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THE BIBLE SERIES

A METAPHYSICAL
AND SYMBOLICAL
INTERPRETATION OF

The Bible

by

Mildred Mann

Author of

HOW TO FIND YOUR REAL SELF (textbook)

THIS I BELIEVE

LEARN TO LIVE

THE FAMILY OF ADAM and EVE

THE BIBLE — The Seven Days of Creation

BECOME WHAT YOU BELIEVE

WHAT IS PRAGMATIC MYSTICISM?

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THE BOOK OF ACTS

As we have seen in the Introduction to the New Testament, Jerusalem was quite a metropolis at the time of Jesus and the beginning of Christianity. It was a cosmopolitan city and the crossroads of every tradeway of the known world. It was steeped in Roman law, Greek philosophy and Hebrew religion. For about thirty or forty years before the birth of Jesus and until the fall of the temple, Jerusalem was a mecca of cultural life. Among those who came to live in Jerusalem was young Saul: an ardent brilliant Jew who came from a well-to-do family of Tarsus. There were a number of great rabbinical teachers in Jerusalem at that time, and probably the greatest was Rabbi Gamaliel. He was a very wise and wonderful old man, and a very orthodox Jew. Students came to study with him, and Saul was one of them. This is still done with Indian gurus whose students seek them out.

It is difficult to comprehend Saul unless we understand something of his background. He is believed to have been one of several children; a singularly unattractive and unprepossessing boy who suffered from an affliction generally believed to be of an epileptic nature. Furthermore, he had a driving fanaticism and a deep religious belief. Saul based his life on his belief that the Messiah was soon to come. Generation after generation of Jews, as well as orthodox Jews of today, expected to see the Messiah in their generation. We have discussed their conception of the Messiah. They dreamed of the kingdom which existed under David, and they were sure that the coming Messiah was literally Yahweh in the flesh — Yahweh the warrior, Jehovah — who was going to restore the grandeur that was Israel. They certainly did not expect a messiah who was a religious teacher, which is a strange irony.

Saul believed this intensely and he was convinced that he was going to see the Messiah himself. Then he arrived in Jerusalem and he heard of a man whom people called the Messiah. However, from what he heard of this man, he strongly resented this appellation, because he had nothing whatsoever in common with Saul's concept of what the Messiah should be. What is more, Saul arrived

shortly before the Crucifixion, and at that time crucifixion was a common form of putting criminals to death. When he discovered that the man who was called the Messiah was put to death with two common criminals — two thieves — he became enraged, because this was the greatest insult possible to his concept of God. He had not had much use for the followers of Jesus before this, but now he was completely outraged.

After the years covered in the Gospels, a period followed when the disciples completely disappeared. They had fled and were in hiding because their lives were in danger. But we are not told in the Bible why or from whom their lives were in danger. They were endangered by a little man named Saul, who gathered all the hoodlums of Jerusalem to chase the followers of Jesus and, wherever they were found, they were to be badly beaten or killed. Between this and the shock of the loss of Jesus, in addition to their own difficulty in finding themselves, the disciples were terrified.

It is at this point that the book of Acts begins. The book is aptly named because it is literally the story of the acts of the disciples. It primarily deals with Paul, Peter and John, who are the leaders, as they once more find their equilibrium and try to demonstrate the power they have received through following Jesus.

CHAPTER 1. Why do you think they were told not to leave Jerusalem, in verse 4? Jesus wanted them to be together so that they would all partake of the experience which we call Pentecost. Part of the reason for this delay was their own emotional upset, for Jesus knew that they would have to be quiet before this experience could happen. Their terror was not unlike those who were hunted by the Nazis or Communists. Not only were they being hunted but the man they loved and had given their lives to follow, had been killed. Furthermore, they knew his power and yet he had not made any attempt to save himself, so they were completely bewildered and shattered. Jesus knew it would take time for them to find a degree of inner peace.

Now, this is a second-hand account. It seems unlikely that the disciples still held their earlier messianic expectations about Jesus, as expressed in verse 6, although they probably questioned the purpose of his return. The verses which follow explain that after their own inner experience of the Presence of God, they themselves would go forth to each witness to the truth of the work and

teaching of Jesus.

Verse 11 simply means that Jesus physically disappeared after death, and he returned in the Resurrection quietly and suddenly — it does not refer to a second coming other than that which took place in the Resurrection.

Verses 12-26 are a fascinating example of the fact that things do not always work out exactly according to our carefully laid plans. I suspect that it was Matthias' good karma, if you want to call it so, to be chosen as a disciple, but it did not work out according to the plan of the disciples and he was never heard of again. The disciples felt that they had to carry out the format which Jesus initiated in full detail and, since there were twelve disciples originally, they must replace Judas — and so they elected Matthias. We know that Jesus chose twelve because that is the cosmic number of brotherhood. They did not understand this reason behind the plan, but they felt they must keep that plan intact by electing a twelfth. But it was not to be Matthias: it was the little trouble maker, Saul.

Verse 18 in its rather gory exactness is the touch of Luke, the physician. Since the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are mainly what Peter told Luke when Luke was his disciple, it is interesting that Luke felt it necessary to include this vivid description showing the doctor's knowledge of the human body.

CHAPTER 2, verses 1-37. Actually, the word Pentecost is a term used to designate the Hebrew feast of Weeks. As described here it means that these men were suddenly seized with a spiritual power and began to prophesy, preach and speak in tongues other than their native languages. Do you believe it happened? One of the things that very often acts like a barometer of your own faith is your attitude towards accepting what you intuitively feel and intellectually cannot understand. In the same way, we have to walk by faith in order to make a demonstration. We invoke that which is within to do something that we cannot see — and may not even know how it is happening — when we want to solve any problem.

For us the event described here may be even more difficult to believe. We are prone to skepticism regarding situations such as this. Of course in the real sense there are no miracles. The fact is that the more we develop our understanding, the greater our knowledge of the Law and the extent of its ability to function. It can

only function in our lives according to our individual ability to direct it. This is why some people will make very important demonstrations frequently and others will progress in relatively small stages: because they do not have the intellectual capacity to perceive that their progress could be greater.

There is a statement that is familiar to metaphysicians: "You can have whatever you can imagine." This may sound like a blasphemous statement, but it is not. We ourselves, each and every one of us, are a living example of it. There is no reason in the universe why each and every one of us should not be at the peak of our development at this very moment. Wherever we have a problem we are limiting the Law because we have been intellectually unable to understand the Law at that point. We cannot grasp its unlimited ability to function in our lives sufficiently, so that we can impress the subconscious with the importance of using it correctly. That is why I say understanding is half of the solution of any problem.

It is not infrequent that a person is able to speak in a language other than that which they consciously know. I have encountered this on a number of occasions. The first time was with a friend of mind who had no knowledge of metaphysics, but she did have a psychometric ability. She was holding a ring and, although she spoke nothing but English, she suddenly was speaking Italian, and then a fluent German. Her husband, who was a linguist, had to translate it because she did not understand or even sense the meaning of the words she spoke. This was not a case of possession by a discarnate entity, which is sometimes the case, but she had been able to tune in on a subconscious memory of these languages from another life. When she relaxed they were able to emerge into her consciousness. This was not an instance of a great spiritual experience, as it was at Pentecost: I mention it only to show that these things can happen.

