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1913: A HUNDRED YEARS ON

The excerpt below is reproduced from “*The Cincinnati Post*”, a newspaper published in Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A. from 1881 until 2007; a period of some 126 years. The article below was published in December 1912—100 years ago.

“THERE never was such a wonderful period! We never before knew so much or could do so much. We never experienced an age of equal comfort. No part of yesterday was as glorious as this hour.

The hundred years behind us are jammed and crammed with achievements that out-balance the sum total of progress since the signing of the Magna Charta. The average mechanic enjoys luxuries that Midas, with all his wealth, could not command. The college freshman has more real information in his little finger than the erudition of the foremost scholar of the Renaissance. We have done more to put existence on a sane, logical and definite basis than the sum total of our ancestors.

A mere hundred years ago even the scientist thought that the atmosphere was simply space—that gas was only a smell. The first microbe hadn’t disclosed his identity. Metchnikoff’s announcement of battling hosts in every drop of human blood would have earned him a padded cell. The best illumination George Washington could secure came from tallow dips, lighted by striking a spark from flint and steel. Every piece of fabric was woven by hand. The only horse-power was four-legged and wore a tail. The steamboat was still building on the ways of Fulton’s brain, and the wheels of the steam engine had only moved in Stephenson’s head. It took Benjamin Franklin two weeks to send a letter from Boston and get a reply from Baltimore. Abraham Lincoln’s angular frame never reposed in a Pullman berth... a 20-day “liner” was an “ocean greyhound”.

Thirty years ago electricity had never been hitched to a wheel; gunpowder was the most powerful explosive; subways weren’t considered within range of possibility. “Impossibility” is now an old-fashioned word with a definition, but not a meaning.

Almost every dream of the past is a reality today. The magic cities and the fairy kingdoms of your grandmother aren’t half so wonderful as the world in which you live.

It is hardly a year since the father of antiseptic surgery was gathered to his fathers. Electric light, trolley cars, bicycles, automobiles, department stores, skyscrapers, 10-cent collars, tinned salmon, airships, penny newspapers, appendicitis and power cranes are infant ideas still toddling in their diapers”.

The glorious hour

Certainly the devices invented between 1813 and 1913 were marvellous, but they fade into insignificance when compared with those of the last 100 years: fluorescent lights, plastics, jet engines, medical diagnostic tools, organ transplants, surgical procedures, computers, robots, space travel, television, nuclear power, refrigeration, mobile phones, and a host of electronic gadgets and machines. Indeed it was not until the late 1940s, after World War 2, that several of the current techniques in agricultural practice were developed, helped along by the dire shortage of food in a devastated world. Modern machinery has greatly reduced the amount of hard physical labour that was previously required to grow food but it is not the ultimate answer.

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Sane, logical and definite

From a human perspective, the benefits afforded by the inventions developed between 1812 and 1912 certainly gave some justification for deeming them to be “sane and logical”. The benefits were such that some publications proclaimed them to be “foregleams of Messiah’s kingdom”. One may speculate what the authors of that time would say if they could see the inventions that have been developed during the last 100 years.

Additionally the claim that the inventions placed society on a “sane, logical and definite basis” may be queried. The present consumption of raw materials cannot be sustained forever, and already the search is on for more natural reserves of metal ores, coal, oil and gas. The folly of trusting in an endless supply of these reserves is exemplified by the reserves of phosphate rock in Nauru. Just 60 years ago it was acclaimed as a vital resource for the production of agricultural fertilizer. However the reserve was exhausted some 30 years ago. So while the inventions may be considered sane and logical, they have not put the world on a definite basis—for that to be the case the reserves of raw materials would have to last forever. While there might yet be undiscovered reserves of natural resources, the most plausible assumption is that the reserves are finite, and consequently the present rate of consumption cannot be sustained indefinitely.

However two changes which would enable the present consumption to continue forever are:

- Inventions which utilise raw materials cease wearing out and therefore not require replacement, reducing consumption of raw materials to zero;
- All natural resources be replenished.

