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Do Not Quarrel on the Way

(Convention Address)

(Gen. 45:24)

“So he sent his brethren away, and they departed; and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way”—in other words, see that ye do not quarrel on the way.

BEFORE we come to the relevant implication and our thoughts around this text, we would like to very briefly remind you of how this going away of his brethren eventuated. It began quite a while before; a number of things led up to this going away, and the going back to the father Jacob to bring him down to Egypt. The reason for this command was rather strange,—“See that ye do not quarrel on the way”.

Beginning about chapter 37 right to the end of the book deals with these experiences of Jacob and Joseph and his brethren. The more conversant you are with that story the more you will gather as we go through and incorporate parts of the story. Joseph dwelt in the land of Canaan with his father. It shows his dreams and the effect they had, and later he was sold into slavery. You know all that. But there are a few points to which I would like to draw special attention. First of all, who does not know the story of Joseph and his coat of many colours? This coat was a symbol of two things, first the father's love for this boy; he had great love for the son of his old age. At the same time it was an indication of his inheritance. This was the thing that the sincere ones treasured, this promise of the inheritance. It was a great favour to inherit the promise. It was a source of trouble between Jacob and Esau. Jacob indicated his successor, the one who would take this inheritance. This was his indication to the others that he preferred this inheritance to pass to Joseph. Of course, this caused great concern, because by birth Reuben was the eldest and Joseph was well down the list. Nevertheless this coat of many colours was a symbol of two things, his love and an indication of the promise of divine inheritance that he held in trust from his father Isaac. The older brethren resented this favour, and they hated him so much they could not speak peaceably unto him. The father's selection, that is in regard to the inheritance, was later confirmed in the lad's dreams, and this resulted in greater hatred and loud opposition to having their brother reign over them.

Many of Joseph's experiences seem to correspond with the greater Joseph's. The likeness in many respects can easily be detected. This is not a talk around the correspondences or the resemblances. There are so many that seem to link up. Some can be plainly seen, and others are more or less hidden. One example of the hidden ones is in the dreams that Joseph had. The brothers said they saw in the dreams something that affected them. The Pharisees said the same thing; they perceived in the words of Jesus that

He spoke of them. The old man, in sending his well-beloved son to discover the whereabouts of his brethren, surely resembles the husbandman of the vineyard parable when he sent out his son and said, They will surely reverence my son. The reception the two sons received, Joseph in one instance and the son of the parable in the other, was exactly the same; it was identical. Joseph's brethren saw him coming and agreed to slay him, cast his body into a ditch and say some evil beast hath devoured him. The keepers of the vineyard said, This is the heir, come let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours. These are just a few experiences in the inner life of Joseph which remind us of other things.

Joseph was one of those rare folk who return good for evil. When Jacob sought a messenger to go to the brethren, Joseph said, Here am I, send me. This was in the face of such dreadful opposition that they could not speak peaceably to him. But his chief joy was to do his father's bidding, irrespective of any personal danger to himself. Dressed in the precious coat of many colours, he unwittingly created envy and jealousy. Also the greater than Joseph, crowned with the glory and honour of perfect manhood and with the precious multi-coloured mantle of love, each colour a grace of perfection, unwittingly repelled those He came to save. The opportunity the vicious brothers sought to destroy the lad was fast approaching. They stripped him of his coat, but before they could slay him Reuben intervened. He disliked the thought of innocent blood on his conscience, so he proposed to relieve them of the horror of stark murder. He suggested they bind their victim and cast him into a pit. Secretly, he intended to return and release the lad. We would like to enlarge on that later. The brothers went about their jobs, and some time later, possibly three days, *Judah* saw a merchant caravan approaching, and an opportunity to dispose of the boy and enrich themselves at the same time. Reuben was absent from the rest at this time, and Joseph was sold as a slave for 20 pieces of silver. So with Joseph as good as dead, they went on with their original plan of telling their aged father of the boy's death. So they took the beautiful coat of many colours and stained it with one more colour, that of blood; and this would be indisputable evidence to Jacob of the death of his well-beloved son.

