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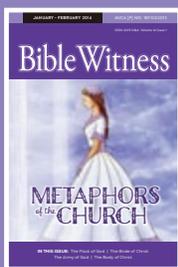
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Bible Witness



METAPHORS *of the* CHURCH

IN THIS ISSUE: The Flock of God | The Bride of Christ
The Army of God | The Body of Christ



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THE CHURCH & HER CHRIST

Prabhudas Koshy

Prabhudas Koshy

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Ex - alt, O Church, thy great Re - dec - mer, Ex - tol His glo - rious work on the cross;
 A - dore, O Church, thy lov - ing Shep - herd, Ad - mire He who stands be - fore thee;
 Sub - mit, O Church, to thy glo - ri - ous Head, Sub - ject to ev - ry Word of His pow'r;
 Sur - round, O Church, thy King's throne on high, Sup - ply all thy pow'rs to sing His praise;

8 A7 Bm/D Bm7/A G D/F#m G D/F#m

Ex - claim, O Church, that He died for sin - ners, Ex - pound His Gos - pel truths to ev - 'ry
 At - tend, O Church, to His voice, pure and glo - rious, Ad - here to all His words, full of
 Sur - vey, O Church, His ma - jes - tic gran - deur, Sur - ren - der to thy Lord, cloth'd with
 Sus - tain, O Church, thy hymns of His king - dom, Sur - pass all earth - ly charms and set thy

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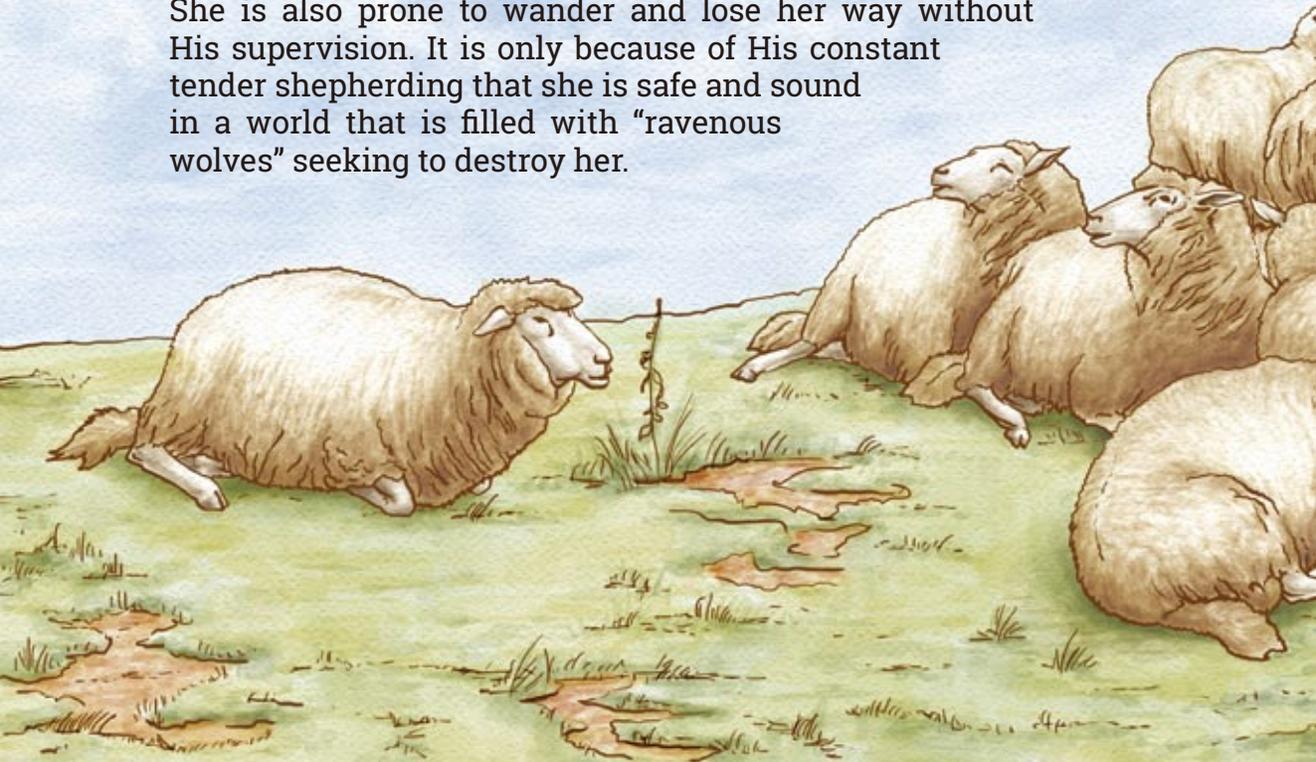
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The Flock of God

Prabhudas Koshy

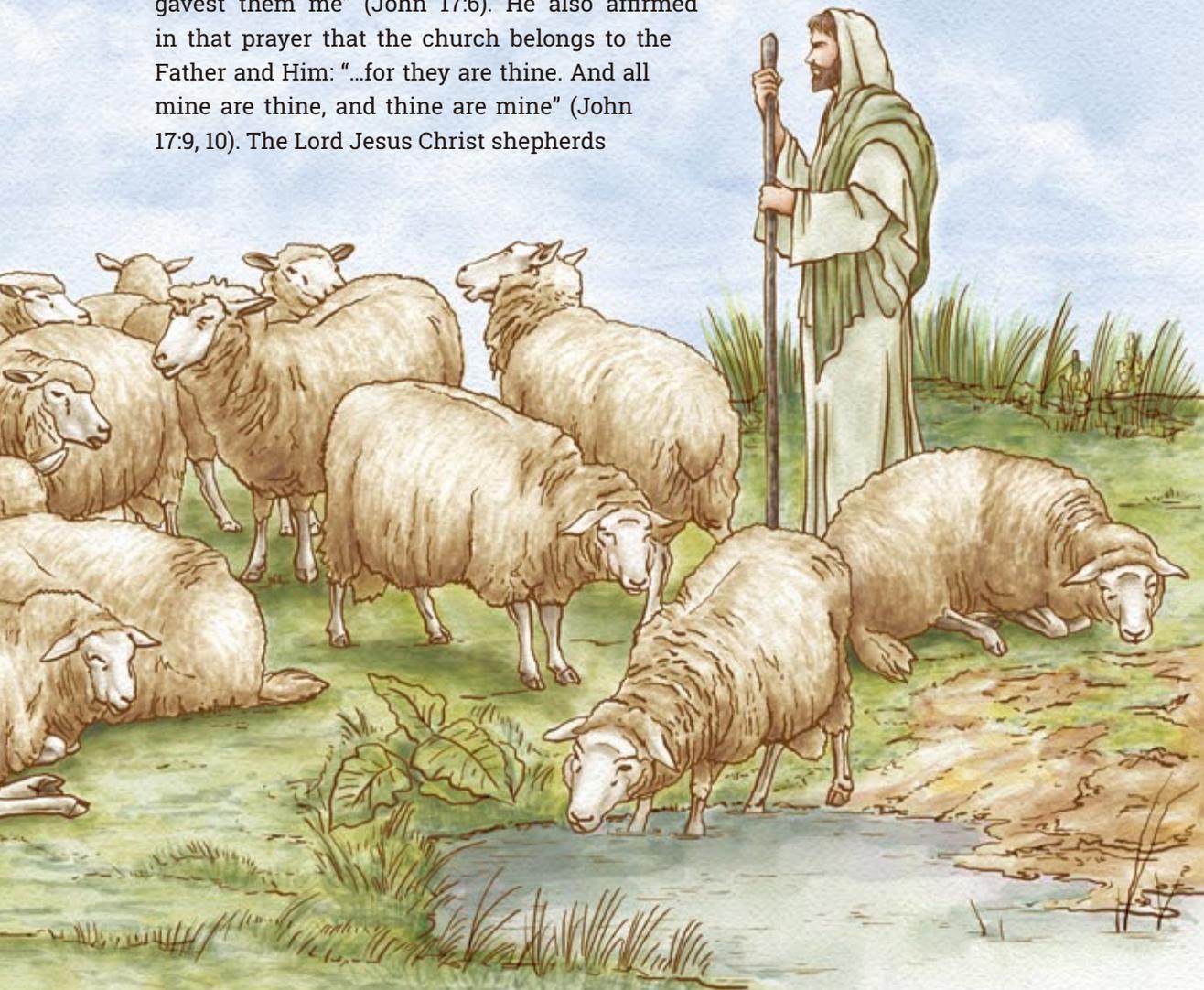
The church is depicted as “the flock of God”, to specifically emphasise God’s great love and care for the church. As Shepherd of His flock, God not only owns the church, but also tenderly leads, feeds and protects her. Like any flock of sheep, the church is weak and defenceless without her Shepherd. She is also prone to wander and lose her way without His supervision. It is only because of His constant tender shepherding that she is safe and sound in a world that is filled with “ravenous wolves” seeking to destroy her.



