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Cor. 1: 26, 27).

Jesus Himself had no reputation by human standards, being of humble home and family. At His conception, Mary had sung in a great burst of joy: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree” (Luke 1: 46-48, 52).

Freely ye have received, freely give

In sending out His disciples to go out and gather “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” our Lord Jesus impressed

upon them that theirs was to be a generous ministry. Blessed with miraculous powers of healing, casting out demons, even raising the dead, as well as preaching the Kingdom of God, they were illustrating in the most practical ways possible, the worldwide work of salvation that would bring life and health to a sin-torn and death-cursed human race, in that future day when the benefits of Jesus’ sacrificial death would be fully realized. They were taking to the people the real Bread of Life.

We who have freely received that Bread, must now freely give. We thereby join ranks with innumerable faithful witnesses down the ages in seeking to

*Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.*

— MRS. F. VAN ALSTYNE

{a pseudonym of “Fanny” Frances Jane Crosby}

Old-fashioned sentiments? Yes — but it is probably true to say that never in human history have so many been in danger of perishing for lack of vision, dying for want of the Bread of Life.

Not many wise . . .

Neither our duties nor our privileges are wholly measured by our own abilities. If God is with us in our distribution of spiritual food to the hungry, even the little means at our disposal may be so blessed as to accomplish marvellous things. After giving thanks, Jesus first gave the bread to the disciples, and it apparently grew as it was broken, so that they were the first witnesses of the miracle. Chastened for their initial misgivings, they were undoubtedly impressed with a sense of great privilege in feeding the hungry. And the satisfying of the spiritual hunger of untold millions would be the future mission of these men of humble origin.

Now, that privilege is ours. There are *some* hungering for better sustenance than the world offers. There are some even now “hungering and thirsting after righteousness,” and we have bread in abundance! But the greater fulfillment of the prophetic picture enacted on the shore of Galilee is yet future, for Jesus said: “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6: 51). Earth’s multitudes — “as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Gen. 22: 17) — will joyfully receive the offer of new life, free from the condemnation of sin, no longer under a sentence of death, their prospect an eternity of peace and harmony, of growth and development, as they return to the stature of perfect humanity in which God’s earthly children were first created. Well might they exclaim: “Lord, evermore give us this bread!”

* * *

Servants of God and Man

The first in a series of articles on godly men and women from around the world, whose lives have shaped the cultures in which we live.



WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

Instrumental in abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire, Wilberforce entered Parliament in 1780, and in 1807 his bill banning the trade in slaves from the West Indies was passed. In 1833 slavery was eradicated throughout the empire, though he died just before the Slavery Abolition Act came into force.

BORN IN HULL on August 24, 1759, William Wilberforce was the son of a successful businessman who had made his fortune in the Baltic trade, flourishing through the port of Hull. William was a small child with weak sight and delicate health, but he was intelligent and had an active mind.

Early influences

He was nine years old when his father died and his mother sent him to live with an uncle and aunt. His aunt was a religious woman who highly respected George Whitefield, the Methodist preacher. The boy grew fond of his relatives, and being particularly influenced by the character of his aunt developed a serious and pious nature. This influence was somewhat counteracted by his mother's efforts to involve him in the worldly society she enjoyed.

Life at Cambridge University also offered many distractions, and as William had inherited an independent fortune from his family he was not forced to work. While at Cambridge he had decided to enter Parliament and undertake a life of public service, and in 1780 was elected Member of Parliament for Hull. It was there that he renewed his acquaintance with William Pitt — soon to become Prime Minister — whom he had met at Cambridge, and they now became lifelong friends. London society offered many worldly attractions, and in his early career he enjoyed an active social life.

Spiritual development

But William's early religious feelings were revived and deepened when Isaac Milner, an acquaintance of his Hull school days, accompanied him to France. They passed the time on their journeys by reading together *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* by Philip Doddridge, a nonconformist minister, and the Greek New Testament. Wilberforce was so impressed by the character of his companion and their readings that his spiritual leanings were greatly stirred and strengthened.

John Newton, the hymn writer and friend whose advice William sought during an emotional crisis, persuaded

him to continue in his political career. Newton had been a slave trader before his own conversion. Joining a group of evangelical Christians later known as the "Clapham Sect," William gradually put aside the worldly pleasures of London society, devoting himself to charitable causes, such as the Sunday School movement and later the British and Foreign Bible Society, and in particular espousing the cause for the abolition of slavery, undertaking to campaign for this in Parliament.