We all know how that strange, mysterious power we call Providence works. About 23 years later this Providence forced the brethren to Egypt to beg for help from Egypt's Prime Minister, unknown to them but none other than he whom they so treacherously treated many long years ago. Joseph had been expecting his brothers, and arranged matters so it would appear they were spies and thieves. The pressure upon them becomes so great that their fears compel them to conclude that the present is a judgment from heaven for their shameful treatment of their younger brother and their father so many years ago. The poet writes,

“Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelms them
To men's eyes.”

Time does not erase a knowledge of sin, or excuse a guilty conscience. A flashback of 20, 30, 40 or 50 years to the memory, is no harder in effort or longer in time than the blink of an eyelid. Memory, that storehouse of the mind where past experiences are compiled for future reference, retains independently of the will faithful pictures in minute detail of all past activities. Memory obeys every command of conscience, and conscience chooses its own time and way and place to relive events of other days. It is idle to pretend one did not do a mischievous act which one would like to forget because it has not been revealed.

But what is the connecting link between this present predicament in which the brothers find themselves in Egypt, and that in Dothan when the brothers rid themselves of their dreamer brother, more than twenty years previously? Memory is awakened by a similarity of circumstances to relive past experiences. This is so convincing that they confess, “God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. We are guilty men.” Maybe they linked the anguish of soul when Joseph pleaded for his life with theirs, now that they are

pleading in anguish for mercy and liberty. They are desperate, as was Joseph, to return to their father. Appearances convicted them as spies and thieves, and they know that they are neither. Treachery is somewhere around the place. There is treachery somewhere, and they know not where, but they know they are not spies or thieves. But this treachery would hardly be something in their lives every week or month. They connect it with the treachery in which they were involved many years ago. So you see how memory reminds them of the two events being alike in so many respects, and how treacherous they were. They were involved in this treachery when they deceived their aged father, and hypocritically, in view of all they had done, tried to comfort him. Isn't it ridiculous? They tried to comfort him. But now they are in the predicament; in appearance someone has plainly tried to convict them as thieves. You remember how this was done with the cup in the sack on the way back. They are framed, just as they framed Joseph. In appearance, they are like thieves and spies. So they produce the evidence in this, of Joseph's dream, that they should bow down to him. Memory and conscience combine to assail the brothers. This is always the case, in every instance. I think there were 23 years between the past and present. They have no refuge, and no deliverer, and they have concluded past behaviour is part of the present, and stand condemned before him whose word was law. They debate their fears and convictions in the presence of the Prime Minister, not aware that he was their brother and understood their language. In this way Joseph learned of their repentance. Their remorseful confessions were so pathetic that Joseph withdrew, and secretly wept.

However, he tests their sincerity of repentance, and finds they are as they claim, true men. But before the crucial test they are invited to dine with him. They came from a starved and parched land, and who would not enjoy such a banquet as Joseph provided? There was no resentment of the special favours Benjamin received, as there was earlier when Joseph received special favours. Joseph knew from bitter experience the resentment they had for him when he received special recognition. So the brethren are dismissed with Egypt's blessings, but very soon they are back again in greater distress than ever, both on Benjamin's account and on account of their aged father.

The final experiment satisfies Joseph, and now he reveals himself as their younger brother whom they sold into slavery. Reconciliation is effected midst tears of sorrow and tears of joy. Who could read Genesis 44 without a lump welling up in the throat? Joseph mercifully encourages them not to reproach themselves, as God's plan overruled it for their good. Reconciled to his brethren, Joseph thinks of their return journey to their father. The gifts he showers upon them are sufficient for all their journeying. Was there any symbolism for them in the gift of a change of garments? Forgiven, joy and peace after reconciliation, laden down with gifts, and still more, a pressing invitation to come to him from their poverty-stricken estate to the best Egypt could offer. What more could be desired? Are they not enriched beyond all expectation, with a guarantee of protection and personal supervision by the mightiest Prince in all the land, coupled with the promise that while they are journeying a place will be prepared for them? Why is it necessary at this historical point, when they had so much for which to be thankful, so many promises, why is it now that this command is given, this parting command — Do not quarrel on the way? Why should they quarrel? They have everything in common to promote a welfare state among themselves. As they commence their journey homewards, their feet would be light with peace and joy and love, and the command not to quarrel would seem most unnecessary.