The Flock's Shepherd

The Lord God has always been the Shepherd of His people; the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, points to this picture of His relationship with His people. The Lord has been the "Shepherd of Israel" (Psalm 80:1; cf. Psalm 78:52; 79:13; 95:7; Isaiah 40:10, 11; Ezekiel 34:11, 30, 31), with His people responding to Him, saying, "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3).

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to this world, He proclaimed, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14), and referred to the church as "my lambs" (John 21:15) and "my sheep" (John 10:14, 26, 27; 21:16, 17). The church is Christ's flock because His Father has given them to Him. Christ acknowledged this truth when He prayed, "thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (John 17:6). He also affirmed in that prayer that the church belongs to the Father and Him: "...for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine" (John 17:9, 10). The Lord Jesus Christ shepherds



the church, the flock of His Father. The church belongs to both the Father and the Son; and the Holy Spirit effects the divine love and care for the flock through the appointment of godly men as elders of the church (cf. Acts 20:28).

Christ has proven His loving ownership of the flock by giving His life for them that they may be redeemed from sin and eternal damnation. He said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He gave His life for the sheep that He may purchase them for Himself. It was not for His own defence that He shed His blood, but to pay the ransom for whom He came to save. Hence, in Acts 20:28, the Apostle Paul referred to the church as "the flock, ...the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood". Through His sacrificial death, Christ has proven Himself to be "the Good Shepherd" and also "the Great Shepherd" of the church (cf. Hebrews 13:20). So the Apostle Peter said to Christians, "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). The church's True and Chief Shepherd is Christ (1 Peter 5:4).

Christ, the Shepherd of the church, knows every sheep of His flock. He knows whom He owns. He knows them collectively and individually. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep" (John 10:14). He knows them by name and "he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:3). He calls them out from their fold and leads them by His voice (through His Word) to "green pastures" and "still waters" (Psalm 23). Jesus illustrated His role of the Shepherd when He said, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and

the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4). Jesus also said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Today, His sheep hear His voice through His Word and they obediently follow His counsel.

Christ the Shepherd is a tenacious defender of His flock. He is not like the "hirelings" who have no commitment to protect the flock against the vicious forays of the enemy. Christ did not mince His words in describing the hirelings thus: "But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep" (John 10:12-13). But Christ the Good Shepherd, in order to deliver His sheep from their adversary, laid down his life for them (cf. John 10:11), with this comforting assurance: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

Christ, as the Shepherd, is the church's redeemer, provider, protector and guide.

The Flock's Under-shepherds

The Lord God has always instructed the leaders of His people that they ought to be loving and faithful shepherds who tend His flock. The leaders of His people are required to lead the people according to His will and purposes. They are exhorted to be men of spiritual and moral integrity with a wholehearted devotion to the Lord, their

“Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4), and a deep love for His people and His work.

Moses’ prayer to God for a future leader for His people, recorded in Numbers 27:16-17, comprehensively describes the shepherding job of the leader: “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.”

Moses prayed that God would “set a man over the congregation” to shepherd them. The shepherds of His people must be those who are called and appointed by God to watch over and lead the people. Paul iterated, in his conversation with the elders of the church in Ephesus, that “the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God...” (Acts 20:28). When the Lord calls them and equips them to be shepherds of His flock, they will have all the spiritual qualities (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), spiritual abilities (1 Timothy 4:6, 11-16; 5:17; 2 Timothy 1:5-6; 2:2, 15, 24-26; 1 Thessalonians 5:12) and spiritual concerns (Acts 20:24, 28-31; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Timothy 6:11-12, 20; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3) that characterise God’s choice shepherds.

As shepherds, they are exhorted to “feed the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2; cf. John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28). The Greek word that Peter used for “feed” (*poimainō*) indicates the care, guidance and protection which a shepherd extends to his flock. When Jesus exhorted Peter in John 21:15-17 to “feed” His flock, He used this same word (*poimainō*) one time and another Greek word (*bōskō*)

two times, which has to do with causing animals, particularly pasturing animals, to eat. So the Lord’s expectation of His under-shepherds is that they will tend His flock like a genuine shepherd who is committed to nurture, protect and lead his sheep.

It is important to take note that the Greek word which the Apostle Paul used for “pastors” (*poimēnas*) in Ephesians 4:11, means “shepherds”. Paul clearly referred to them as “pastors and teachers”. They shepherd the flock by “labour(ing) in the word and doctrine” (1 Timothy 5:17;). Faithful preaching (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2; Colossians 1:28) and teaching of the Word of God (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2, 24) nourish the souls of God’s flock. Pastors ought to be able and faithful ministers of God’s Word that they may adequately and appropriately teach the flock of God, so as to nourish and guide them.