Removal of wear and tear

In view of the developments made so far one may speculate that “science” will develop mechanisms that will not wear out. Wear is caused by friction between moving parts and has been reduced by lubricants. Consequently some credence may be given to the possibility of friction being totally eliminated. Regarding things rusting out, again great improvements have been made with “non-corrosive” and “corrosion resistant” materials and coatings. Nevertheless on both fronts there is still a long way to go before perpetuity is realised.

Climate change

Another factor which might add to the debate about the sustainability of the present industrial world is the effect of the inventions on the environment, currently termed “climate change” and “global warming”. Scientists and politicians continue to differ regarding the truth of the concept and it is not the purpose of

this column to enter into a debate on the subject. Nevertheless as we go to print a scientific report has just been released which claims the rate of warming is accelerating, as evidenced by the melting of large areas of the polar ice caps. From a spiritual viewpoint, such a change is plausible because the emissions were not part of God’s original creation.

Intellectual prowess

Many of the inventions have been developed from earlier more basic devices, and in that sense their development may be considered to be evolutionary. Thus it may be contended that their development is evidence of mankind’s evolution to a higher and more intelligent creation. However an analysis of the development of many inventions reveals that they were developed by a few persons and the population generally had little or nothing to do with it.

The argument that Man is developing a higher intellectual capacity is further negated by another factor. Many of the original inventors, those who broke through the frontiers of scientific knowledge, were not men of high education. Neither were they of greater intellectual might than Moses, Solomon, the Apostle Paul or Shakespeare. In general, it has been the distribution of knowledge that has resulted in the benefits flowing to many. In that regard, the printing press was a monumental development—perhaps the printed page has been the most powerful single instrument to have aided the distribution of knowledge—and in the twenty first century the internet may be its equal.

Knowledge explosion

Additionally the article published in “*The Cincinnati Post*”, quoted above, testifies that the developments have occurred during very recent times, after centuries during which there was no change in the methods of performing tasks. The speed of development is exemplified by the Short Message System (“SMS” or “texting”) on mobile (or “cell”) phones. The first SMS was sent on December 3, 1993, just 20 years ago. The message transmitted was “Merry Christmas”—just two words. Today indications are there are 1 million SMS messages sent in the world every second—that is, 8,640,000,000 every day! Such a sudden increase may justifiably be termed a “knowledge explosion”!

God’s time

To those who are privileged to understand God’s hand in mankind’s affairs, the dramatic increase in technological devices is explained by God lifting the veil off the eyes of human understanding. When His set time had come He allowed mankind to see the power of steam and to learn how to apply it. Later He lifted the veil in respect to electricity, and in more

recent times He has revealed some of the secrets of the atom. The developments have occurred at this time and in such a short period of time because it is God's time to grant mankind increased knowledge.

Daniel's prophecy

Many centuries ago Daniel foretold (prophesied) there would be a sudden increase of knowledge. He wrote: *"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people... many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased..."* (Daniel 12: 1-4). It was not to be until Michael stood up that knowledge would be increased, which is consistent with there not having been any gradual increase prior to late nineteenth century. As Daniel's prophecy further explains: *"for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end"* (Dan. 12:9).

Daniel also prophesied that the time period during which knowledge would be increased would be *"a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time"* (Dan. 12:1). The last 100 years—since the outbreak of World War 1—has seen the fulfillment of that prophecy, at least in part.

New Testament prophecies

Jesus and His apostles also prophesied about the end time when Michael would stand up: *"But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven"* (Luke 21:8-11). *"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory"* (Luke 21:25-27). The events foretold by Jesus are manifest in the world today and indeed have been since 1914.

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy regarding the end times: *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection... heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth... reprobate concerning the faith"* (2 Tim. 3:1-8).