The parallel experiences of the Greater Joseph and His brethren are remarkable for their many points of similarity. There was also here a betrayal, and some, like the well-intentioned of Joseph's brethren, were powerless to ease the victim's suffering. There were no voices of protest; they all forsook Him and fled. On looking back, all find themselves guilty in some measure of contributing to the suffering of the innocent victim. None could point an innocent

finger at another and expect his own involvement to go unnoticed. The evidence of unrighteousness was too much to deny. But then follow repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, great and merciful gifts, precious promises, all preceding the homeward journey. Jacob the aged patriarch was waiting for them.

God the Father, who is called the God of patience, waits for the Bride of Christ.

After Joseph had completed arrangements for their return, the brothers set out. In the light of their incredible experiences, a new relationship between one and another must have prevailed. The central point of interest would be in their mutual responsibility to their brother Joseph. For many years his death had been mourned. Who could measure their surprise in finding him seated at the right hand of power? How fortunate for them, considering the distress of nations at that time, to have such a respected Advocate pleading their case at the King's court! The gifts they carry are valuable. The promises are precious. And with so much to discuss in the course of travelling, they would hardly notice at parting time the command, Do not quarrel on the way. But the Apostles of the Christian era recognised the full significance of that well-known command, "Love one another as I have loved you." There are so many correspondences in the lives of Joseph's brethren and Jesus' brethren; there is a great similarity in their experiences. In view of certain parables and many texts relative to love, it can reasonably be expected that the command, Do not quarrel, anticipated circumstances which might be expected.

Now, as the journey progresses, the miles seem longer with each succeeding day. There are many inconveniences, daily irritations, even the responsibility of valuable gifts adds to the weight of care. The brothers are human. Unpleasant conditions compel them to veil their feelings. Could they avoid reviewing their previous conduct? Hardly. But rather than add to their worries, they now would view their past in a favourable light. Joseph was right; why should they reproach themselves with something that really worked out so well for the younger brother in particular, and also for themselves? Retrospectively, they are exonerated. But prospectively it is a different matter. An ordeal awaits them in that the good news they carry for their father implicates each one of them in a terrible mischief. The usual procedure is to find a scapegoat. Who was the chief culprit responsible for this guilty conscience they all had? Each could find an excuse for himself and blame another. Excusing himself is so easy to the natural heart, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. A favourite device in excusing self is to magnify another's shortcomings. One of the brothers, to his own advantage, could easily point to another, saying, You were the first to berate Joseph about his dreams. This would be rejected, and the one charged would point his accusation at the one who said, Let us kill him. Since that idea was not adopted, he could easily go to the one who proposed to throw him into the pit and so be free of his blood. Reuben, who proposed this strategy, would be hard pressed to prove that he secretly entertained the idea of saving the lad at a later date. He is involved in the plot unintentionally: he did not mean to do it. But now look at the trouble, look at the mischief! He would be unable to refute the charge, and he could say, Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the boy, and you would not hear? He also had another grievance against the rest, for while he was absent they sold him to the merchants.

Joseph knew his brothers. In the light of present truth, old grievances would rise and gain fresh impetus as each tries to fasten the blame on another. Every brother had a justifiable complaint against the others. Jacob, the father, and Reuben had rent their garments in vain. Joseph was not dead. Charges and counter-charges excite hostility, which soon threatens violence. A crisis in previous years might develop easily, but not now! They are arrested in their folly as they remember their commission and their brother's command, Do not quarrel on the way. Joseph is no mean force, and disobedience to his commands may not be mercifully overlooked to serve personal prejudices. His wise command is necessary to keep the tribe intact. No time for wrangling, attend to the business in hand. Every talent must be accounted for at the end of the journey. He did not wish to erase from their memories past experiences, but that these memories may be used to promote their new lives, the embryo of a new relationship in which Joseph would be a part. To respect his command would once again reinstate loyalty and unity. To return to the old life, in view of recent circumstances, would be to go into a void and stifle growth of understanding. Responsibility to each other is quickened by the Master's command. Thus they are saved from themselves, and once more entrusted with responsibility. God speaks to them again, not through Jacob, but through him whom they once rejected. Joseph was alive in Egypt, but his influence permeated all their