Pastors are also to watch over the flock that they may not be misled or destroyed by “ravaging wolves” that would suddenly appear among the flock. They are the flock’s camouflaged enemies. Much vigilance and courage will be required to ward off these adversaries of God’s flock. Jesus warned, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves” (Matthew 7:15; cf. 2 Peter 2:1). Likewise, Paul warned the Ephesian elders, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:29-31). So Paul’s counsel to the under-shepherds was to “take heed

therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). Those who come to destroy the church will try to influence the church with unbiblical doctrines and unholy practices (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-3). Paying careful attention to guard the flock against false teachers is a major task of every pastor and elder overseeing His flock. This is certainly not the most pleasant or easiest of work one would like to do. It would require much boldness and confidence in the Lord. Like David, who fought with a lion and a bear while tending his father's flock in order to deliver the lamb from their paws, pastors and elders must be ready to fight a good fight of faith to protect the believers from unscrupulous men who creep into the church (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 6:3-5, 11-12).

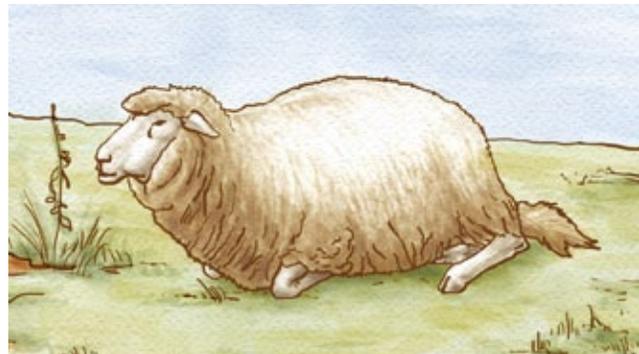
The Flock of His Pasture

God's flock are characterised by certain unmistakable spiritual characteristics, which distinguish them from the rest of the world. Those distinguishing marks also help to prove that they are not wolves in sheep's clothing that have crept into His flock unawares. These spiritual qualities are also helpful and necessary to keep the flock together under the supervision of the under-shepherds whom the Lord has made overseers.

The sheep of His flock will follow the voice of the Lord. Jesus said about His sheep that "they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). This is a definite, distinct characteristic of all the sheep of His flock.

Jesus earlier said in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Upon hearing His voice, whoever goes to Him shall be among the flock of His pasture. Jesus said again, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Every sheep of His flock is delighted to hear and follow the Shepherd's voice. Today, they hear the voice of the Shepherd through the Word of God being preached and taught by His faithful under-shepherds. So God's flock are admonished in Hebrews 13:7 to "remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

All the obedient sheep who follow the Lord shall be brought together "and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). They will be united under His voice. They shall not go to flocks and pastures where the voice of their Shepherd cannot be heard. They are always happy to be in the company of those who follow the voice of the Great Shepherd. If any of His sheep wanders away, he shall then cry out, like the psalmist who said, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" (Psalm 119:176). All His sheep shall confess together: "For



he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Psalm 95:7, 8; cf. Psalm 100:3). Thus they shall rejoice together in His presence, and worship Him as their Shepherd (Psalm 80:1), saying, "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations" (Psalm 79:13).

At times, this world may be very daunting for His sheep. They would have to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4), which is filled with all kinds of enemies and evil. However, like the psalmist, they can say, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Our Shepherd gently assures us, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). He will never forsake us till He brings us to our eternal home. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). Finally, our wonderful Shepherd, who came as the Lamb of God to suffer and die to redeem His flock, shall receive us into His glorious, comforting and joyful presence that we may for ever be with Him – "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed (*poimainō*) them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17). ■



Bible Witness

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"...ye shall be witnesses unto me..." Acts 1:8

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The
Bride
of
Christ

Ho Kee How

The church has been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9b), and is to be presented as "a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2b), among other metaphorical depictions used in Scripture. Hence, the phrase "bride of Christ", though not found in the Bible, is a most biblical figure of the church in her relation to Christ. In the light of Ephesians 5:25-27, 32 (which speaks of "a great mystery... concerning Christ and the church"), we gather that this spiritual bride is being assiduously prepared for presentation to the Heavenly Bridegroom, Christ Himself.

In the more conservative biblical times (unlike our self-indulgent, decadent modern-age), a bride is understood to be a virgin who has been espoused to one man and no other. A bride is also one who keeps and guards zealously her chastity before the consummation of her marriage to the bridegroom. Needless to say, she looks forward to her wedding with great anticipation and eagerness as she awaits her presentation to her bridegroom. This figure of a bride as a representation of the church in her relation to Christ, underscores certain crucial inclinations and dispositions of all true believers as we await the world's next most momentous event, namely Christ's second coming.

As the virgin bride awaiting the coming of her Bridegroom, the church has the responsibility to keep herself pure. "Beloved, ...when (Christ) shall appear, we shall be like him... . And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Our "manner" should be

"in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11b), that we may be found blameless at His coming. Furthermore, just as a bride has to forsake all others and separate herself only for her bridegroom, the church is also to keep unspotted from the world, having been "espoused... to one husband" (2 Corinthians 11:2). In other words, the church, as bride of Christ, must keep herself separate from anything that will "beguile" and "corrupt" her "from the simplicity (or single-hearted faith) that is in Christ" and thereby to accept "another gospel" (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). The only safeguard is to "take heed... unto the doctrine; (and) continue (i.e. persevere) in them" (1 Timothy 4:16), "lest ye... fall from your own stedfastness" (2 Peter 3:17b).

The analogy doesn't stop here. Like a bride who can't wait for her big day to come sooner and is ever ready to meet her groom, the church is expectantly "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of... Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). As our citizenship is in

heaven, it behoves all true believers to “watch therefore” and be prepared for the unannounced yet imminent “hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:13).

This figure of the church as the bride, essentially a prophetic metaphor revealing the eternal union now being formed but yet to be consummated between Christ and His perfected Bride in glory, nonetheless delineates 3 vital areas which all true believers should pay attention to, namely purity of personal life, perseverance in sound doctrine, and preparedness for Christ’s return.

Purity of Personal Life

Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature”; yet it did not take us long to realise that after becoming a Christian, we are entered into a formidable arena of conflict. “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” Paul’s words in Romans 7:19 perhaps sum up our inner “battlefield” most succinctly. We are all too familiar with the wretched flesh still present in us, ever lurking to drag us down into wrongdoing if we but just lower our guard. Oh, the downward pull of sin – the lust of the flesh / eyes, the pride of life – is always there.

Yes, the moment we become regenerated, we are sanctified positionally (though not sinlessly perfect). But we do not stop there. We need to go through progressive or practical sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3), which is ongoing. That requires constant vigilance and a relentless fight

to the end against sin! True, at the point of salvation, our darkened minds have been illumined by God’s marvellous light and there was a 180°-turn when we experienced marked changes in our convictions and values. Yet there are still old ways of set thinking, deep-seated misguided attitudes and deeply-entrenched ungodly world views that need to be changed as we swim against the tide of a godless, corrupt culture around us – and fight the good fight of faith! How well we fare on our Christian journey depends on how much we allow ourselves to be sanctified and cleansed “with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26).