At Pentecost we find a group of men who, first of all, have come through an experience of loss which has emotionally torn them apart. As we have seen, they were not great intellectuals. They were simple human beings with very little educational background who perhaps understood only half of what Jesus had been trying to teach them. The only thing they had to fall back on was that he said that when he left them he would send a Holy Comforter

so they would not be left alone. They had no understanding of how it was to be, or what it was to be, or even whether it would be another human being like Jesus or not. They had no idea. Then suddenly they were all impelled to meet at a temple and when they were together this experience took place.

Why did it happen to all eleven at one time and not to one or two individually before this? First of all, as we have seen, a spiritual teacher with any development can, by looking at a student, know how far he has advanced. Jesus did not say that this would occur on one specifically named day: he told them it would happen soon after he left. He knew that they were ready for this experience and that it would happen shortly. This is not in itself unusual. That he told them this, however, is rather unusual. A teacher will not normally tell a student because he would undoubtedly begin to wonder about what is going to happen and when it will occur, and this can delay the process considerably. But Jesus knew they were close to it and I have no doubt that he treated them to bring it to pass soon after he left.

We have spoken of the fact that there were and are teachers who can use psychic means to stir the inner forces of the human being. This can, and usually does, result in catastrophic effects. There are a number of unscrupulous Eastern teachers who have the ability to do this. By having the student do certain exercises and then by means of their own physical and psychical contact, they can stimulate the endocrine chain of glands and force the power which is locked at the base of the spine to rise. When this occurs before the person is ready it may result in either madness or death. The only saving grace for many people who have studied with these teachers is that they do not concentrate sufficiently. Consequently, they may get a bit ill and uncomfortable and then leave the teacher as soon as they can.

However, the experience at Pentecost could not have happened unless the disciples were ready for it. The fact that it happened to them simultaneously was undoubtedly due to Jesus' summoning them individually — either telepathically or by implanting the idea in their minds. It was also done for the tremendous effect it would have on the people who witnessed it. This experience is the First Major Initiation. In reading this I have often thought to myself that it must have been rather disturbing to have this

occur in public. It is a tremendous psychological and soul shattering experience. The very few people who have had it have witnessed to the intensity of the experience by the fact that immediately thereafter the entire pattern of their lives are changed, and the persons will abruptly find themselves in some field of service. (I would suggest students read "Cosmic Consciousness" by R. M. Bucke.) So I think beyond doubt the effect on the observers must have been intensely moving and made a lasting impression upon them.

Of course, Jesus had developed to the extent that he could utilize the Law as no one has ever been able to do. Pentecost was part of his plan, for if this had not taken place his teaching would have died with him on the cross. The further step in his plan was to have the work carried on by these men. We touched on the fact that the disciples elected a twelfth disciple in conformity with his plan of twelve, but that he was not the one Jesus chose. Saul was chosen, which was also in accordance with this well laid plan.

There have been other world teachers before Jesus, but he was able to carry humanity further than any other because the race had grown in understanding. For example, Moses dealt with the Jews who were a very primitive and fear-ridden people at that time, and he could only inspire them with a fear and awe of Jehovah. They were as yet too undeveloped to understand the love of God. But Jesus taught the love of God and he brought this teaching to these people as forcefully as he did because they were ready for it.

If the disciples had not had this experience, and if it had not been witnessed, there would have been very little impetus to carry the teaching forward. Even so, Jesus knew that as much as they loved him and as sincere as they were, they would never have had the ingenuity or intellectual ability to carry it to a wide range of humanity. That is why he chose Saul, who had the personal qualities that were necessary to do this.

However, I think that the fire mentioned in verse 3 is an elaboration of Luke's. The only part of the experience that could have been visible would be that the individual could appear to be close to collapse, because there is a great intensity of energy released which can literally shake the person. I think we have all had the experience of being so furious that we shook with rage, and if

you can shake as a result of an experience so relatively unimportant, you can dimly imagine how much greater the effect would be in this instance.

The actual impact does not last very long — perhaps five or ten minutes — and then you try to recollect yourself. However, it would have been physically impossible for Peter to make this speech at that particular moment. There is no indication in the text as to the exact period of time this event covered, but verse 14 indicates that he spoke immediately after it, and he certainly could not have spoken until a few hours later, in spite of the fact that everyone is completely conscious during the experience, as well as afterward.

There is another element in this question of time which arises within the speech itself. Peter brings in many of the references in the Old Testament which speak of what would happen and what it implied. The section from Joel is very beautiful — “and your young men will see visions” — as are the statements from David in verses 25 and 34. But Peter would have been incapable of remembering all these texts at that moment. Also, he would have been too shaken to look up these references. Peter was not that well grounded as a speaker to be able to give this as an impromptu speech. Nor would the fact that they had been able to speak in tongues have given him the power to do this, for that can occur in a psychic seance, and a speech of this type requires a clear conscious thought. Now Peter did become a good teacher and speaker after this experience, and I believe that he made this speech at a much later day than is indicated.

Verse 38 is questionable. First of all, we know that to “receive the Holy Ghost” means that the Presence of God becomes the paramount issue of your life. Once you realize this, in return you suddenly find your life becomes much easier and begins to be more in accord with what you want it to be. The question here is the use of the term “baptism,” which Peter would not have applied in this sense. Whenever I hear people say “you are saved if you accept Jesus as your saviour” I wonder what they think happens. Is the statement of acceptance all there is to it? Many people believe this and unfortunately they delude themselves. The act of baptism is not going to make you a different human being, if you are a negative, resentful and envious person. The only thing that

baptism will do for you is get you wet, unless you yourself decide to change — not only your clothes, but yourself. On the other hand, if you are an optimistic person and wish your fellowman well: if you serve God well and would like to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, then, if you believe in baptism it will do you good. But, physical baptism has no merit in itself.

Most of the physical rites of the churches are simply the products of a misunderstanding of the psychological and spiritual experiences of soul growth. For instance, the First Initiation, which occurred at Pentecost, is known as the Immaculate Concept and the Virgin Birth and it certainly has nothing to do with the theological concept of the virgin birth. This initiation is known as the Immaculate Concept, not Conception, because the individual has come to the realization of what God means to him. The immaculate concept is that God is perfect good, and God can be the author only of perfect good. When that takes root within the individual to such a degree that through his efforts he has cleared out most of the negation from the subconscious mind, the Presence of God is then able to make him feel His presence. The soul, which has had all experiences in past lives, is now cleansed through its own efforts, and becomes virginal through that cleanliness. It is only then that the Presence of God can manifest, and this is called the New Birth. From this experience they have formulated the theological dogma which is behind Christmas.

The next major initiation is the Baptism. The Baptism is where you have reached a certain degree of inner growth so that you become aware of the tremendous spiritual powers hidden within the individual. This spiritual power has always been symbolized by water. For the first time the individual has reached the stage where he is living in a completely new world and is able to use these powers. "Him that hath an ear, let him hear." At any rate, from this I think we can see that Peter, having experienced the First Initiation, would not have used the term baptism in the sense that it is used here. The Major Initiations will be covered in detail when we reach the book of Revelation.

CHAPTER 3:1-26. In healing the man, in verse 4, Peter and John concentrated upon it as they had been taught to do, but it is not this in itself which heals. Actually, they sent forth their Word in faith which, of course, manifested to the degree of their

faith. Verse 6 as well can be slightly misleading, for the name itself cannot heal. The name, which we have seen means the nature of a thing, was also used in this instance because the man had no doubt heard of Jesus and so it could also strengthen his faith.