actions, especially their community relationships. He who had the most cause for complaint voiced no grievance, but encouraged them to go forward in newness of life, not forgetting previous folly but all the while remembering the loving-kindness of their brother, who in effect said, Neither do I condemn thee, go your way, and do not quarrel among yourselves.

Another pleasant surprise was also awaiting them, soon to be experienced. Their father Jacob, when all the circumstances of their discovery became known to him, when they said, We have found the lost son at the right hand of Pharaoh, what did he do? He did not, like we would do, order an inquiry and unearth past folly and mete out justly deserved penalties. If Joseph could forgive his brothers and love them, the father himself could also forget the past with all its suffering and sorrow. In this way he certainly portrayed God's love towards us. Jesus said, He that loveth me shall be loved of the Father; Who loves the Son so effectively and deeply He is prepared to condescendingly include in His love all those who love His Son.

The story goes on to tell how Israel removed from Canaan to reside in Egypt close to their princely brother, and how he prospered their welfare. This could not go on forever; Jacob died. With his death, the fears of the brethren returned. They believed Joseph's love towards them was active because of his love for their father, so with Jacob's death they sent a messenger, probably Benjamin, to plead their case for a continuance of favour, and remind Joseph, out of concern for themselves, of their father's will. Their guilty conscience would not allow them to forget, so they doubted that Joseph could forget and forgive. They reminded Joseph of his relationship to them—"We are the servants

of the God of thy father". There was no denying the meaning here. They were not only children of the same father, but worshippers of the same Jehovah. It was saying, We are all brethren, with one Master. Joseph wept. So did Jesus in similar circumstances. They still suspected him and distrusted him. He needed no reminder of the opportunity for justifiable retribution, to revile them for their revilings against him. He dismissed their apprehension by stressing what was always his desire, loyalty to God's will. As leader of the group, he had no intention of quarrelling on the way. A oneness with God is a oneness with all God's people. They were reminded that with the overruling providence of God, all things worked together for good under His guidance, and rather than accuse and quarrel with them, he continued to comfort and speak kindly to them. He reaffirmed his precious promise of doing them good, and set the perfect example to his own command, and did not quarrel in the way.

Having such wonderful examples that inspire us to peaceful intentions and desires, what then when we encounter those whose chief purpose seems to be that of fault-finding? In a parable in Matt. 18:23-35, Jesus illustrates the quarrelsome trait of one servant who, being forgiven the huge debt of 10,000 talents, molested a fellow-servant whose indebtedness was a mere 100 pence. Trusts committed by the Lord to His servants are likened to talents, so each talent wasted or buried is a talent in debt to the Master. He sees still the wicked servant who freely received for himself so much compassion, mercy, grace, loving kindness, and had none to bestow on a fellow servant. Joseph's brethren were so relieved of their burdens of debt that uncharitableness one to another was something that would have to be accounted for. To ignore Joseph's command meant they would incur the sentence that James utters—"They shall have judgment without mercy that have showed no mercy."

When someone has wounded us in the Christian way, we have in our possession live ammunition for a quarrel, and it is remarkable how that ammunition can be used. If we are able to be of that select company whose conscience is void of offence towards God or men, with no conviction of ever having injured another, we can well afford to be generous. But if, like the Apostle Paul, memory constantly reminds us of the injury done to others, intentional or unintentional, like Reuben's, and that the penalty for that injury required the sacrifice of our Saviour, we shall not easily be offended or angry on the way. The Apostle strove to show all meekness to all men, and he lovingly reminds us we ourselves were sometimes foolish.