Clearly, God’s Word (preached and read and meditated upon) is the cleansing instrument to purge us from our entanglement with sin. No wonder Paul in Romans 12:2a exhorts us to stop being “conformed to this world” but be continually “transformed by the renewing of (our) mind (through God’s Word, of course)”, which is a command to do so repeatedly. This intimates an ongoing battle and therefore lifelong spiritual discipline. Undeniably, an unclean and “unwashed” mind is perhaps the greatest hindrance to personal purity. Alas, Satan uses all he can in the environment and mass media to provoke an evil, impure mind in us. How to conquer an unclean mind?

There is something negative, and something positive to take note of. Be selective in your reading, TV viewing and Internet access. Avoid looking at suggestive magazines, posters and other displays. Cinemas are out. Why subject yourself to undue temptation and undesirable influence, if you can help it? Rather, take heed of Philippians 4:8 and exert yourself

to the various means of grace. By engaging in worship services, prayer gatherings, Bible studies, fellowship meetings, camps, retreats and the like, we fill our minds with lofty thoughts and high resolve through “the washing of water by the word”. Beloved, “Keep thy heart (and mind) with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). The Christian who guards this area well is halfway to victory already, insofar as purity of life is concerned.

Perseverance in Sound Doctrine

The Bible speaks specifically of a troubling phenomenon among the churches worldwide that must transpire before our Lord’s imminent return. There will be a “falling away first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3a) from the historic biblical faith; Christendom will manifest apostasy. In the face of prevalent doctrinal liberalism and compromise in Christendom worldwide, biblical separation is simply not an option but an indispensable part of our not being conformed to the world. Let us not forget the figure of a bride – she has forsaken all others, her relationship to her bridegroom being an exclusive one. However, the prevailing mood among serious thinking men, both in the church and the world, is towards unity, cooperation and inclusivity. In this modern climate of world opinion, to lay exclusive claims to the truth is scandalous and arrogant. Mergers with contemporary culture, worldliness, and even with Roman Catholicism (as manifested in the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” movement), are considered worthy and compatible goals to aspire to. Ecumenical cooperation is the way to go forward in this

postmodern, advanced, sophisticated era! All true believers, as the bride of Christ, must surely cringe at such unchaste spiritual “flirtations”.

Make no mistake, Satan, our adversary is a wily foe, and has throughout the church age been bent on subverting the “once-delivered” faith of God’s saints. It has constantly been his all-consuming design to defeat the church in whatever diabolical way he could. It is no exaggeration to say that we Christians in the 21st century are living in an age of information explosion. Many ideas and views come to us via the media, schools, workplaces and authoritative voices in society, all vying to capture our imagination and influence our convictions, together with the philosophies, world views and lifestyles they espouse. For believers living / working in pragmatic, highly connected and advanced societies (like Singapore and many first-world cities), the pressure is even more intense, being subject to many so-called expert voices from the political to the educational and even religious realms. Dare we accept undiscernibly what the government, universities and ecumenical churches advocate, without question?

We do well to draw a lesson from American society in the early 20th century, where humanistic philosophies spawned by the Liberalism-Modernism uprising were enthusiastically received by the world’s academic leaders as great advances in modern thought, which gradually pervaded and deeply influenced societal thinking, affecting even the churches. Not surprisingly, “theological liberalism” soon made significant inroads into the Protestant church in America, subverting the faith of many so-called evangelicals!

Be not deceived, O Christians: "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). How do we go through this life unscathed, unspotted by the world's corruptions? The only safeguard is to hold fast the faithful word we have been taught (Titus 1:9) and persevere in the Biblical doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16), "for the time will come when (many) will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3a).

Preparedness for Christ's Return

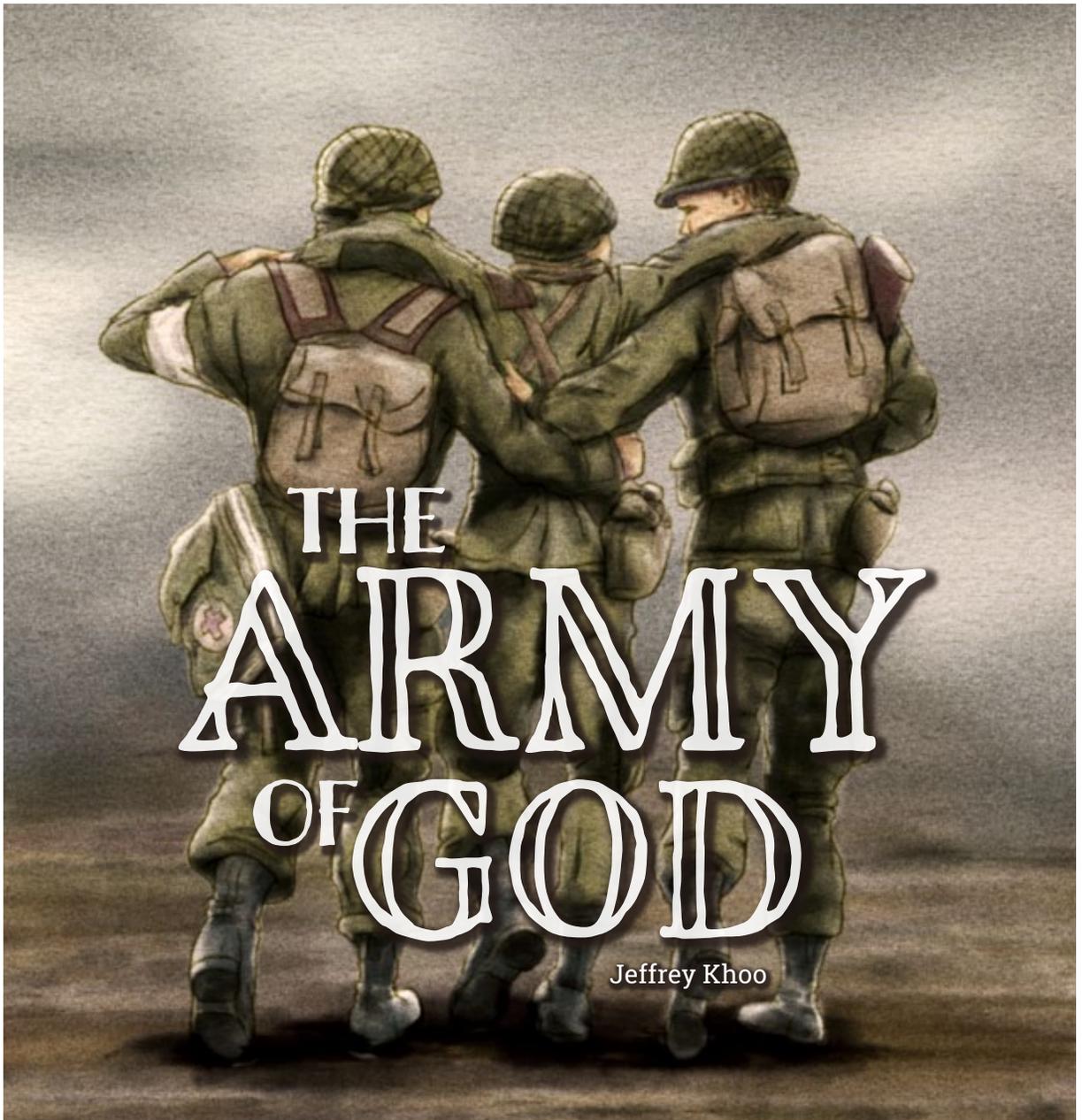
Incidentally, the Lord tells us that His return will be at an unexpected hour, like "a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). This ought to instil in us a vigilant preparedness for His second coming, much like a faithful steward's awaiting his master's return while being given charge over the master's household in his prolonged absence (Matthew 24:45-46).