Some of the characteristics of Paul's prophecy that are evident in the world today, and have become increasingly so since 1913, include *"without natural affection"* (that is homosexuality); *"heady, high minded"* ("impossibility is now a word without meaning"); *"ever learning"* (there has never been so much education in the world) but *"reprobate concerning the truth"* (agnosticism and atheism have usurped "Christianity"). As Paul continued, *"evil men have waxed worse and worse"* (2 Tim. 3:13).

The next 100 years

And now the question may be asked "what of the next 100 years?"

It is very tempting to say the kingdom of God will be firmly established in the earth well before a further 100 years transpires. However, while that is the desire of every Christian, it should be remembered those living 100 years ago—in 1913—probably had the same conviction, their reflections on the previous 100 years providing strong evidence that the kingdom of God had already come and they were basking in its blessings. However, overall, in spite of the development of so many inventions and increased availability of education, the world has become less reverent of God since that time.

Maybe Christians today would do well to remember the Lord's words by Habakkuk: *"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry"* (Hab. 2:1-3).■

THE YEAR BEFORE US.

STANDING at the portal of the opening year,
Words of comfort meet us, hushing every fear;
Spoken through the silence by our Father's voice,
Tender, strong and faithful, making us rejoice.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.
"I, the Lord, am with thee, be thou not afraid;
I will help and strengthen, be thou not dismayed.
Yea, I will uphold thee with Mine own right hand;
Thou art called and chosen in My sight to stand".
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.

STRONG DELUSIONS

"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

Through the Apostle Paul, God declared He will use "strong delusions" to distinguish those who believe the truth from those who have pleasure in unrighteousness. Thus, for those who are endeavouring to prove themselves loyal to God, it is necessary to be aware of the nature of delusions.

Nature of delusions

The basic characteristic of a delusion is fraud, that is, it is error masqueraded as truth.

Jesus warned His disciples that deceptions would be severe at the end of the Age: *"And at that time there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and they shall show great signs and wonders insomuch as if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect"* (Matt. 24:24). Jesus' warning was repeated by the Apostle Paul: *"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived"* (2 Tim. 3:13). Thus one must be ever alert of the possibility of fraudulent influences, indeed the subtlety of the deceptions (delusions) would be such that the Apostle Peter wrote: *"... beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness"* (2 Pet. 3:17).

Human agencies

Paul warned the Christians at Ephesus that human agencies deliberately perpetrated delusions: *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"* (Eph. 4:14). Paul implies that the Ephesians had been uncertain of some things and were "tossed about" by various doctrines which were deliberately promulgated by those who "lied in wait to deceive". In stark contrast to the wiles of those whose objective was to deceive, the apostles were clear and forthright in their ministry: *"For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile... For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness... Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burden-some, as the apostles of Christ"* (1 Thess. 2:3-6).

Deceptive speech

Words are a powerful tool. Paul declares the Apostles did not use "flattering words". The Apostle Peter also warned of the deceptive power of words: *"For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness..."* (2 Pet. 2:18). The message for the

Christian is simple: *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"* (Isa. 8:20).

The test of love

However one factor which presents a challenge to Christians is the balance between love for the truth and love for human beings. Accommodation of others' feelings can lead one into a situation which confronts the Christian with acts and situations which appeal as plausible and loving, but in reality are contrary to God's will and righteousness and have the potential to deceive one into accepting falsehoods.

Balaam was one who entangled himself in such a conflict. The record is in Numbers chapters 22 to 24. There are several aspects of the story that appear to the human mind as exemplifying Balaam's loving and kind disposition. However the truth is that Balaam allowed himself to be deluded into believing God's will might be different from what had been clearly communicated to him: *"And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed"* (Num. 22:12). Nevertheless, in spite of an initial forthright response from Balaam—*"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you"* (Num. 22:13)—he was eventually persuaded to reconsider what the Lord had told him. After a prolonged course of action Balaam deviated from God's instruction and sought the advice of others: *"And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness"* (Num. 24:1). So Balaam, who repeatedly refused to be bribed by Balak, was eventually enticed to act contrary to God's direction and turned to other agencies for advice and support. 2 Peter 2:15 explains that Balaam was motivated by a hidden desire for *"the wages of unrighteousness"* and it was not until God opened his eyes that he was aware of the delusion under which he struggled.