Some of the verses in this chapter, such as verse 19, have obviously been added later as people's understanding became more and more limited. I do not think it necessary to go into these in detail. The main part of the chapter is Peter's talk, and it certainly is the expression of a more loquacious and different Peter than heretofore. But we can see from this that understanding was still a growing and not yet fully developed quality. For instance, in all of the Gospels, there is no instance where Jesus spoke of repentance or the need for it. He merely told people to "Go and sin no more" or "Take up thy bed and walk." His action was always that of a completely directed belief in the fact that once the healing had taken place the pattern for it was wiped out of the subconscious. Here we see that Peter feels the necessity of impressing the person with what he still must do to correct his life. This was not the idea of Jesus.

You know that you cannot have anything happen in your life, in your body, in your affairs or relationships, positive or negative, which is not first a pattern in your subconscious mind. The whole power of demonstration is in healing — not merely the situation in the physical world — but, far more important, the pattern in the subconscious mind. For no matter how strongly imbedded the negative pattern may be, behind it is always the Truth of Being in the deep levels of the subconscious, or in the Superconscious, where none of these negative ideas have any existence. Therefore, when you really heal a situation, you eradicate the negative in the subconscious and allow that Truth or perfect good to come through. This cannot be done unless it is also accompanied by a change in consciousness. No one knew this better than Jesus, with the result that as soon as he said "Go and sin no more," he knew in that moment that the pattern was wiped out of the subconscious. The truth was there and the person was aware of it. This is one of the most important points in metaphysics.

CHAPTER 4:1-17. Once more we are brought face to face with the political reasons behind the Crucifixion. Jesus was very definitely a threat to organized religion. Religion at that time was a

ritual designed to produce prestige, power and money. If you wanted to make a sacrifice in the temple, which was the accepted form of worship, you had to buy it there because the officials claimed that only the temple animals and birds had been properly sanctified. They also charged a very healthy price. This is why Jesus became furious and went into the temple and threw out the money changers. Of course the high priests and their followers had never been threatened before. Furthermore Jesus healed the people. If they had been familiar with their own scripture they would have known of various instances — for example, Elisha, Elijah, Nathan and Samuel — where healing occurred, and that this was part of religious belief and power. This was the expected result of religion. But they had strayed so far from the original idea that the religious worship of their days was a mockery. Jesus brought religion into its own reality again and rid it of all the shams that had accrued causing it to become no longer worship, but a habit.

This is the situation behind this chapter. We have reached the point where Peter and John are getting themselves into a rather dangerous spot. They have made enemies and are standing up for what they believe. They are going to continue to do so. The high priests do not quite know what to do because the disciples have made an amazing healing which is going to spread through Jerusalem like wild fire. They wondered what they could do to prevent it, and also how was it that a group of ignorant men could do things which the great rabbis could not do.

In verses 26 and 27 Peter refers to "his Christ" and "thy holy child Jesus," which, even if it were an error in translation, was probably based on a term or idea which indicated that Peter still did not understand. I bring this up because, whatever the origins of the individual texts, this misconception does continue for a while. It is of interest to us for it does change, and comes out strongly in the conflict with Paul who initially also believed that Jesus was God.

In verses 34-37 we see one of the first instances of communal living. Of course communism, in its original meaning as a sharing with everybody, is a communal way of life. Here we find that this was the way the group functioned around Jesus and they were going to carry it on from there. But, in our day and age, because we

have become so materialistic in our approach to life, it would not work. On the other hand, I am not in favor of joining forces and living in a communal society today because, firstly, I do not think our world functions that way anymore and, secondly, I do not think that form is needed. And, needless to say, it certainly has nothing in common with what is called Communism in our day.

It is very interesting, however, as we will see, that the one man who did not even begin to follow this form was Paul. Paul was completely independent. Whether you like him or not, he never relied on anyone else. He worked for his living while he taught, as did some of the others, but he did not join a group or receive material help from a group. Many people wanted to give him things and help him and it was only under the most difficult circumstances that he allowed this, for he was too proud.

The other disciples had learned this from Jesus whose main purpose in doing it was to gather a group who would carry on his teaching. One of the easiest ways of holding them together was to have them with him all the time, while at the same time teaching them that there was nothing but the substance of God. God gave everything whether he chose to give it through human beings or not. They learned that lesson, and here we find them carrying out the form by starting their own group.

The healings which they made were so startling that they converted many to the teaching, and it began to spread throughout that part of the world. For instance, Joses, in verse 36, came from Cyprus. So we see that different nationalities are beginning to join the movement and it is no longer confined to the Jews. As we have seen, Jerusalem was a crossroads of trade and culture and so many of their followers were now non-Jews. That raised a problem because none of them had reached the point where they were completely free from the ritualism of Judaism. They had come a long way — they would heal on the sabbath, for instance — but there were other elements in orthodox Judaism which retained a strong hold on them. The Catholic church is right when it says "give me a child until it is seven and the child will always be a Catholic;" for the impressions retained by a child trained until that age are tremendously difficult to change. These men had grown up in orthodox Jewry, and I am sure they found it extremely difficult to accept a Greek as a brother. Do not forget that through-

out the Old Testament we heard the law against intermarriage and adulterating the pure concept of Judaism by close relations with other tribes and nations. Now suddenly Jesus has said all men are brothers: "Our Father," not just of the Jews, but of everybody. Little by little they begin to broaden their viewpoint, but we will see remnants of this orthodox approach as we go on.

CHAPTER 5. Do you think that this really happened as it is recounted here? There are a number of interesting points revealed in this story. First of all, Ananais and his wife came to join the group and did not want to give the full price for what they had sold. Ananias was terrified when Peter accused him, since he had no idea that any of the disciples had the ability to know what was in his mind. But I am also sure that Peter carried it to the point of saying "God is going to punish you" and the shock and fear was too much for poor Ananias.

However, Peter was wrong in his concept to begin with. Jesus never said, and there is no law which says that you must give up everything in order to follow God. Peter may have based his ideas on the episode of the young man whom Jesus told to give up his wealth when he asked to be a follower. But that was because Jesus knew the young man loved material things more than he loved God. Jesus knew in the case of this boy that no matter how much he thought he wanted to follow God, his god was really his wealth. It is not dissimilar to the Hindu story about the student who besought the guru to teach him about God. The guru took him to the lake, threw him in and held his head under the water. When he released him, he asked, "My son, what did you want most when I held you under the water," "Air" gasped the young man. And the guru told him, "When you want God as much as you wanted air, you will find Him." It is the same principle. Jesus never said that anyone must sell everything he had and give it to him or his group of disciples, but Peter was perfectly sure that this was what Jesus meant, and so this was the result.

Tithing is a most important part of life, and should always be done. But you certainly would never tell a person what to tithe or how to tithe, for this is something that the person must determine for himself. We do it because we believe that all substance comes from God, and this is our way of physically demonstrating our belief. But it also strengthens our own spiritual belief that

everything else we have is from God as well. Everything. That is why tithing is so terribly important, and Peter knew this. He wanted to make sure that Jesus' teaching was understood, but he alters his approach a bit as he grows in understanding. We must not forget that we are watching a group of neophytes who are suddenly on their own. While they understood basic principles, they did not understand them sufficiently to impart them to others as clearly as they had originally been given, or to apply them one hundred per cent correctly at all times. At this point they taught an approach of fear, which is completely wrong.

There is another aspect to this story which is somewhat deeper. As I have often said, it is true that everyone has the same degree of healing ability. You and I have the same ability that Jesus had: what differs is the amount of our faith. But, in the flush of the first healing the person does feel a sense of power which he has never experienced before. And, remember, power is impersonal: it only knows what it is directed to do, and the same power that heals can also kill. It is possible that Peter was so filled with his success as a healer and, because he was decreeing the full amount to be received from everyone, he misused his power in his anger at discovering their deceit — perhaps with the intent of setting an example. For the sequence of the two deaths is such that you must wonder just how far he did go. Did the wife die of shock or of fright? It is a question because there is the possibility of Peter having caused her shock. He was being over zealous in asserting his authority.