It is instructive to note that after finishing listing some of the signs prior to His second coming, in response to his disciples' queries regarding the end-times, Jesus went on to narrate the parable of the 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Interestingly, the imagery of a wedding (often a Jewish symbol of the end of the age), is used to emphasise a specific eschatological truth, namely our readiness to meet the Lord at His return. This time, we are associated with the conduct of the bridesmaids-party. Their readiness, in a sense, reflects the bride's readiness as well to receive the bridegroom. We are to be like the 5 wise virgins who, though surprised by the bridegroom's belated and sudden arrival at midnight, were not caught off-guard, because they had been

diligent and thorough in their preparations to welcome the bridegroom by keeping their lamps "trimmed" and still lighted. This tells us it is possible not to be caught by total surprise, the unknown nature of the exact time notwithstanding.

This is also intimated by Matthew 16:2-3 and Luke 12:54-56, two parallel passages which warn about the need to discern the signs of the times. The lesson here is that there is no substitute for watchful vigilance. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Someday, the "midnight cry" will be heard again: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" It is so easy for us to grow weary, careless, and spiritually sleepy as we await the unexpected hour of Christ's soon return. Some will be ready to meet Him; some will not. Some will go in to sup with Him; some will be left, as it were, "standing at the door". In which group will you be? How to stay prepared? Be not engrossed in things that do not matter to God's kingdom, lest "that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4). Work "while it is day" before "the night cometh" (John 9:4); occupy till He comes again!

Beloved, "seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him... without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14), as befitting a holy bride prepared for that most worthy Heavenly Bridegroom, namely God's beloved Son, who has given Himself for her. As part of the invisible universal Church consisting of a called-out company of born-again believers throughout the ages, we look forward to the day when we will be made ready as "a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2b), wholly purified and made qualified for His eternal and glorious companionship. Amen. ■



Are we as Christians looking for a fight? Gangsters do that, but Christians do not. The Bible teaches us to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18). However, although the Bible teaches us to be a peaceful and peace-loving people, it does not mean that we do not or cannot fight when necessary, especially when there is a need for self-protection and self-defence.

Singapore is a peaceful and peace-loving country, yet she has her police and armed forces. Why? It is because there are wicked and evil people out there who can

do great harm to society and country. It would be foolish for a country not to have a defence force to protect her safety and guard her peace from the dangers that

surround her. The church likewise must be armed spiritually for the sake of self-protection and self-preservation.

The Bible requires all Christians to be “sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). That is why the church on earth is a church militant, that needs to be constantly vigilant, putting on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:11). That is why the church on earth must continue to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). And that is also why the church must cease not to preach against sin and error, so as to combat worldliness and falsehoods that seek to destroy her faith and her members.

For this reason, the Apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy concerning the need to fight a good fight of faith. “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12).

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul taught Timothy what he must do to fight this good fight of faith: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” How to protect and defend the faith? The biblical (and the best) way is to preach the Word. The Word here refers to the Word of God—the Holy Scriptures. The necessity and goodness of the Word of God have already been taught by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness.” The inspired Scripture—all its God-breathed words—are good for all believers for the protection of our mind (“for doctrine, for reproof”) and our heart (“for correction, for instruction in righteousness”).

How we need the Word of God in our battle against Satan and against sin, the Word of God being the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) that can defeat Satan and defend us from his sinful temptations.

Armed with the Sword of the Spirit, we must “be instant in season, out of season”. We must always be on “standby”, ever ready to go into action or battle when called upon, be it in peacetime or in wartime. The minister of God must be like the fireman or policeman, always on 24-hour standby – just like the founding pastor of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore, the late Rev Dr Timothy Tow, who repeatedly told his members, “Ring pastor ... anytime.”

CONTEND AGAINST SIN AND ERROR

Being a church militant requires doing things that may be unpleasant, like refuting and rebuking someone in error or in sin. John MacArthur, the popular and famous Bible expositor, at one point in time denied the Eternal Sonship of Christ. He taught that Christ was not the Son of God since eternity past; He only became the Son of God when He was born into this world at the time of His incarnation. Fundamental ministers of the Gospel in the United States took him to task and refuted his erroneous view on the Sonship of Christ. Thankfully, MacArthur repented. He no longer believes nor teaches this heresy. The Bible is very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ has always

been the Son of God from eternity past (John 1:14, 18).

Sin must be rebuked. Paul spared no effort to rebuke the carnality that was in the Corinthian church. A whole lot of worldliness has crept into the church today through the Charismatic Movement and Contemporary Christian Music (CCM). The megachurches in Singapore like City Harvest, New Creation and Lighthouse Evangelism are vivid proofs of how much churches today have been influenced by the world. Instead of separating themselves from the world, they have embraced the world and become like the world. The church militant is a church that believes and practises the biblical doctrine of separation. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

It is not enough just to refute and rebuke, there is a need to exhort as well. What not to do must be followed up by what to do. There is a need to encourage holy living. The work of refuting, rebuking and exhorting must all be done with much godly patience and with a clear presentation of the teaching of God's Word. Doctrine is not dry and academic. Doctrine is faith-imparting and life-giving. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which

testify of me" (John 5:39). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

STAND FAST IN BATTLE MODE

Why must the church be in battle mode? Paul gives the reason: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). In His Olivet discourse, Jesus warned His people thrice to watch out for false Christs and false prophets in the last days – "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:11). "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24).

Hear the pertinent words of the late Rev Dr Carl McIntire—the foremost contender for the faith in the 20th century: "The Church of Christ simply cannot be preserved without emphasis upon separation from the world and from apostasy. The church of Christ is not a hotchpotch or a forum. It is a standard. That standard must be kept unsullied and pure. It is a banner; it is a flag; it is an army marching as to war."