Balaam's actions are recorded as an example for Christians to note: *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"* (Rom. 15:4). May every Christian who believes the truth be continuously aware of the delusions of the Adversary: *"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Cor. 2:11).■

THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Every human being is unique. Even so-called “identical twins”, while being so similar in outward appearance that the human mind cannot distinguish them, are not completely identical: there is a difference somewhere, if not in appearance it will be in talents or mannerisms.

The Apostle Paul was unique: his call to apostleship was different from that of all the other apostles, being converted by a miraculous experience on the road to Damascus, when his name was Saul: *“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”* (Acts 9:1-6).

Understandably Ananias was hesitant when asked to confront Saul but God reassured him that He (God) had a special work for Saul to do: *“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”* (Acts 9:13-16).

Additionally Paul was given a vision which he was not permitted to convey to others: *“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... such an one caught up to the third heaven... How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter... And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure”* (2 Cor. 12:2-7).

Subsequent to those experiences God commissioned Paul with the special work He had for him to do—*“the care of all the churches”* (2 Cor. 11:28).

Means

Paul carried out his mission by utilising two mediums: personal visits and writing letters. In his second letter to the church at Corinth he wrote: *“And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea”* (2 Cor. 1:15-16).

Letters

One reason for Paul writing letters was the hope that a letter would be less antagonistic than a personal confrontation. The church at Corinth was one such church: *“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing”* (2 Cor. 7:8-9). Paul’s letter was “not pleasant reading” for them but it had the desired effect of motivating them to a higher level of spiritual conduct—they realised his letters were authoritative: *“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful...”* (2 Cor. 10:8-10).

In spite of his poor eyesight, Paul personally wrote a letter to the Galatians: *“Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand”* (Gal. 6:11). Letters were important in Paul’s ministry.

General application

Paul intended his letters to be read in the church to which they were addressed, and also to other churches in the area: *“Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it”* (Col. 4:15-17). He gave similar instruction to the church at Thessalonica: *“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren”* (1 Thess. 5:27).

Thus letters were one of the means by which Paul accomplished the care of all the churches. The fact that his letters were to be shared with other churches shows that his messages were applicable to all, which

in turn means the message was uniform—it was not one doctrine for one church and another for another church: all were to share the same message. Such uniformity (generality) is consistent with the Lord's strategy: *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:11-13).

Divisions

Nevertheless unity did not prevail in all the churches: *"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you"* (1 Cor. 11:18-19).

The primary cause of the differences was that there were heresies amongst the members of the church—a heresy is something which provides a choice; something that arises from a teaching that differs from what was initially taught—and Paul declared that there were divisions in the church because some taught concepts which were different from those he had taught. He also explained that such differences were permitted by God to prove those who were sincere and those who were imposters. A lesson for all Christians today!

Paul's teaching

In that context it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of the various types of instructions Paul gave to the churches. It must be remembered that, although the instructions Paul gave might be given different titles, there cannot be any doubt that all of them have the same objective—the edification of the brethren. He wrote: *"... we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying"* (2 Cor. 12:19).

Paul was given the spirit directly, without any intrusion by another human being: *"But when it pleased God...to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus"* (Gal. 1:15-17). Therefore to deem Paul to be in error on any matter is bold indeed.

Ordinances

The title of Paul's instructions which has the greatest authoritative tone is "ordinances". An ordinance is a law or regulation which demands compliance. The Law Covenant contained ordinances: *"Having*

abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:15).

Obligatory

The obligatory nature of the ordinances is evident from the Old Testament: *"And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do"* (Exod. 18:20). *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God... After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God"* (Lev. 18:1-4).