One of the great difficulties in reading the Bible is that so often the editors put in concepts which they thought were important and eliminated what they thought was superfluous and so, often in stories such as this we lack the details which would indicate what actually happened. We do know this however about Peter; that he was kindness itself, outgoing, impetuous and, as we also know, he was not brilliant. At this point he was torn by the idea of being the head of the flock because he was the oldest. He had to carry out the ideas of Jesus and he was determined that this teaching would spread. The compulsion to keep the flock together as Jesus would have done could have been the reason why he misused his power, for it certainly was not from a wish to harm or punish anyone.

Verses 12-32. Despite the difficulty in communication — it was all by word of mouth — the movement began to spread so quickly that thousands of people came, not only from Jerusalem itself, but from the surrounding country to be healed and converted. Of course this aroused the indignation and fear of the high priests who took steps to have Peter put in jail.

How do you think the doors were opened? Were they opened by an angel or supernatural being, as in verse 19? Peter used hypnosis, which was a very simple thing for him to do at this stage of his development. He hypnotized the guards so that they would do his bidding, and they were re-awakened when the people came to get Peter. The angel of the Lord is the editors explanation, but it actually refers to the Presence of God. An angel did not come down from heaven and open the doors, but the Presence of God within Peter told him what to do: he followed directions exactly and it worked. That is what happened, but the editors of the Bible felt that no individual, not even Peter, could have God speak to him as they believed that was reserved only for Jesus.

So, for the first time in his life, Peter used a little occultism and was successful. Of course you can imagine the effect this had on everyone, his followers as well as his enemies. This was a rather startling thing to people who knew as much about these things as the average man on the street does today. The disciples had training in occultism from Jesus and, although they understood little of what was said at the moment, the understanding gradually began to dawn upon them. As they began to use and work with what they had learned, they finally realized that these things were not relegated to the realm of imagination.

Can you picture the officers' faces when they saw Peter and the others teaching in the streets? It must have been a rather disconcerting scene. Then, it seems that Peter's speech did not have the desired effect of making them feel guilty but, rather, they felt that these people were extremely dangerous and had to be disposed of.

Verses 33-52. Gamaliel was Paul's teacher and an extremely wise man when he said if this is of God nothing can stop it and if it is not of God, it will die of itself. That is very good advice which we can take to heart in our own day in all areas of our life, even politically, but we do not find that easy to do. The disciples con-

tinued in their work and, in spite of the increasing persecution, the crowds increased even more.

But what does verse 38 mean in our own terms? The Rabbi is saying in effect that they should let it alone for if it is not of God it will fade out of existence, and if it is of God it will sustain itself. Does this mean that we are not supposed to take action against things that are not right? Of course we are but, for instance, in this case they were not doing anything that was wrong. When we apply this to our day we can use as an example our tremendous national concern and determination to be on guard against Communism. We are supposed to defend ourselves, certainly, but no one can seriously think that Communism as it exists today can endure. In fact, that is one of the elements behind the unrest existing right now which is causing the Communist leaders some concern, for conditions are not much better for them than they have been. Nothing bad can possibly last. This is still God's universe and there is a divine plan which is going to manifest. We can delay it. We have delayed it and there have been untold sufferings as a result of these delays, it is true, but it will emerge in the long run. When we find things are wrong and we are in the position of either being put on the defensive, or being able to help someone who needs this help, we should take whatever steps we can. But there is no sense in becoming terrified about an alien ideology.

As far as this group of disciples and followers is concerned, they were doing nothing but good. No one could censure them for that. But they were suspect and considered to be a group of rebels and dangerous rabble rousers by those who feared them. They did not conform to the religious or political views of the leaders. Their power was growing and this frightened the established order. We have not changed a bit. There is another parallel in our time. Let us take it out of the field of politics and take it into the field of orthodox religion. Between each sect and even the branches of each particular religion there are almost violent feuds and divisions. Everyone thinks the other group is in the wrong.

You know, I was amazed, because it had never happened before, but on one of our mailings when we sent out the little booklet, "What Is Pragmatic Mysticism?" I received seven or eight of the nastiest letters imaginable. "Why didn't I read the Bible? Why didn't I become a God-fearing Christian?" Actually, I think if

there is any belief that is free of ritual and dogma it is the New Thought movement. We do not care what your religion was, nor do we care if you continue to practice it. The only thing that we ask you to do is to practice the Presence of God in your everyday living. And that alone is sufficient to arouse strong antagonism and the feeling that we are dangerous. Why? Because we remove the necessity for churches and the necessity of intermediaries. This is what happened here: Jesus had removed the necessity for intermediaries. He did not tell them not to go to temple. He simply said; when you pray, go into your closet in secret, and live the life. This is heresy, as far as organized religion is concerned and it is dangerous. It is dangerous for certain political philosophies as well, for the focal point of all negative ideologies, such as Nazism and Communism, is fear and this teaching will remove fear.

CHAPTER 6:1-15. The disciples were so busy taking care of and spreading their new found faith that the part of the work in the form of charity and alms had to be delegated to others. So Peter very wisely appointed seven people who were given the duty of seeing that the sick and elderly people were cared for. In other words, it was the beginning of order in what was getting to be a rather unwieldy group. In verses 3 and 4 we get the impression that Peter formed a little hierarchy. They all administered and taught, but in addition to everything else, these seven were to have added duties and form an organization. I do not think that there is any doubt that Peter had the idea that the twelve original disciples were in a higher class than the others, and those who followed were supposed to do what they were told to do. Peter became a little martinet and he retained this attitude for a long time.

In verse 7 it says "a great number of priests were obedient to the faith," which is interesting. By this time it had become quite a widespread movement which created a great furor with its teaching and healing. Many priests became followers because it was different from anything they had heard before and because they recognized that the proof of the teaching was in the healing which occurred simultaneously.

Now Stephen also taught in conjunction with his other duties and, according to this section, he was such a success that the priests grew afraid of him as well. He was apparently a very won-

derful and most inspired man who made almost as many converts as Peter and John. And when he speaks here he is attacking the Jews' on their own ground in the Sanhedrin. He evidently had great courage and found himself in difficulty. In verse 14 the witnesses took what Jesus had actually said and twisted it to suit their needs. Certainly Jesus never said that he was going to destroy one word of the Law. They were trying to "frame" Stephen and he, rather than being fearful and cowed, impressed them by the beautiful attitude with which he faced them.

CHAPTER 7:1-60. Since Stephen's speech is more or less a brief resume of early Jewish history, I do not think it requires discussion. This is very typical of the entire Old Testament. The Jews were constantly reminded of what God had done and of the miracles He had performed for the Israelites. This time it is being related not to remind them of the past, but to make a comparison: to tell them that if it happened before, it can happen now. Furthermore, the effect of the new teaching was already being felt. Peter and John had begun to use the power that had been bestowed upon them at the day of Pentecost, and the people who watched them, particularly their enemies, were just as astonished and afraid as the ancients were when they saw the earlier acts of God. Stephen is trying to make them aware of the fact that this is the continuing action of God.