Truly, as God's standard, the church militant is destined for final victory, for even "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18b). ■

The BODY OF CHRIST

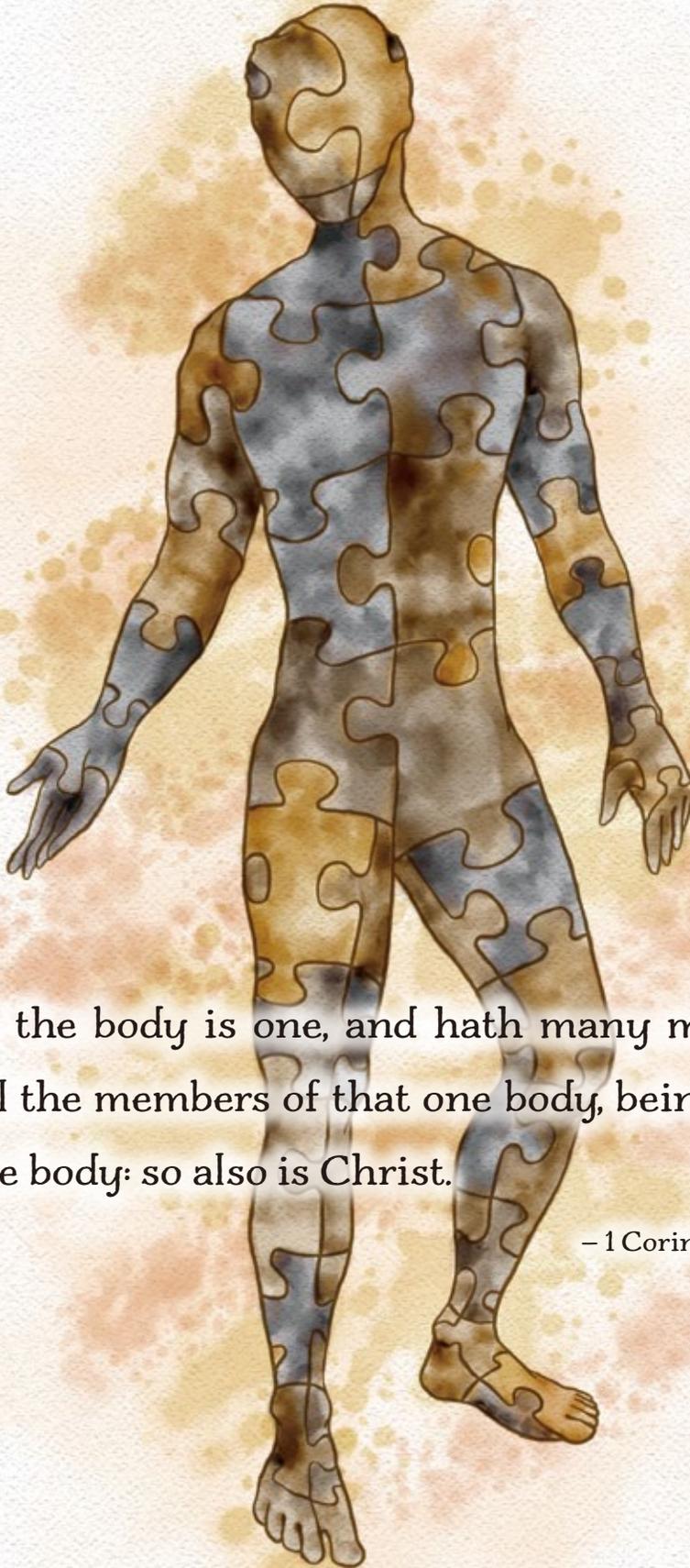
Dennis Kabingue

Ho Kee How & Prabhudas Koshy

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27, the Apostle Paul portrays the church as the body of Christ. Upon regeneration, born-again believers are joined together in a living union with Christ and automatically become members of Christ's body, "made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The emphasis here is on the church as an organism, a living union of all true believers in Christ. It is not merely an organization; nor is it a collection of discrete and unrelated parts. Paul purposefully employed the picture of the human body to help God's people understand that the church is an organism (just like the human body) with many members under one Head – Jesus Christ the Lord.

Body of Christ in Relation to its Head

We cannot ignore the rich lessons that Paul wants believers to learn from this metaphor. This anatomical representation is indeed instructive. Just as the body is governed and empowered by the nerve-centre in the brain (i.e. the head), the church as the body of Christ is presided over and vitalized by Christ the Head of the church. This headship of Christ (which has 2 aspects) is clearly borne out in Ephesians 1:22-23 – "And [God] hath put all things under his [Jesus'] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,



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.

– 1 Corinthians 12:12

which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Submission to His Leading

Oh, what glorious truth! God’s infinite, eternal and unchangeable power, which has raised Christ “from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:20), is the same power that has elevated Him to His pre-eminent and rightful place of authority and honour. In Christ’s exaltation, all creatures, in fact all creation in heaven and earth, have been made subject to Him. The overwhelming truth is Christ reigns over all kings, presidents, rulers, principalities and powers. God has put all things under Christ’s feet; He is Lord over all things.

Now, this Head of the universe and the heavenlies has also been given to the church as its Head. As “functional” Head, Christ is the indisputable Leader, the prime mover; in short, the “President” who directs and controls every act, thought and intent of His body. The church must therefore rely on Christ and follow His direction. In other words, Christ manages every aspect of the church. It is clear that in the church of God, the pre-eminence belongs to **Christ alone**. Pastors, elders, deacons, members, boards, councils are subservient to the authority of Christ. No one but Christ has the ultimate say in the church, because He is the One whom the Father has appointed to the highest office in the body of Christ. “And he is the head of the body, the church... that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). As inseparable members of His body, we are to submit to His bidding, for our blessing lies in our true obedience to God’s will as revealed in His Word.

Trust in His Supply

That is not all. We, the body, derive all our spiritual vitality from Christ the Head, much like the branches drawing life-giving sap from the vine. By virtue of our inseparable union with Christ in whom “all fulness dwell” (Colossians 1:19), the church becomes partaker of the goodness of the One who possesses all the fullness of God, for “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). This means the church as the body of Christ is filled by Him with all the graces that it needs. “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). As “anatomical” Head, Christ is also the “Provider”; He provides believers with “all things that pertain unto life (physical blessings) and godliness (spiritual blessings)” (2 Peter 1:3a). Do not forget, He is the One who holds the whole universe together, sustaining His creation by His Providence, for “by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). This same Christ is the Head who nourishes and cherishes the church, the way a man does to his own flesh (Ephesians 5:29). Christ’s love and nurture of the church give believers utmost trust in His supplying the church with all its needs for its well-being from His inexhaustible “fulness... that filleth all in all”.

Body of Christ in Relation to its Members

The human body has a marvellous unity. It is not a motley assortment of disjointed organs, but a well-regulated and highly-coordinated organism. In just the same way, the church as the body of Christ is to manifest this oneness among

its members. "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. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

Spiritual Unity of Believers

How the body works in tandem to fulfil its various physiological functions is an amazing picture of immaculate unity. When one is thirsty and in need of a drink, the brain sends a signal to the feet to move the body to the water dispenser, whereupon the hand automatically reaches out to fill a glass with water to bring up towards the mouth, which almost simultaneously opens to let the thirst-quenching water flow down the throat, to refresh the whole body. A series of well-coordinated, synchronized actions go almost undetected to fulfil a commonplace physical need. What a vivid picture of the spiritual unity expected of all the members who comprise Christ's body as they worship and serve together in various ministries as a church!