Paul gave the church "**ordinances**": *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you"* (1 Cor. 11:1-2). It was Paul's duty to convey the ordinances to the churches, which he did either by letter or by word of mouth: *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions (ordinances—Greek: *paradoses*) which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle"* (2 Thess. 2:15).

Non-compliance

Paul gave directions regarding the action to be taken if another disregarded the ordinances: *"Now we **command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition (ordinances—Greek: *paradoses*) which he received of us"*** (2 Thess. 3:6). The believer must withdraw themselves from any who disregarded the ordinances—compliance was mandatory.

Paul instructed Timothy to withdraw from those who did not comply with the ordinances: *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: **from such withdraw thyself"*** (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Commandments

Another term which reflects Paul's authority is "commandments": *"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the*

things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

Paul used the same term in his letter to the Thessalonians: *"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus"* (1 Thess. 4:1-2).

In summary, the churches were to comply with the "ordinances" and "commandments".

Would not

One expression that might be deemed less authoritative is in 1 Corinthians 10:20: *"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I **would not** that ye should have fellowship with devils"*. The word "would" might give the impression that it was Paul's preference but not obligatory that they did not have fellowship with those who sacrificed to devils. However the expression "would not" carries the same authority as the ordinances—the word "not" means **the absolute negative**—that is, definitely not. So the Apostle was giving firm direction to them that they not associate with those who sacrificed to devils.

The import of the term "would not" is further evidenced in Romans 11:25: *"For I **would not**, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"*. It was imperative the Romans understood God had not cast off His people *"whom he foreknew"* (Rom. 11:2) because if they did not understand that point they would become wise in their own conceits, that is, puffed up, esteeming themselves of greater merit than the natural Israelites.

Another instance where Paul used the expression "would not" to dictate an essential doctrine is in 1 Thessalonians 4:13: *"But I **would not** have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope"*. Knowledge of the resurrection is an essential component of the Christian hope and hence the Thessalonians were not to be ignorant of it.

God's order in creation

An understanding of God's order in creation was, and is, essential to understand the order in the church: *"But I **would** have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Cor. 11:3). In this instance the word "not" does not appear because

Paul's instruction is "positive"—that is, his statement is not a prohibition but a direction—they were to understand the hierarchy in God's creation.

Suffer and permit

Yet another expression which might be interpreted to mean it was merely one of Paul's wishes but not mandatory is "suffer": *"But I suffer"* (Greek: *"epitrepo"*—Strong #2010: "allow") *not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence* (1 Tim. 2:12). *"Epitrepo"* occurs only three times: 1 Corinthians 14:34, 16:7 and 1 Timothy 2:12.

In 1 Corinthians 14:34 it is translated "permit" and modified by the word "not": *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is **not permitted** unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law"*.

1 Corinthians 16:7 reads: *"... but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit"*, that is, allow. The negative "not" would be inappropriate.

Hence "suffer" has the same authority as the terms ordinances and commandments.

Beseech

On the other hand there are instances when Paul gave the Christians advice that was not mandatory. One word used in such cases is "beseech" which means to invoke, implore, exhort: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"* (Rom. 16:17). It was good advice, but not essential, for the brethren to note those who stirred up divisions (by teaching doctrine that was contrary to what they had been taught), and having noted them, to avoid them (2 Thess. 3:6).

It was in that vein that he urged the Corinthian brethren to *"speak the same thing"* (that is, doctrine) and thereby not cause division (1 Cor. 1:10).

Paul used the word which is translated "beseech" to **exhort** the believers to follow his example regarding conduct: *"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church"* (1 Cor. 4:16-17). And: *"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more"* (1 Thess. 4:1). Again Paul was exhorting them to adopt his pattern, but he did not issue the exhortation as a commandment.

Think I have the Spirit of God

Finally, and perhaps the most controversial expression regarding Paul's authority occurs in 1 Corinthians 7:40. Regarding marriage Paul wrote: "*But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God*". Paul's statement was not mandatory, and indeed could not be mandatory because marriage was not prohibited: "*But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned...*" (1 Cor. 7:28).