With verse 58 we are told of the first martyrdom in the new religion: Stephen. Although it is omitted from the text, it is fairly well known that the mob was instigated by the young man named Saul, who is depicted here as an onlooker. As we have seen, Saul was fanatic in his desire for the coming of the Messiah, and was violently enraged at the idea that the Messiah could be classified as a man crucified with common criminals. This was the height of sacrilege to his concept of God and so, wherever he found Christians he made trouble for them. However, here it says simply that "Saul approved of his death."

CHAPTER 8:1-25. The word sorcery, as used in verse 8, has a very wide meaning. Most people who do any form of religious work know that there are people who have a hypnotic ability and learn to develop it. There are a number of so-called evangelical healers who have done some amazing healings with this ability. But the proof of its efficacy is, does the healing last? Does it? Re-

cently there are, and have been, a number of law suits mentioned in the newspapers which were brought against several of these healers as a result of the tragic effects of the simulated conditions which they caused. This is a form of sorcery. The same is true of those Evangelists who get people aroused to such an emotional peak that they say they are converted. This, too, is a thing of the moment and never holds. It is what Dr. Fox used to call "emotional debauchery." When a real change takes place inside, you do not scream and shout and jump around. The experience itself is completely overwhelming and beautiful, and the outer change is quiet.

Apparently Simon had been doing something similar to this in Samaria and when Philip arrived the people responded to the truth. One of the first to respond was Simon. The question could be asked, did he respond out of genuine sincerity or did he respond out of economic necessity? The Bible does not give the answer. But I think we should give him the benefit of a doubt that perhaps he was suddenly made to see that what he was doing was wrong. It is interesting too that this happened in Samaria, which all Jews regarded with violent scorn. But here we see that Samaria was the first city to become converted to Christianity, and you may recall Jesus' own experience with their openness of belief.

Now, as we have seen, the disciples acquired their power and experience — here termed the Holy Ghost — at Pentecost, and in verse 15 we are led to assume that they were able to transmit this power to others. However, receiving the Holy Ghost as it is described here would be merely stirring up their enthusiasm. By the same token, Simon was baptized in order to receive the Holy Ghost, as they all were, but it is quite apparent that he did not "receive it" otherwise he would not have said, "Here is my money. I'll give you everything I have if you tell me how to do this."

This is one of the many instances of editorial liberty taken because the later writers did not understand. The disciples and their followers were beginning to live within the Fifth Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Spirit. There we live above, to a great degree, although not all of the time, the things that bother and molest people who live a purely physical life. The editors were unable to understand the possibility of this transition, because they had not had the experience, and so they tried to make it as understandable and logical as they could according to their own approach towards

life. We deal with the fact that the people who translated, edited and wrote these accounts, although they had the desire and sincerity, did not have the spiritual experience and knowledge. The King James version, which is to my mind the most beautiful of all, is the result of the continual misunderstanding of editors and of the pattern of theology which had been built up over the centuries. No one dared dispute this theology because it was what the early church fathers said. The editors had no other course than to follow the line of current theology and the Bible was often altered to fit this. We find that this occurs more frequently in the book Acts than it does in the Gospels because the sources are less direct and the authority which came through, even in the altered words of Jesus, is also missing.

Then, in verses 26-40 we are told of Philip's encounter with the eunuch, which is fascinating for a variety of reasons. Of course the chapter of Isaiah which the eunuch did not understand was the famous chapter 53 containing the tragically beautiful description of Jesus. Philip's response to the eunuch is quite unusual when we recall the attitude of the Jews towards them in the Old Testament. The majority of Jews still despised eunuchs for not being "whole men." In Judaism one of the most important instructions to the male is to perpetuate the race, on the basis that the Lord said to Abraham "be fruitful and multiply," and the eunuch is deprived of this ability. Of course this made no difference to Jesus, but the disciples were still very steeped in Judaism, so it is interesting that Philip wanted to, and took the trouble to explain the chapter and the teaching. And, even more, that he performed the rite of baptism on one whom he was taught from his youth was not a man and was an abomination to the Lord. This is a tremendous step forward in the beginning of a widening change of concept and a dying out of the old idea of the Law.

If we read this symbolically it provides an interesting sidelight. Ethiopia refers to the subconscious, and the eunuch is the symbol of a subconscious that had been completely restricted and unable to use its creative power. For the first time in this particular incarnation the point was reached where a degree of liberation was achieved through the symbol of the rite of baptism which means cleansing and the teaching of Philip.

I do not believe that Philip taught that Jesus was the only son

of God, as we are led to believe in verse 37. I think this is either an interpolation in building up the ritual of the church, or that he said that he the son of God as we all are. I also rather doubt that Philip used occultism in being transported, as it is described in verse 39. I have the idea that the Ethiopian was so tremendously overcome by his experience that he may have gone into a slight trance and when he came out of it he suddenly became aware that Philip was gone. Philip was not particularly occult and, in fact, the only disciples who really knew anything about it were Peter, John and Paul, and only to the degree that they were able to use it.

CHAPTER 9. In verses 1-9 we find the very famous moment in the life of Saul where his transformation takes place. We are told that he was without sight for three days, and three is the symbol of the birth of a new idea. Actually he was blinded by the impact of his tremendous emotional experience. Now, do you think it happened in the way it is described? First of all, anyone with something approaching the degree of Jesus' development could make himself mentally heard by a group if he wished. We have the habit of believing that we hear with our physical ears. The men with Saul could mentally hear what was said. For instance, occasionally in a genuine seance a discarnate entity is able to be heard by one or two people. It seems to be the same as physical hearing except that you inwardly hear the sound of a voice, yet you have the impression of physically hearing the words very clearly. If Jesus wanted to make this experience apparent to the group with Saul, he would have had no difficulty in doing so.

It was a tremendous awakening and a tremendous experience for Saul. We can only imagine the impact and shock for this man who had dedicated his life to decimate the followers of Jesus to suddenly find himself at one with them. The only thing he knew was that he had to obey this one man: the man who spoke to him. Notice too that the first thing he says is "Who art thou, Lord." Saul was familiar with the idea of discourse with discarnate entities, so there must have been something unique in this experience to so overwhelm him with awe that his immediate response was to say "Lord." For instance, if you or I were to have the experience of seeing a discarnate entity, we would not say "Who are you, Lord?" We would say, "Who are you? What do you want?"

Many people believe that Saul simply had an attack of epilepsy, but a fit of epilepsy does not change your entire life. He might have been an epileptic, which I doubt, or been subject to trance, this we do not know. I think the reason for attributing this to epilepsy is that many people try so hard to explain these things "logically." But it is certainly true that this experience changed his life. This was the beginning of the First Initiation. We have seen that the earmark of that experience is a complete change in the pattern of the life.

It is interesting that it descended so suddenly upon him. We can ask a question which so many people who know of these experiences and have continually strived to reach them have asked. They do everything they can to live what is called "the good life" yet, this experience very rarely occurs. Here is Saul who, although very sincere and devoted in his belief in God, was not what we call a "good" man. Saul was not struggling to find the truth; he was sure he had the truth. He was a rather unpleasant person who was extremely critical, sarcastic and egotistic and yet it happened to him. This experience also happened to Jacob who, as you recall, was a little sharp-shooter. You might say that this happened to Saul because nothing was as important to him as the service of God, and that the same desire which drove him to destroy the followers of Jesus in the name of his God, was transmuted into the power to spread the teaching. But that was not true of Jacob whose only desire was to serve himself. The Bible does not give us much information on this, but we see in these instances the pattern built up from past incarnations. It is only because a Saul or a Jacob had been involved in a metaphysical concept of God and had lived it and perhaps given their lives for it in past incarnations that at a particular moment in their lifetimes it was able to break through into consciousness without any apparent outer reason. This is one of the most fascinating aspects of this entire episode. We may not know his interior life, but Jesus gave us the means of appraisal: "By their fruits ye shall know them." We do not believe one thing inside and do another outside.