If one is bent on quarrelling, let it be with oneself. The Psalmist was greatly distressed when he, the Psalmist, found in himself many kinds of sins, even more than there were hairs on his head. (Psalm 40:12.) Maybe we in this dispensation are more virtuous than the Psalmist. Or maybe we hide from ourselves under the cloak of another's righteousness. Whatever it be, behind us lies that stern rebuke, **See that ye do not quarrel on the way;** and before us is that quiet and loving command, **Love one another as I have loved you.**

(This address given by our late Brother Jordan of Adelaide at the Christmas Convention in Melbourne in 1967 will no doubt be appreciated by all readers.)

Showing the Lord's Death.

THE Lord's Supper was first observed or instituted by our Lord Jesus for His devoted disciples on the last night of His earthly ministry,—”on the night in which he was betrayed”, as the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 11:23. We have no record of our Lord even hinting previously, that He was about to give this Supper to His chosen band of Apostles until that very evening. As that evening was the anniversary of the Jewish Passover there are strong reasons for connecting the Lord's Supper with the Jewish Passover feast, which had been kept annually by devoted Israelites in memory of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage when the Lord “passed over” their homes, and saved their firstborns from death, when the firstborns of all Egyptian homes were destroyed on that first Passover night.

The reason God sent that Passover judgment upon the Egyptians was because the time was due for Israel to leave Egypt, and only by this severe judgment of slaying the Egyptian firstborn would Pharaoh allow the Israelites to leave his country. God had chosen Moses and prepared him over a number of years to be the leader of Israel out of Egypt, and both Moses and Aaron received detailed instructions to pass on to all the families of Israel to prepare for the momentous Passover night. These instructions and the outcome are given in the main in Exodus 12:3-14; 21-24; 28-33.

The provision of the Passover lamb was the all-important means of providing protection for Israel's firstborns on that first Passover night,—the blood of the Passover lamb marking the lintel and two side posts of the houses was the sign for the destroying angel to pass over the firstborn of Israel. To show their appreciation of that great deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites were expected to faithfully keep the Passover service each year after that, on the anniversary—the 14th of Nisan. The lamb would be ever prominent in their minds, because the blood gave protection during the first Passover in Egypt.

When Jesus commenced His ministry at 30 years of age we have no record of Him gathering His disciples for the Jewish Passover each year until the last one at the time of completing His sacrifice. No doubt He did observe the previous Passovers, but as there is no reference to those we conclude they were not really important; but the last one at the close of His earthly ministry was all-important. In Luke 22:7-15 we read of the last Passover Jesus observed, the importance of this occasion being indicated by His words—”With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” This was the all-important Passover, before Jesus paid the supreme sacrifice, as He knew He was about to give His own apostles (apart from Judas) the Memorial Supper, the Memorial of His death.

Verses 19 and 20 of Luke 22 read,—”And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the

cup after supper (after the Passover supper), saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” “This do in remembrance of me”, clearly indicated—no longer keep the typical Jewish Passover in commemoration of the coming out of Egyptian bondage, but keep this Memorial in remembrance of His sacrifice as the antitypical “Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” How understandable it is that our Lord meant His followers to keep the Memorial of Him on the anniversary of His death, instead of the annual anniversary of the Passover in Egypt.

Inasmuch as the Apostle Paul was not with our Lord while Jesus was on earth, to receive instructions about the Lord’s Supper, we find he was given special directions about it by revelation. He mentions this in 1 Cor. 11:23-26. After quoting almost exactly the words recorded in the Gospels, he adds,—”For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” The Apostle is not here advising that the Lord’s Supper be taken often. The Amplified Version renders the first part of this verse—”For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup”,—that is, every time the anniversary of Christ’s sacrifice comes round.