Nevertheless the expression gives rise to the possibility that Paul was unsure of himself, and that might well have been the case because he might not have received an ordinance from the Lord regarding

marriage. However, before dismissing Paul's advice, in view of his background, experience and the charge given him to care for all the churches, it is a bold assertion to dismiss his advice as erroneous.

Old Testament testimony

In summary, Paul's advice reflected the instructions given in Old Testament times: "*But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward*" (Jer. 7:23-24).■

TEMPTATIONS COMMON TO MAN

Jesus said: "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*" (Matt. 7:13-14).

The primary implication of Jesus' words is that the Christian needs to exercise restraint—the gate to life is strait, that is, narrow—because many activities that are able to "pass through" the broad gate must be excluded from the Christian's way of life. Such enticements—temptations—must be rejected.

The nature of temptations

The Apostle Paul wrote: "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13). The Christian's experiences might not be anything unusual but merely similar to the temptations that confront mankind in general. Thus the essence of the test confronting the Christian is resistance, firstly to identify those activities which must be rejected (those that will not pass through the strait gate), and then to resist yielding to them. As James wrote: "*.... Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*" (Jas. 4:7).

The love of honour

One of the most powerful temptations is to seek honour amongst men. However Jesus said: "*Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets*" (Luke 6:26). Many of the praises of mankind are insincere and may be justifiably called flattery. Of such the Psalmist wrote: "*They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double*

heart do they speak" (Psa. 12:2). On the other hand the correct course for the Christian is take courage and comfort from Jesus' words: "*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake*" (Luke 6:22).

The love of honour is not limited to words, but all seeking of honour amongst men. Such seeking was one of the temptations to which the scribes succumbed: "*And he said unto them... Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts... and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation*" (Mark 12:38-40).

The love of money

Another temptation that must be resisted is the love of material wealth. The Apostle Paul warned Timothy: "*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*" (1 Tim. 6:9-10). It is not a sin to have money but it is a sin to love money.

Pride

Pride is a temptation which presents in several different scenarios. It is possible to be proud of anything, including one's humility, but maybe the main dangers are:

- Material possessions. It is a great temptation to be proud of what one owns. However such pride is false because it should always be remembered "...who

maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7). Even if the possessions have been gained through hard work, diligence, or expert use of intellect, all must be attributed to God—it is He who has endowed one with the physical ability to work and think, and not everyone has been given such blessings.

- **Ability (or talent):** The same principle applies—the talents with which everyone was born were given by God and applies to every aspect of one’s existence, including personal appearance. One common expression amongst the world of mankind is that one should take pride in their appearance. Certainly some attention is required in order to “*provide things honest in the sight of men*” (Rom. 12:17), but the temptation to be proud of them must be recognized and rejected.

- **Knowledge:** It is easy to be proud of one’s knowledge, including knowledge of the Scriptures. Again, certainly there is need of diligence and effort to study the Word, and God “*rewards those who diligently seek Him*” (Heb. 11:6), but there are several fundamental requirements which enable one to study the Word, many if not all of which are beyond the power of the individual: availability of the Word, an education which enables one to read (often taken for granted in the Western World today due to the availability of secular schools), and the Holy Spirit: “*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Cor. 2:9-14).

- **Good works:** Performing good works is an essential part of the Christian’s conduct: “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:8-10). The Apostle Peter also exhorted his readers to practise good works: “*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts... Having your conversation honest*

among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:11-12). The Christian is to do “good works”—the challenge is to resist the temptation to be proud of the works; the fleshly lust that seeks recognition for the works. As James wrote: “*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom*” (Jas. 3:13). The quality of meekness with wisdom is to flavour all the good works of the Christian.

The cares of this life

Jesus warned His disciples: “*And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares*” (Luke 21:34). While the Christian should not be troubled with surfeiting and drunkenness—“*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Titus 2:11-12)—the cares of this life present a real challenge.