There is another question which may arise in this context. At the day of Pentecost, Jesus was instrumental in stimulating this experience within the disciples. This happened because he knew how close they were to the experience, which was why he chose

such an otherwise strange group of men. He could not have caused it to happen unless they were approaching it, but he was the spur which brought it to fruition. Now let us look at it from another point of view in relation to Saul's experience.

I am perfectly sure that the persecution which Saul indulged in ending with Stephen's death was quite displeasing to Jesus. If Jesus brought the Pentecostal experience to the fore *after* Stephen's death, why not before? I am certain that Jesus would have done anything in the world to save anybody, particularly someone who was close to him. These are fascinating questions and, even though we have no definite answers for them, it is possible that our thought about them may clarify other points for us.

Certainly there is no doubt that Jesus appeared to Saul and that the shock of the experience blinded him for three days. Why did it happen on the road to Damascus and not before? There was a difference of only a few days between these episodes, and the time element might have saved Stephen. You might say that Saul needed the shock to awaken him. But God would never victimize one man so that another man might benefit. Although God does not interfere in our lives, the Presence within us would never give us anything at the expense of another human being. Furthermore, the emotional shock of Stephen's death had no effect on Saul since he was on his way to Damascus to do the same thing again. You might say that it was Stephen's karma. But there is a saying that "Love is the lord of karma" which is perfectly true. Enough love will wipe out all karma, and this would apply to Stephen and to Saul but neither had reached this point as yet.

So, in the end we can only say that this was the moment when, regardless of the outer events, the consciousness within Saul had built to such a degree that with the assistance of Jesus his experience occurred. It is fascinating to take an event like this and ask why. At any rate, we know that he was so shocked and startled by the emotional impact of the experience that he lost his eyesight and had to be led by the hand to Ananias.

In treating ourselves or others we must get ourselves out of the way, emotionally and mentally, in order for the healing to take place, and the motivation for healing is love. We see in this instance with Ananias, as we saw before with Philip and the eunuch, the overcoming of personal resistance and prejudice, which

was very strong in the case of Ananias. But let us ask a question here. Do you think that Jesus really needed the help of Ananias to heal Saul? It seems evident that Ananias was given a little help himself in order to be able to do just this. For him it was like walking into a lion's den just to see this man whose intent was to destroy all Christians, and yet he was to heal him. Actually, the purpose behind the entire situation was to further impress Saul with the nature of Jesus and his teaching.

Jesus told Saul that a man by the name of Ananias would heal him and then told Ananias to heal Saul. But this was not necessary in itself, which is the important point. It has always delighted me to see this very human interplay where Jesus treats them like children in order to make them realize certain things. They have to go through this experience because only by their own experience will they believe. Nothing would have been gained if Jesus had said "Saul, you are healed" and Saul had immediately regained his vision. But the fact that there was a three day period where he did not see; the fact that he was told who would heal him; and the fact that Ananias was told where to find him: this is what is called "documentary evidence." And it was evidence not only for Saul and those who followed, but for the disciples themselves. It was corroboration of the fact that Jesus had actually chosen Saul. If Ananias had done this on his own, he might well have suffered at the hands of the disciples. But they were impressed by the strangeness of the episode and the fact that each had knowledge of the other: it was the evidence of communication which convinced them.

It is quite true, as we are told in verse 16, that Saul did not have an easy life as a result of his complete change of life and discipleship. He might have gone on to become a great rabbi of Israel and lived in comfort like many of the Saducees and Pharisees. Instead, he lived on as little money as possible: he had poor health and was constantly moving about in danger of losing his life; and he was finally beheaded in Rome. I would say that his life was not exactly easy, and Jesus knew this as he knew what Peter's life would be.

Regarding verse 20, we might ask how Paul was able to preach immediately about the teaching he had so recently opposed. First of all, he had always known how to preach. He came from a family of rabbis, and he was raised as a lawyer. Secondly, he was the

type of person who would familiarize himself with everything that was said by the opposition so that he would know their doctrines quite well. But, even more than that, the person who has an awakening knows the right words immediately. It is a very strange thing, and one of the most baffling facts of all to intellectuals. If you can raise yourself high enough in consciousness, there is absolutely no knowledge in the universe which can be denied you, and it does not come from reading books or from other people. Certainly Saul had a great religious and legal background, and certainly he knew what Jesus taught, but he found himself teaching this instead of using it as a weapon against its proponents and this is quite a different matter. However, as we see in verses 20 and 22, he was so swept away with the concept that some of the specifics, such as his belief that Jesus was the Christ, eluded him. He did not know completely.

In verses 23-30 we see that the disciples were very unhappy about having him come and the last thing they wanted was to see him join them. As you remember, they had elected Matthias to replace Judas and that was the beginning and end of it. The disciple Jesus wanted was Saul. One of the things that always fascinates me about this is that there is often such a tremendous difference between man's idea of morality and ethics and God's idea. When we look at some of the great figures in the Bible, knowing what their lives were, and we see to what extent they developed, we must realize that something is wrong with our thinking; that our decisions and judgments are much too narrow, because they certainly do not coincide with the judgment of God.

The most important factor is that of motivation. There are many figures in the Bible whose lives and actions do not correspond to those we consider to be "good" or "nice." The First Isaiah was an initiate and a very great figure, but he was not a nice person. He would not be the sort of person, no matter what degree of initiation he had reached, whom I would like to have for a friend. He was nasty, he had a violent temper, and he was a snob because he was a member of the upper class and looked down on everyone else. On the other hand, there was an aspect of his inner being that brought him to the point of development where he had become an initiate. This is the same man who said "For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." That realization could

only come to one who had had the experience. But it does not follow that we have to be what is commonly called "sweetness and light." I usually run from that kind of person because it rarely is sincere. I much prefer a person who is down-to-earth, matter-of-fact and who at least does the best he can and stands on his own two feet; a person who does what is right and is not interested in the approval or disapproval of anyone else. This is the meaning of Augustine's statement, "Love God, and do as you please." If you really love God you cannot really hurt another, no matter what the appearances seem to be.

From this, verses 32-43, it appears that Eneas and Dorcas were healed without their request or that of their relatives but evidently this is an omission, for Peter had of course been made aware of the law that you must ask. Healing was very well known and was sought by many people, particularly the new followers. The request may have come from their own families, which is the logical assumption, or from somebody close to them. Spiritual healing was not new, but it was new for them to see someone raised from the dead. When Jesus did this with Lazarus, it was the most astonishing thing he did, as far as the people were concerned, and now we see Peter also doing it.

There is another aspect to the question of initiation and the limits of human understanding which arises in connection with Saul, here and in later sections. There is no mention at this point of the fact that there was a great discussion and upset between Saul, whose belief was that Jesus was God, and the disciples who had by now realized for themselves that this was not so. The disciples' horror at his misconception was intensified by the fact that, with the exception of Peter and John, they were a bit suspicious of Paul until the very end because he had terrified them for so long. At one point there is an intense disagreement. Saul did not enjoy being placed in a position where he was wrong theologically, and it is an experience which is difficult for him to accept. However, he gradually learned and came to his own realization, and through this he begins to learn humility. Too, Saul was astonished at the healing and raising of the dead which he had not witnessed with Jesus and, despite his fire and zeal, he realized it would take tremendous faith to accomplish this.