Showing or declaring the Lord’s death was no doubt intended by our Lord to have a beneficial effect upon the hearts of His true people. And as He gave the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, symbols of His broken body and shed blood, to His devoted followers to picture participation with Him in His sacrificial death, “showing the Lord’s death” truly includes not only demonstrating our faith and thankfulness in the sacrifice of Christ, but also indicates the willingness of true Christians to sacrifice their human lives with the Master. So, in keeping the Lord’s Supper we show our union with Christ in being sacrificed as His members.

Speaking of the Lord’s true people being united with Christ, the Head, the Apostle Paul stated in 1 Cor. 12:12,— ”For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ”, —the body is united with Him in sacrifice, as it will be also in the glory of the kingdom. The Apostle expressed this matter very clearly and beautifully again when he said of himself,—”Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” (Col. 1:24.) There is nothing here claiming that the sacrifice of the church adds anything of value to Christ’s own sacrifice; rather, because God saw fitting to associate a church class with Christ in glory, so it is necessary that all members of this company demonstrate their devotion and faithfulness to their Master in sacrifice, even unto death.

The thought of being united with Christ in sacrifice is also impressed by the words that Christ’s true members “show the Lord’s death **till he come**”, by partaking the Lord’s Supper in all sincerity; that is, till the last member is joined to Christ, the Head, beyond the veil. So in keeping the sacred yet simple Memorial of Christ’s death, the Lord’s people the world over do this “in remembrance of Christ”, and also sealing their own willingness to continue in the steps of Christ, by His grace, faithful unto death.

The Church of the First-Borns.

“The General Assembly of the Church of the First-borns.”—Heb. 12:22, 23.

THE Church of the First-borns is not to be confounded with the Church of the First Resurrection. The word first, in the phrase First Resurrection signifies better, superior. The First Resurrection includes only the Lord and “the Church, which is his Body”; in other words, the Bride Class. But in this glorified Church of the First-borns are included all those who are born of the spirit. Those who are to be of the spirit nature will be those who have been developed throughout the Gospel Age—before God’s favour goes to the world. This Church of the First-borns includes all who come into covenant relationship with God before the New Covenant is put into force. Some will have part (an inferior part, however, to that of the Church) with the great “High Priest of our Profession” in instituting the New Covenant. They will all have some share with Him in dispensing the blessings of the New Covenant to all the families of the earth—to Israel first, and then to all nations.

This Church of the First-borns is prophetically pictured in the Old Testament in connection with the Passover. In that night when all the first-born of Egypt were slain, all of the first-born of Israel were passed over. These escaped because of the blood on the lintels of their houses and because of their partaking of the lamb within. We know that afterward all of the first-born of Israel were exchanged for the one tribe of Levi; and that this tribe was separated or divided into two parts—one a priestly class and the other a servant class. The former were called Priests; the latter Levites; though, of course, all were Levites. These two classes were types of the Church of the Gospel Age.

“But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; to the General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborns.” (Heb. 12:22, 23.) More properly we understand this to signify that we have approached—this is that to which we are coming—it is in sight. Some have already reached it. Our Lord has reached the goal. And some others of the First-borns have also reached their goal; and some of us have not yet reached it.

But this is what we are approaching. We shall all have come into power and into our place in the Divine Plan, at the close of this Gospel Age. Thereupon will follow the “time of trouble” with which this Age will end, typified by the trembling of the mountain of Sinai. Then, in the same connection, we read that we are approaching an innumerable company of angels.

The Apostle seems to be here setting before us the glories of the future. Not only shall we see our heavenly Father and our heavenly Lord, and be ushered into the Assembly of the Church of the First-borns, but we shall be ushered into the presence of an innumerable company of angels. These are the angels who encamp around about those that fear the Lord and deliver them. (Psa. 34:7.) They are sent to be ministers for those who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1:14.) They have been with us here overseeing our interests; and it will be part of our joy on the spirit plane to make their acquaintance. If the Apostle had neglected to mention these, we would think it strange; for he is enumerating the things to which we are approaching.

Thus we see that the Church of the First-borns includes the “Great Company” of the Levites as thoroughly as it includes the smaller company of the Priests. As the Levites had no inheritance in the land, so not only the “Little Flock” but also the “Great Company,” the servant class, the companions of the Bride, have no share in the earthly inheritance, but will have a share in the heavenly inheritance.