The Christian is obliged to give due regard to the things which pertain to their sustenance: “*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*” (1 Tim. 5:8). The Apostle Paul earned his own living, “*working with our own hands*” (1 Cor. 4:12), and exhorted his readers to do likewise: “*And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you*” (1 Thess. 4:11). The challenge is to know what constitutes due care and what is excessive. Failure to provide for one’s own does not bring praise to God’s Name, not now nor will it in the day of visitation.

Summary

The path before the Christian is a delicate one, requiring wisdom and judgment—judgment to distinguish what is a proper responsibility and what is unnecessary and therefore is a temptation which will distract from the Christian walk. Judgment is made more delicate because, for the most part, the issues are common to mankind and therefore not easily distinguished. In that respect the more extreme temptations are easier to identify as the Apostle Peter wrote: “*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*” (1 Pet. 4:12-13).■

THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

Genesis 1:7 records the separation of the waters when God created the heavens and the earth: *“And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so”*. It is the water above the firmament that gives rise to clouds.

Clouds in Israel

A knowledge of the weather patterns in Israel adds some significance to the symbolism of clouds in the Scriptures. The area is bounded by sea on the West and desert on the East. The wind coming from the West is always moist and has the potential to bring clouds. If the temperature over the land is low enough the clouds will be condensed and rain will fall, but if the temperature is high there will be no rain even though there are clouds.

In the months of October through March, rain storms often arise suddenly from the sea, and might be the phenomenon seen by Elijah’s servant, miraculously arranged by God to occur at that moment: *“And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain... And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel... And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain...”* (1 Kings 18:41-45).

In the months of April, May and June a hot east wind sometimes rises from the desert and brings a cloud of dust. Such clouds are caused by strong winds and do not contain water. Maybe they gave rise to the symbolism in Jude 12: *“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds...”*.

The wide difference in temperature between day and night in Israel often results in clouds being short-lived—the clouds that come in from the Mediterranean in the cool of the morning are often quickly dissipated when they enter the warm atmosphere of the land. Such transient clouds might have been what Hosea used to illustrate the transitory state of the faith of Ephraim and Judea: *“O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do*

unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hosea 6:4).

Symbolic meaning of clouds

Clouds are also used as symbols. One symbolism is God’s chariot: *“Bless the LORD, O my soul... who maketh the clouds his chariot...”* (Psa. 104:1-3). Chariots were a vehicle that transported the ruler to war—they demonstrated might—and so the Psalmist might have used clouds to convey God’s might.

Clouds are also used to show the difference between God’s power and that of mankind, as Job declared: *“He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them”* (Job 26:8). The weight of water held in the clouds is a manifestation of God’s power—the weight of water required for the island State of Tasmania (Australia’s smallest State) to receive 25 mm (1") of rain is approximately 1.7 million tonnes. However that amount of water is infinitesimal compared with the amount that has deluged parts of the USA and Asia in recent times, all of which came from clouds.

Zephaniah referred to clouds to convey the gloom mankind will experience in the day of the Lord: *“The great day of the LORD is near, it is near... a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness”* (Zeph. 1:14-15).

Ezekiel also used the symbolism of clouds and rain to convey the power God will use in that day: *“And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face... and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence... and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone”* (Ezek. 38:18-22). Torrential rain and hailstones have devastating power.

On the other hand God can use rain to gently water the earth, as Job observed: *“Behold, God is great... For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly. Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds”* (Job 36:26-29). God can use clouds and the water they contain to destroy or bless the Earth.

God’s presence

Clouds are also used to convey God’s presence and guidance, as when He guided the Israelites through

the desert after they were freed from the Egyptian yoke: *"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people"* (Exod. 13:21-22).

The cloud also provided them with protection from the Egyptians: *"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night"* (Exod. 14:19-20).

As well as assuring them of God's presence and protection, the cloud also told them when they were to move camp and when they were to stay: *"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day... in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys"* (Exod. 40:36-38).