This is what Christ has desired of His followers as an irrepressible witness to the world, when He prayed that "they all may be one... that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21, 23). Spiritual unity also means guarding against divisiveness. Christ's body is an undivided body. Each member must do his part to keep the unity in the church, working together with the rest as one body subservient to one Head, Jesus Christ. He must love the brethren, maintain humility of heart and bear the weaknesses of others for the sake of unity

in the body of Christ. Knowing how prone we are to self-centredness, Paul beseeched us to "walk... with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). May God help us keep this "fellowship of kindred minds".

Interdependence of Believers

God is the Great Designer of the mightily complex human body. The orderly and harmonious functioning of different parts of the body is indeed wondrous to behold, prompting the psalmist to declare our body as "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). There are no unnecessary parts of the body. What the evolutionist scientists once thought were about 180 "vestigial" parts of the body (which serve no useful purpose), are now discovered to fulfil some indispensable bodily functions. Similarly, each member in the body of Christ is important. Each should fulfil his responsibility faithfully. There are no unnecessary members in Christ's body.

The Apostle Paul must have had this thought in mind when he said, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy... Or ministry... or he that teacheth... Or he that exhorteth... (or) he that giveth... (or) he that ruleth... (or) he that sheweth mercy" (Romans 12:5-8). In other words, the church is not a one-man show. No one is empowered to do everything in the church's ministry all by himself. No one can say he alone has all these gifts mentioned – that will contradict Paul's teaching! Everyone has his role to

play in the church. This diversity in the body of Christ is what makes the church so vibrant and allows it to function healthily. The hand is dependent on the foot; the eye cannot do without the ear (1 Corinthians 12:15-16). On the contrary, if the whole body were to consist of just one type of organ, the body would surely malfunction (1 Corinthians 12:17, 19).

Realising this truth is the essence of a string of rhetorical questions raised by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30, all of which are to be answered with a resounding "No!". That is to say, different individuals will possess different gifts. Every believer will have at least one gift. The kind of gifts we receive is not determined by us, but by the Holy Spirit. They are given for the benefit of the whole church. Thus it is paramount that those who do not have a particular (perhaps more prominent) gift, should not pretend to have it, nor be envious of those who have it. The overriding thought is this: the interdependence and mutual care among the many members of Christ's body is God's design for the church as the body of Christ. Our spiritual gifts are not for our personal satisfaction. We are only trustees of His

grace. It is given to us for the sake of others. As vessels of His mercy, we must have the heart to minister to our fellow brethren in the church. When every member thinks in a likeminded way, not regarding "himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly" (Romans 12:3), mutual care will flourish in the church.

It takes much effort, tears and toil to build up the fellowship of a church, but it will take very little to instil resentment and disunity of spirit among its members, which can be easily brought on by a haughty or overbearing spirit or an undue sense of self-importance. The disruption of harmony in the church can happen when individual members allow self-centredness, an unforgiving attitude, envy and pretension to creep into their lives. O brethren, we must pray, examine and guard our hearts always. If we remain submissive to Christ, trust in His vitalizing empowering, maintain unity and cherish the interdependence of church members, God will make us a blessing in the body of Christ! ■



What You Can Do For Bible Witness Media Ministry

1. Pray for the Bible Witness Media Ministry team.
2. Pray for the contributors of contents for the *Bible Witness* magazine and Bible Witness Web Radio.
3. Pray for more faithful and skilful labourers.
4. Introduce our Magazine and Web Radio to others for the Gospel's sake.
5. Continue to support with your generous gifts to meet the needs of the ministry.

BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 17 & 18

Sarah Yong

Fill in the blanks below. Print your answers in the boxes below. By looking down the highlighted boxes, you will find the meaning of the name of the altar ("Jehovah-nissi") which Moses built (Exodus 17:15).

1. All the children of Israel journeyed according to the _____ of the LORD.
2. They pitched in Rephidim and _____ for water, but found none.
3. Moses heard the murmurings of the people. He sought the LORD and was told to go to _____.
4. He was to bring the _____ of Israel, and his rod, along with him.
5. The LORD would provide water for the people out of a _____.
6. Moses changed the name of the place to Massah, and _____.
7. The Amalekites fought with Israel in _____. (Amalekites were descendants of Esau. See Genesis 36:12.)
8. Joshua led the battle while _____, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill.
9. Aaron and Hur helped to keep Moses' hands _____ until the going down of the sun, and Israel prevailed.
10. Jethro rejoiced and _____ the name of the LORD.
11. He declared that the LORD was _____ than all gods.
12. Moses sat to judge the people from _____ to evening.
13. He taught them God's _____ and laws.
14. Later he appointed _____ of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.
15. They were able men who feared God, men of _____, hating coveteousness.

ANSWERS TO VOLUME 13 ISSUE 6: BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 16 (PP.20-21)

1. wilderness; second 2. murmured; flesh 3. heaven; quails 4. twice; sabbath 5. manna; round; wafers

Sir James Simpson

DISCOVERER OF CHLOROFORM AS AN ANAESTHETIC

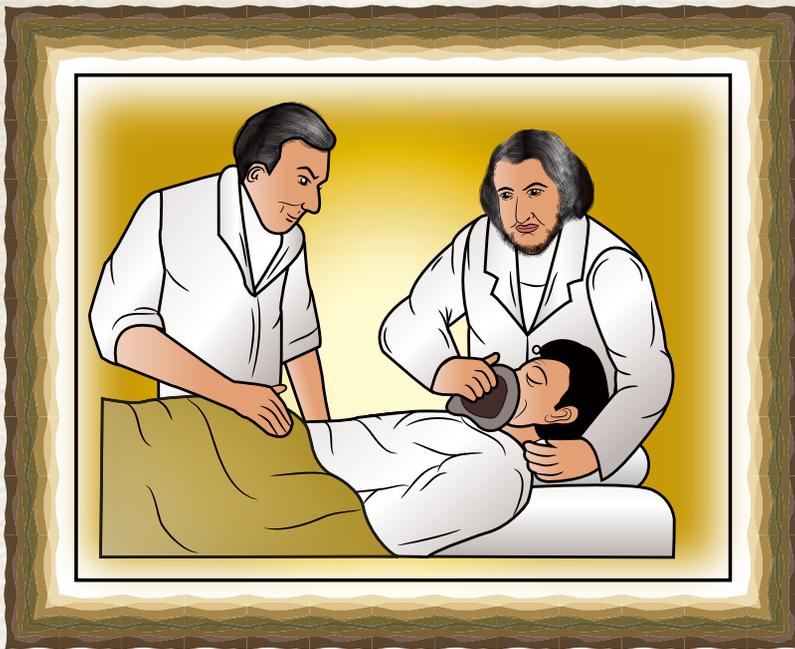
*Story retold by Ruth Low and illustrated by Linus Kok
(Sources: Wikipedia and "Men of Destiny" by Peter Masters)*