The anniversary of the Memorial of Christ's death falls this year on the evening of Tuesday, 1st April. It is the privilege of the Lord's people to observe this memorial at this season "in remembrance of Christ."

Memorial Services

Melbourne—Sunday, 30th March, at 6.30 p.m., at Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond.

Sydney.—Tuesday, 1st April, at 7 p.m., at 81 James Street (near Norton Street), Leichhardt.

Adelaide—Sunday, 30th March, at 6.30 p.m., at Manchester Unity Building (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide.

Perth—Tuesday, 1st April, at 7.45 p.m., at 7 Harvest Terrace (opposite Parliament House).

The Intents of the heart.

(Convention Address)

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:12-14.)

THE Scriptures make it very clear that God, our Heavenly Father is able to know our every thought and motive, and that there is nothing we can hide from Him. This understanding should have a very sobering effect on us. We accept the Bible record and the fact that God is the Creator of man, and seeing He created the marvellous mechanism of the brain, He can also read the thoughts it records. We are unable to do this. We can only know what is in the mind of another as it is revealed by word or deed, and so can gain only a superficial understanding of others as we know what they say or do.

It is interesting to read the selection of David as king of Israel, as recorded in 1 Sam. 16:7—"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Just in reference to the meaning of "heart", in making preparation for this address the dictionary was found to have a good description of what the heart represents. It reads,—"The heart is the chief organ of the physical life and occupies a most important part of the human system. The word came to stand for man's mental and moral activity. The heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life. The heart being deep within, it represents the hidden man. It represents the true man, which is concealed."

Samuel was sent by the Lord to select and anoint the king for Israel, to be chosen from the sons of Jesse. The seven older sons were passed over, though by appearance they would have been acceptable. David, though smaller and not so attractive, was selected. "The Lord looketh upon the heart." It was David's sincere heart loyalty that later on allowed him to be forgiven when he committed sins. All our thoughts and motives are naked before the Lord. There is nothing we can do to hide them from Him. If we recognise this, it should help us to watch our thoughts and motives very carefully. It could be an encouragement to us as we realise our mistakes and failures are not of the heart, and God deals with us according to our heart intentions.

This seems to be the thought the Apostle has in mind in Heb. 4:14-16, when he says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We can come boldly, or with confidence, to the throne of grace, because we know that through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus we can seek forgiveness for our unintentional sins, if our hearts are right in the sight of God.

When Jesus was on earth, He was able to read the thoughts and intents of the hearts of others. This was through the power of the holy spirit. We remember the time when Philip introduced Nathanael to Him, and He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." This surely indicated that He knew the heart of Nathanael, even before he was introduced to Him.

This is clearly shown also in the life of Peter. Just before He was crucified, He told Peter he would deny Him three times. Peter did not think this was possible, and said to Jesus that he would die for Him before denying Him. No doubt Peter sincerely meant this, but Jesus knew when the test came Peter would deny Him. Peter learnt the lesson. That Jesus knew this in advance and foretold it made a very marked impression on Peter's mind. Later on, after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus was to remind Peter that He knew the thoughts and intents of his heart. The incident is recorded in John 21. It was here that the disciples decided to return to their fishing business. They laboured all night without catching a fish. In the morning they saw a stranger on shore. He questioned as to whether they had any fish, and the answer being "No", the stranger advised them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, and to their surprise the net was filled. A similar miracle had occurred when Jesus first called them to follow Him, so they knew this was Jesus. Peter swam ashore to greet Jesus, and they made a fire and prepared a meal and ate together. It was after eating together, and still on the shore of the lake, that Jesus questioned Peter. He said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He said unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." That Jesus asked Peter three times, "Lovest thou me?" must have taken Peter's mind back to the time when, before the crucifixion, he denied Him three times. This must have been a reminder to Peter that Jesus still knew every thought and intent of his heart. By now Peter realised he could hide nothing from his Master. That is why he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee."