Thus the clouds of heaven are a powerful indicator of several aspects of God's dealing with mankind: His power, His presence, His protection and His plans for the future. May all watch the clouds of heaven diligently as the events of the next year unfold and more is revealed of His program (Matt. 24:30).■

JERUSALEM : THE HOLY CITY

Jerusalem is mentioned more than 800 times in the Bible, in relation to both history and prophecy.

Historically it has had at least five names:

Salem—first mentioned in Genesis 14:18, when the King of Salem blessed Abraham. The location of Salem is not given in Genesis, but Psalm 76:2 links it to Zion and therefore Jerusalem: *"In Salem also is His tabernacle and His dwelling place in Zion"*. Salem means peace (Heb. 7:2).

Moriah—Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2) and Solomon built the temple there: *"Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah..."* (2 Chron. 3:1).

Jebusi—*"... the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho... and Jebusi, which is Jerusalem..."* (Joshua 18:21-28).

Jerusalem—First mentioned in Joshua 10:1. King David established his throne there: *"And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem"* (1 Kings 2:11).

It is God's chosen city: *"... David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there"* (1 Kings 11:36); *"But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel"* (2 Chron. 6:6).

The second temple was built there: *"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged*

me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah..." (2 Chron. 36:23). *"Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem"* (Ezra 1:5).

The heavenly Jerusalem is the city of God: *"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem..."* (Heb. 12:22).

Zion—*"Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David"* (2 Sam. 5:7).

Prophetically, the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem: *"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem"* (Isa. 2:3).

"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" (Micah 4:2).

"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD" (Zech. 8:22).

The new Jerusalem will bless the world of mankind: *"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."* (Rev. 21:2).■

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT

The Apostle Paul's exhortation to think on things that are of good report (Phil. 4:8) is easier said than done.

There are at least two factors that make it difficult to decide whether something is of good report. One factor is the power of words and the other is that different reporters convey different impressions of the same event, either subconsciously or deliberately.

False reporting has ever confronted the Lord's people: Moses had to deal with the false report of the spies he sent to assess the land of Canaan: *"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel..."* (Num. 13:30-33).

Paul was conscious of ill reporting: *"We then... beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. ... But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God... by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true..."* (2 Cor. 6:1-8). Paul was aware there would be evil reports of their activities and one counter to false reports was to take notice only of those things that were attested by more than one witness: *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men..."* (2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul's exhortation means the Christian should not take undue notice of any single evil report regarding the brethren; it should be remembered that, while Christians will be evil spoken of at this time, nevertheless their adversaries will glorify God in the day of visitation: *"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Pet. 2:12).

False Christians

Additionally, and on the other hand, the Christian is to be wary of good reports—they might be flattery designed to deceive: *"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets"* (Luke 6:26). Alternatively, one who is praised by those in this world are not good examples of the ministry: *"... know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (Jas. 4:4).

However not all favourable (good) reports convey incorrect perceptions. Cornelius was one who was well renowned: *"Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius ... And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews..."* (Acts 10:21-22). Likewise Ananias also had a good report of all the Jews and was used by God to restore Saul's sight (Acts 22:11-13).

Elders

The test regarding those who would be elders is even more demanding: they must be of *"good report of them which are without"* (1 Tim. 3:7)—in other words they must be as Paul wrote to Titus: *"... of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you"* (Titus 2:7-8). While they may be evil spoken of, their conduct must be exemplary.

Temporal associations

Keeping one's mind on things of good report also requires the Christian to separate from some in the world, as Paul instructed Timothy: *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers... false accusers... fierce, despisers of those that are good... having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"* (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Association with those who practise such things does not engender holiness of thought and does not cultivate thinking on things that are "of good report".

In summary, the essence of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians is that Christians must think on those things that are well reported of by those who know the Lord: *"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them... which are able to make thee wise unto salvation..."* (2 Tim. 3:14-15).■

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