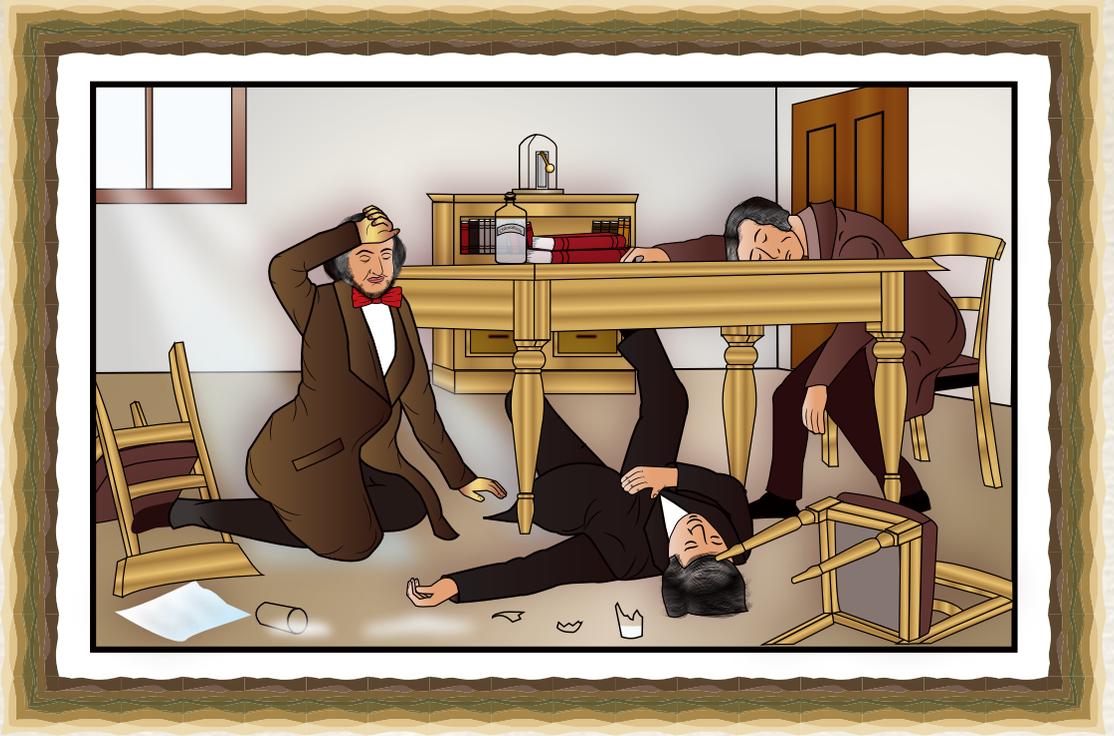
Do you know what chloroform or an anaesthetic is? Chloroform is a chemical that exists as a gas or a liquid, whereas an anaesthetic is a substance which numbs the pain of patients or knocks them out in preparation for surgery. This brief story tells of the man who discovered such a use of chloroform, and how he also discovered something even better...

James Simpson was born in Scotland in 1811. He was a smart boy with a love for books. His knowledge and thirst for learning led him to medical studies, after which he became a very capable surgeon. He was an excellent lecturer in obstetrics (a medical field concerned with childbirth and the care of women giving birth), obtained a high position in the University, attracted people with his magnetic personality, and was sought after by many patients. By the young age of 31, Simpson was already a wealthy and reputable doctor.

Yet Simpson felt dissatisfied and uneasy. He was searching for something deeper, wondering what the meaning of life was. He did not exert himself to pursue an answer for long though, because he was soon caught up in his material pursuits. Having faith in himself and the world, he chose instead to focus on his earthly hopes and ambitions. Outwardly, he followed the Christian faith, regularly attending St Stephen's Church. But his real opinion of Christianity was: "good at death but not in life". Even after his dear little daughter fell ill and died, his revived search for answers to life's questions was short-lived. Not surprisingly, he did not persist, for his worldly-mindedness carried him back to his work once more.



Then came the medical discovery of chloroform. Simpson and his helpers, Dr Duncan and Dr Keith, had tested various drugs for use in anaesthesia, but to no avail. When these three men finally tried chloroform, they made headway. They took deep breaths of its fumes to test its effect on the body, and guess what happened? Dr Keith began laughing loudly; Dr Duncan danced round the room like a child; and Simpson fell into a dazed stupor! Soon, all three collapsed. Chloroform was proven a successful anaesthetic! This sudden and wonderful discovery brought much fame to Simpson, and you would think he would feel happy and accomplished, perched atop all his eminent achievements. But this doctor was still not satisfied. The nagging questions of his early life kept returning, which by God's providence, led him to another and an even greater discovery.



Simpson had witnessed and was touched by the extraordinary peace which his friend, Dr Reid, manifested while suffering from a very painful terminal illness. Reid was also heard praying and uttering his dying words: “The world is behind”, something that impressed upon Simpson, whose life was all centred around the world. God also used an invalid patient of Simpson’s to awaken him spiritually. She once wrote (putting herself in his shoes), “When benevolence shall have run its course, when there shall be no sick to heal, no disease to cure, when all I have been engaged about comes to a dead stop—WHAT is to fill this heart and mind of mine?”

Simpson had been addicted to wealth and honours but now he was changing. He felt he desperately needed Christ. “I felt I must go somewhere tonight... I wish to come to Christ, but I can’t see Him,” he told his invalid friend. Having been urged by her to repent of his sins and trust the Lord for salvation, Simpson received Christ, and became a whole new person who possessed a better understanding of Scripture, prayed with greater conviction, and had a new desire to know and serve God more. In his lecture room, he shared with his students his conversion, and called himself the “oldest sinner” and “youngest

believer” there. He became genuinely interested in the spiritual welfare of others, including his children’s. Simpson’s ambitious self-love had died, and in its place grew a love for Christ!

At the end of his life, in his fifties, Simpson was honoured with knighthood. His discovery of chloroform as an anaesthetic won him applause, even the confidence of Queen Victoria who bore Prince Leopold under chloroform. In his teaching, Simpson also contributed much to the advancement of anaesthesia. When asked what his greatest discovery had been, Sir James Simpson said without hesitation, “That I have a Saviour.”

Children, what was truly important in Simpson’s life? Wasn’t it a personal and close relationship between him and God rather than money, success, capability or the praise and support of man? How about you – can you say the same?

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15)



“I have
somewhat
against
thee.”

So said the Lord Jesus to the church in Ephesus.
Is that also His sentiment towards you?

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Speaker: Pastor Prabhudas Koshy

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