The Slave Trade

British ship owners had carried on this lucrative trade for many years, but the conditions under which slaves were bought, transported, and sold were rarely seen by outsiders. Fortunes were made also from the cargoes of sugar, rum, and tobacco returning to Liverpool in slave trading ships. Those bold enough to advocate the abolition of this trade faced a high degree of vested interest in opposition.

The long struggle

Pitt encouraged Wilberforce to propose a motion in Parliament. At the debate in May 1789 he did so, and in the closing words of his three-and-a-half-hour speech he appealed to his listeners:

Sir, the nature and the circumstances of this trade are now laid open to us. We can no longer plead ignorance. We cannot evade it. We may spurn it. We may kick it out of the way. But we cannot turn aside so as to avoid seeing it.

— *William Wilberforce and his Times*, by Oliver Warner; publishers Batsford, London, 1962

Pitt and others ably supported Wilberforce, but it was 1792 before Parliament decided that the trade in slaves should gradually be abolished, and an Act was finally passed in 1801. However, *freedom* for the slaves was not yet won, and campaigning continued, though ill health meant that Wilberforce could no longer play a prominent role.

Long years elapsed before justice was done, and in August 1833 Parliament passed a Bill to free all slaves in the British Colonies. Wilberforce had died just one month before, knowing that the Bill had passed its second reading.

"He may be accounted a maker of England in that he came to represent to the world in general the sort of Englishman prepared to spend his energies for the benefit of mankind at large. . . . There is such a thing as altruism, and men like Wilberforce are a proof of it."

— *William Wilberforce and his Times*

Other sources consulted: www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilberforce_william.shtml • www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_culture/protest_reform/antislavery_01.shtml • www.hullcc.gov.uk/wilberforcehouse/introduction.html

LETTERS

Dear Brother Hedman,

Thank you for answering my letter on Michael the Archangel. When you sent me Volume 3 I also got *The Revised Standard Version Examined* and thank God I did. I was doing a Bible correspondence course and they were teaching the three persons of God. If $H^2O = \text{water}$, do I still have water when I divide the three elements? Well anyway Rev. 3: 14 and Col. 1: 15 tell who Jesus is.

To know more about my God and His grace thrills my soul with joy. Everlasting Love!

W.K., Georgia

Gentlemen:

I am enclosing my check for the Lord's work at the Bible House and to cover the cost of three paper bound *Divine Plan of the Ages*.

I have to tell you about a little experience. I have a Lowery organ and go to a music store every week for lessons and concerts. The secretary at this store approached me and said she heard I was leaving for Chicago to attend my church convention. She wanted to know a little about our beliefs. I told her about restitution, resurrection, and the ransom. She said it sounds like what she believes.

I immediately went home and got some tracts, but found I had no *Divine Plan of the Ages* books.

I want to give her one of these. You just never know when one is interested. Look forward to receipt of these three books.

Sincerely,

M. H., Florida

* * *

We welcome your letters for publication but reserve the right to edit them. We indicate only the correspondent's initials, except where the writer is an appointee of the Movement. Submit letters, marked "Editorial" to our mailing address, or e-mail us at: editorial@biblestandard.com (enter "Letters Column" in the subject line).

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<i>The Gift of Tongues — Should We Seek or Shun It?</i> (80 pages)		50
<i>Is there Hope for Any of the Unsaved Dead?</i> (80 hope-inspiring pages).....		50
<i>Satan, Satanism, Demonism and Exorcism</i> (80 pages; real dangers).....		50
<i>Born Again</i> (48 pages; what, when and how)		50
<i>The Great Pyramid and the Bible</i> (48 pages; Bible corroborations)		50
<i>The Hell of the Bible</i> (60 pages; a veritable sunburst to many thousands; treats every Bible text relating to Hell)		25
<i>Spiritism — Ancient & Modern</i> (67 pages; a Biblical, factual, and reasonable explanation, proving it to be Demonism)		25

<i>Jewish Hopes and Prospects</i> (52 pages; describes present-day fulfillments of God's promises to the Jews; illustrated).....	10
<i>The Revised Standard Version Examined</i>	10
<i>The Teachings of "Jehovah's Witnesses" Examined</i> (points pro and con)	10

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Generally we do not pay distributors of our literature. Samples of many of our items will be provided on request. Preferably, our literature should first be studied and digested prior to distribution, so that you would be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence (1 Pet. 3: 15).

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announcements

CHANGES IN OUR MAGAZINE

Beginning with this issue, *The Bible Standard* has been increased from 12 to 16 pages. Additionally, the price of a subscription has been increased, as announced in our December issue. Those details are repeated below.