Now all of this period is part of Saul's experience of the First

Initiation, which raises some interesting points. First of all, there have been people who have taken the First Initiation who have never heard of Jesus — for example, Buddhists. Then you may say: but with initiation you realize that God is in you. We should not forget that Saul's contact at the time of his awakening was with Jesus and it was the most real thing that had ever happened to him. I doubt that he could distinguish between Jesus and the Presence within him at this point, because everything was happening too quickly. You see, the person who is growing normally and developing along the metaphysical path consciously has had knowledge and even a small contact with the Presence of God within him, with I Am, so that when the experience occurs it comes an overpowering realization of what he has dimly known. But Saul did not have this conscious knowledge. He had instead an intellectual concept of God which had to be overcome before he could meet the inner reality. And we have already seen that initiation does not mean that you know all the answers.

CHAPTER 10. As a rule, visions occur at a particular point of evolution where the person is emerging from the psychic stage and beginning to enter the intuitive stage. This is not dependent on the outer personality — although Cornelius was probably quite a wonderful person who lived a very devout life. There are many different kinds of visions. People who are psychically open often see discarnate entities, many of whom are far from pleasant in appearance. It also happens that many people who are sincere students of metaphysics, through the process of meditation, begin to naturally and unconsciously expand their abilities. Sometimes at this point they will have the experience, as they enter the state just prior to sleep, of suddenly seeing strange faces in a yellow or golden light. Some of them may be horrible and some quite beautiful, because this is a manifestation on the psychic level where there is a mixture of personalities and, as I have said before, the experience of death does not change a person's character. But the person who is beginning to develop may have this experience for many months and often become frightened by it. There is no reason to be frightened and, if you do not like what you see, you can order it to go and it will. There are others who will see landscapes, for this too is part of the same area. The faces appear from the level nearest to us, which is called the lower astral or etheric,

and the landscapes show that you are increasing your ability to penetrate this plane: your consciousness is growing. Again, it depends upon the kind of landscape, for these too can be very beautiful or very disagreeable. But the visions which occur at the stage of a Cornelius are rarely symbolic: they are very direct, as in this instance.

Verses 10-17. The thing which is so beautiful about this section is that it wipes out, in one fell swoop, all of the ritualistic commandments of the early Jews, such as eating unclean food, and then carries this to the realization that God has created everything and that God is in every human being, emphasizing the brotherhood of man. On the other hand, we cannot say that the Jews are exceptions in their adherence to ritual and their sense of exclusiveness when we see what has happened to the Christian sects since that time. I have always been baffled by people who are intelligent — and certainly this is not an unintelligent era — who never seem to use their intelligence in these areas. I suspect it is because most of us have been indoctrinated from our childhood with certain concepts which we now automatically accept without thinking. For instance, do you realize how many people, even those in metaphysics, are afraid to sit in a draft because they once heard that if they do they will catch cold! Yet we all know that if we do not get fresh air we can get very ill. Or, they believe that if they get their feet wet they will catch cold, but if they sit in the bathtub, they will not. Logically these ideas are ridiculous, yet we accept them as Peter had accepted the concept of kosher food. But he is told very simply, clearly and firmly that this is false thinking.

It is also interesting to see that it is explicitly stated that Jesus is not God. We might wonder, since Peter's words are left here, why it is edited in every other text. It may be that the editors thought that Peter was still in a state of learning. Also, beginning with verse 34, it is clearly stated that God is no respecter of persons. It is certainly hard for some of the sects to believe that they are not the only privileged ones, and they should take this section to heart.

CHAPTER 11, verses 1-18. This entire section is a repetition of the preceding chapter to emphasize the instruction. But it is fascinating to see in these various instances, that the disciples still want to adhere to the old laws despite all they have learned and

now believe. In spite of the fact that they had their own experiences at Pentecost, and had been with Jesus, they still did not believe that grace should be allowed a non-Jew. Another interesting point is that they gloried in being the first Christians and yet they did not want to give up the concepts of Judaism. Peter stresses this in verse 17, which repeats what has already been said. We should also notice the editorial insertion in that verse of "Lord Jesus Christ" for we know that Peter knew from his own experience that every human being is the son of God and would not have expressed himself in this way.

In verses 19-30 we see the beginning, for a short time, of the brotherhood of man. As a united group they overcame to a great degree the religious difference between those Jews who followed Jesus and those non-Jews who were embracing the teaching. It is interesting to see the beginning of the term Christian. Jesus never denied that he was a Jew himself, and naturally they saw no reason to adopt a new name. Actually Christos in the Greek and Messiah in Hebrew both mean the same thing, and they had no reason to think of themselves as anything other than Jews who had suddenly acquired a wider understanding of their own belief. Then in Antioch, for the first time they are given the name of Christians, as the followers of Christ.

With Saul's arrival in Antioch, we see the beginning of what for him was the great tragedy of his life. He wanted to bring this message to the Jews but the Jews would not accept it from him. It remained for the other disciples, particularly Peter, to carry the message to the Jews: for John went to Greece, Thomas to Egypt and Andrew went as far as India. Peter stayed close to home and divided his time between Jerusalem and some of the minor churches. Incidentally, it must have been extremely difficult for these men who had always been deeply religious to be refused admittance to their temples because of their association with Jesus. They believed in his teaching and wanted to spread it to others. Naturally they wanted to give it to those of their own religious affiliation first, which they were generally unable to do. But for Saul, with his background and mind, this was a particularly bitter blow, for he had little contact with the Jews from this time on.

Actually it is only through the metaphysical movements that we are now beginning to get rid of this old exclusiveness, and that

is one reason why it is so important for us, not only to train ourselves, but to spread it to the best of our ability. We are now living in a world where the most important thing is that there is a belief in the one God. It does not matter whether it is interpreted by the Hindu, the Moslem or the metaphysician. The way we worship Him is unimportant, as long as we do not try to limit Him by saying that He belongs only to us. This has been the trouble with the whole world: this is the bone of contention behind every war. The truth for all of us is, and always has been, "Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is one."

CHAPTER 12. There is a very ancient belief that we each have a guardian angel, and this appears to be the basis for the description in verses 1-16. There is no doubt that Peter got out of prison: he may well have had a dream in which he realized he had enough power to extricate himself and then used it. I think it is a very beautiful and charming description, but I do not think that an angel came down in this instance any more than one did before, because angels have other things to do. We use the term angel to designate many things. We have mentioned before that there are a very few people who do have angel vision, and the angels they are able to see are those who are in charge of the cosmic rays. There are only seven of them. That is all. Actually Peter used his own power as he had before. Of course it was a most remarkable thing, and it is equally possible that he may have felt that he was considerably helped by Jesus, but I would say that the specifics of the story are dramatic elaboration on the part of the editors.

The question has been raised that if Peter was aware of this power, what prevented him from using it to alter the conditions of his own death. Although you may be aware that you have a certain degree of power, you must reach the same level or degree of consciousness in order to use it. Peter was quite concerned about his personal life in terms of life or death, as we recall when Jesus told him in what manner he would die, and it could be that his fear kept him from reaching that level of consciousness.

It is probable that what happened, in verses 20-25, was that Herod worked himself up into such a fever of excitement that he had a stroke. However, there is an interesting version of his death given in the writings of Josephus, according to *The Interpreter's Bible*. Herod, who was extremely superstitious, had been told that

his death would be forewarned by an owl. As he was speaking he saw an owl on the awning of the theatre and his panic caused an illness which eventually resulted in his death.