Yes, Jesus did know what was in Peter's heart, and He knows what is in our hearts. In the resurrection Jesus was exalted to the Divine nature, and it is true of Him, as it is of our Heavenly Father, that all the thoughts and intents of our hearts are open and naked before Him; He knows us better than we know and understand ourselves. This would be a terrifying thought if we did not know He is our sympathetic Advocate before the Heavenly Father, and that God does not look upon us according to our imperfect, fallen flesh, but according to the intentions of the heart.

We get a similar lesson from the church at Ephesus. Though the message to the seven churches covers the period of the church's history, it is true of a group of Christians or an individual Christian at any time. This message says,

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." These are

wonderful commendations indeed. But the Lord said, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” This could be true of us. It seems important that when we realise our hearts are open and naked before God, we should search our own hearts, and this should be a lesson from the message we have just read. When we look back over our past, especially to the early years of our consecrated life, have we the same love for the Lord now as we had then? Have we the same love for the Lord’s people as we had then? Because our love for the Lord will be shown by our love for the brethren. If Jesus said to us today, “Lovest thou me?” could we answer as Peter did, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?” If because of weakness of the flesh our good intentions fail, we have an assurance from the Apostle Paul, “Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, and find mercy and grace to help in time of need.”

We saw earlier that David was selected as king of Israel because God knew his heart. Later on he did commit some sins which were not good in the sight of God. David sought forgiveness, and was later restored to favour with God. He said, “Search me, O Lord, and know my heart.” We also should be pleased, as was David and Peter, that God knows our heart. David seems very much impressed with this thought, for in the Psalms so many times he mentions how the heart should be kept. Psa. 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” He also said in Psa. 19:14, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.”

Question Box

Question.—Please explain Rev. 14:1-5. If the women referred to are unfaithful church systems, just where are we to draw the line; where do they start and finish as such?

Answer.—These verses seem clearly to picture the church triumphant—the overcomers of the Gospel Age. The statement is that these have not been defiled with women. That would appear to intimate that they had kept the faith and not had their hearts deflected by the allurements which are associated with these women, i.e., church systems which have lost their first love, and became entangled in earthly matters and confused in doctrine.

Woman in the Bible appears to represent a church. Virgins represent those who have preserved their hearts in purity, looking forward to the great marriage of the Lamb. The “woman” that “sits as a queen,” or “Jezebel,” represents the unfaithful church—a church married to the world, leaning on a secular arm. So “women” in this passage would refer to any church that has become allied with the world. The worldly spirit has taken possession of the churches today. There can be no doubt we are living in the Laodicean period, and that the message of Rev. 3:14-21 is applicable. Worldly alliance and associations have crept in and the spirit of Christ has been quenched. The congregations are mostly kept together by sports, games, socials, dances, card parties, etc. The true Church, the “chaste Virgin,” is not attracted by such things, but by the glorious hope of sharing with her Lord in the joys of His Kingdom. Instead of the spirit of the world she is held together by the holy spirit of consecration, of faith in Christ and fellowship around the Word of God. The true Christian must consider just how far such Laodicean conditions prevail, or whether there is food from the Word of God provided; whether the doctrine is pure and God is glorified by the revealing of His glorious character and plan of salvation, so that there may be growth in grace and in knowledge and progress made in the work of transformation into the likeness of Christ.

Adelaide Easter Couvention

The Adelaide brethren are arranging for their Easter Convention this year from Good Friday to Easter

Monday (D.V.), in Manchester Unity Building (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide. Further information from the secretary—Mrs. R. Jordan, 14 Newark Road, Torrens Park, South Australia, 5062.

A very good Oxford Bible, with References, India paper, thumb index, Brevier clear type, Persian *Morocco* binding, is now available at \$9.50.

Oxford Teachers' Bible, with References, India paper, thumb index, Brevier clear type, Persian *Morocco* binding, with Oxford Helps, Subject Index and Concordance, \$11.50.

Christians often need to be reminded that with only one pair of hands they cannot thread two needles at the same time. "A Saint of Old."