In an effort to diversify our circulation we also begin this month a British edition of our magazine for circulation in the United Kingdom only. In addition to the articles available in the American version, the British edition will contain features and announcements relevant to the domestic interests of that region.

Increase in Cost of Subscription

Effective January 2004, a subscription to *The Bible Standard* will be increased from \$7.00 to \$12.00. If your current subscription runs into 2004 or beyond, you will not be charged the higher rate *until you renew*. (Your expiration date is shown above your address label.) Subscriptions postmarked before December 31, 2003 will be honored at the existing rate of \$7.00. You may request up to two sample copies free of charge; additional single issues are \$2.00. We will provide one subscription free of charge to those who lack the funds, *but you must apply to us in writing*.

Discounted Rates:

5-Year Subscription — Discounted to \$10.00 per year (\$50.00). Payment in full must accompany your application.

Gift Subscriptions — A one-year subscription purchased as a gift is discounted to \$7.00. Please indicate "Gift Subscription" on your application along with payment and the address(es) of the recipient(s).

MEMORIAL DATE FOR 2004

Friday, April 2, after 6:00 p.m.

Our Lord's Memorial is Friday, April 2, after 6:00 p.m. This is calculated as follows (all times Greenwich Mean Time): The vernal equinox is March 20, 6:50 a.m.; the new moon nearest this equinox is March 20, 10:42 p.m.; add 2 hours 21 minutes to get Jerusalem time = March 21, 1:03 a.m.; so Nisan 1 is from 6:00 p.m. March 20, to 6:00 p.m. March 21; Nisan 14 begins 13 full days later, on Friday, April 2, 6:00 p.m., ending Saturday, April 3, 6:00 p.m. The Memorial should therefore be kept after 6:00 p.m. Friday, April 2. May God bless all His consecrated people in this service. We will be glad to receive reports of each commemoration. (*Note: The vernal equinox and new moon nearest this equinox fall on the same date in 2004, a rare but occasional occurrence.*)

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2004

At-a-glance

France: (*All at Barlin*) *Spring* — April 11, 12; *Summer* — July 30-August 1; *Autumn* — October 30, 31

Germany: *Velbert*, May 29-31; *Altleiningen*, October 1-3

United Kingdom: *Hyde*, August 6-8; *Sheffield*, October 30, 31

United States: *California*, February 14-16; *Florida*, March 12-14; *Massachusetts*, April 16-18; *Michigan*, May 29-31; *Philadelphia Area*, July 3-5; *Ohio*, August 13-15; *Illinois*, October 1-3; *Oklahoma*, to be announced.

Details

United States

California, February 14-16 (Saturday-Monday)

Site: Country Side Suites, 204 N. Vineyard Ave., Ontario, CA 91764; telephone (800) 248-4661 or (909) 937-9700; Sales Fax (909) 937-3414. *Rates and Reservations:* 1-2 occupants, \$74.00, 3-4 occupants, \$84.00; all rooms plus 11.85% tax; check-in after 3 p.m.; check-out noon. Any cancellations of guaranteed reservations must be done 24 hours prior to arrival. Free and frequent shuttle bus transport is available (only 5 minutes from airport to hotel). Please make room reservations through the Class Secretary, Mrs. Mary Detzler, 6941 Abel Stearns Ave., Riverside, CA 92509; telephone (909) 779-0331.

Florida, March 12-14 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: Oceanfront Comfort Inn, 1515 N. First St., Jacksonville Beach, Fla., 32250; Telephone: (800) 654-8776. *Rates and Reservations:* \$69.00 for 1-4 guests, plus 13% tax. Reservations must be made directly with the hotel, by **February 15:** *be sure to inform them that you are attending the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement Convention to secure the special rate.* Please make all other inquiries to Mrs. Beverly Blaine (Class Secretary), 3569 John Anderson Drive, Ormond Beach, Fla. 32176; telephone (386) 441-9836.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

Carl W. Seebald

Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 28

Ralph Herzig

Springfield, Massachusetts, February 1

Robert Herzig

New Haven, Connecticut, January 18

Evangelists' Services

Robert Branconnier, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, February 8

Jon Hanning, Louisville, Kentucky, January 24

Harold Solomon, Boston, Massachusetts, January 25

Robert Steenrod, Cincinnati, Ohio, February 22

William Sturges, North Canton, Ohio, January 25

Jack Zilch, Athens/Nelsonville, Ohio, January 31; Derry, Pennsylvania, February 1

For further information on The Bible Standard in English and to find additional articles of interest, please visit
www.biblestandard.com

Associated sites available in French, German, and Polish. Links provided on the English-language sites.