CHAPTER 13. In verses 1-12 we are told of one of the first encounters the disciples have with black magic. There is one thing we should remember, and that is there is nothing good or bad: it is all dependent upon the use we make of it. The same Law, for instance, that is used for healing, can kill. It depends upon the direction that is given the Law. There is only one power, and the use and the effect of that power is completely determined by what we require of it. These are all different ways of saying the same thing. We have discussed the difference between occultism and mysticism before, and in one sense, there is not much difference because we both study and use the same Law. But the mystic uses that Law to remake his life in order to help him find conscious contact with God and to help others. The occultist develops the Law for himself until, very often, he begins to believe he is God, and he is a law unto himself. We are the children of God, we are the sons of God: we are not God. Therein lies a very great difference.

Do not get the idea that every occultist is a black magician. I have known many people who have been interested in various phases of occultism. I shall never forget the first time I met a woman who was the head of one of the greatest theosophical schools in the world. We had lunch and I learned that she was ill with anemia. I said, "I would like to ask you a question. Why don't you heal yourself?" She said, "Oh, I would never use my energy for anything as unimportant as healing." When I asked her to let me heal her, she replied, "I don't want you wasting your energy, my dear. There are doctors who can do that." So I asked what she used her energy for and she said, "To use the Law to get the world into the shape I think it should be: to mold people." The purpose of their work was to be able to train you to develop your mind so that you could influence the rest of the world to follow their doctrine. This is not the way the Law is to be used. For instance, I would not conceive of using my power to try to kill a Hitler, or a Stalin. That would be an abuse of power because I have no right to do that: there is a Law which governs them as it governs me. But this can be a danger point in studying the Law.

Here we have an example of this and an actual episode of

black magic in the Bible, and I have often wondered how or why it was left in. Paul deliberately spoke the Word and cursed the sorcerer into blindness. It does not make what he did right because it is in the Bible and because Paul did it. But it can be done and, as I said, this is one of the danger points. Do not forget that Paul was very new in this and was not only carried away by his own enthusiasm, but all of the ardor which had previously been used against the teaching was now rechannelled, and Paul was a dynamo. I think he suddenly felt that he could do this and did it without thinking. Was it wrong? Yes, definitely so. Paul is well known for his bad health. In spite of the fact that he healed others, Paul could never heal himself, and I have often wondered if this incident might not have been one of the reasons why this was so. It is very possible.

This is a fascinating episode for we see that not only is Paul developing a tremendous power, but another very interesting point: Paul knew what to do. We constantly speak of the fact that the esoteric truths have been stripped from the Christian teaching, but it is equally true of the Jewish teaching, because there is an occult side of Judaism as well. Paul was familiar with this aspect of Judaism and he was not taken by surprise, as I am sure Peter must have been. I am perfectly sure that when Peter had to use his power in the beginning he wondered whether or not it would work. But with Paul there was never any doubt. And so we find that he, you might say, beat the black magician at his own game.

Can you imagine the effect this had on the multitudes? The great prophet and healer was gone, but in his place there is a group of disciples who are going around the country doing the same things. People are strange because, as a rule, they only believe what they see, and an incident like this probably brought thousands of newcomers to the teaching. Of course this points up one of the characteristics of Paul which was of value in spreading the teaching: Paul was a very good publicist. If it had not been for Paul and his travels and talks, I doubt if the early Christian church would have lasted, because Paul actually built the church. Peter was called the rock, but it was Paul who traveled from one end of the Mediteranean to the other carrying the message, refusing to be stopped and making the most of every opportunity to dramatize

the points he wanted to get across. Paul had a brilliance of mind in conjunction with a powerful personality. And, of all the disciples, Paul was certainly the most dramatic figure, whether or not you like him personally.

Before we continue I would like to return to verse 9, which brings out a most interesting point. "Then Saul (who is also called Paul)" . . . What do you think happened? Do you think someone rebaptized him? From here on he is known as Paul. If you recall our earlier discussion of the Cabala, you know the difference in the meanings of the letter S and the letter P. The letter S is Samech, which stands for physical energy used as a means of force and aggressiveness. And P is Peh, which is the letter of power and the number 8, which means "as above, so below" and so the change represents the transformation from the emotional, sexual drive to that of spiritual attainment. Samech is one of the forms of S in the Hebrew alphabet, and it means "coiled serpent" which is an apt description of Saul. In addition, the number of Samech is 6 which is love of God or love of self, depending on the individual's approach. As the love of God it is positive, as the love of self it is negative. Consciously Saul was not a ferocious zealot because of a love of self: he was consciously driven by the belief that the new teaching was an insult to his concept of the Messiah. But in reality it was his own will which was expressing itself and stirring other people to the emotional pitch where they would follow him. The letter Peh in the Tarot designates the card of the Tower. This depicts the state where everything that is extraneous and negative is thrown out and all that remains is the clean and original framework. In this sense, Saul symbolically becomes Paul. It is a fascinating transition, and it is the reason behind the change of names.

There is also a lesser mystery of the soul which is connected with the change in names. If you follow through to the deeper study of metaphysics — and I am choosing my words very carefully for those who are not conversant with this — you find that we actually live on a vibratory impulse. Another synonym for spirit is vibration, as light is also vibration. Actually, in its finest essence everything exists on a wave length of its own individual vibratory value. It is known that each individual has a certain sound which is the key to his being, and in metaphysics this is known as his spiritual name. Your given name in any incarnation

is always a dim echo of that name. The tremendous experience which Paul went through in his transition from being a hellion capable of doing violence to those who disagreed with his religious ideas, to one who was desirous of being led by the Presence of God within him was so overpowering that it brought him to the realization of his spiritual name. We can say simply that it denotes a complete change in character. Only the Presence of God in you can tell you this name, but the day will come when everyone will know his spiritual name consciously.

We saw the same thing happen with Abraham and Sarah. In the beginning they were called Abram and Sara: then, following a conscious experience with God the H, Heh, was added to both their names. You remember that the letter Heh symbolizes the light shining through the window: the light which is the Presence illuminates the human being. This is one of the reasons why it is important for students to get behind the obvious words which are written here and find out the meaning they hold. We know too that every name in the Bible stands for a certain frame of mind, or a certain type of consciousness and gives us a clue to the deeper story which that person represents: David means Love; Elijah means God is Power, for example. If you will seek the meanings of these names you will have a completely new insight into the Bible and it will become a much more fascinating book.

One of the rather lovely phases of the Bible which we found throughout the Old Testament and now find in abbreviated forms in the New Testament is the constant repetition and reminders of what has happened before; of the fact that God did intercede and God was with them. In verses 14-42 Paul gives a short outline of the history and reminds them that it is always held before them to guide them. It is apparent if you study the Bible objectively that its greatest figure, next to Jesus, was Moses. As we have said, Moses certainly understood almost as much as Jesus, yet he knew that he could not teach his people a law of Love. They were too unruly, too primitive, too fearful and vengeful; so he gave them a law of fear: they *must* love the Lord their God, for He was a jealous God. And now we see the transition and the elaboration of those things which were spoken of in the Old Testament. And the strangest part, is that it comes to life in the New Testament — after the original teaching of Jesus — through the person of Paul,

who is now teaching the law of Love. I have often said that God has a sense of humor, and the irony of this is that most of the New Testament is devoted to what Paul, who was probably the most unloved of all the disciples, had to say about Love. Paul, who had no interest in being loved and merely wanted to justify his own idea of God until his great experience: Paul is the pastor of Love. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal . . . Faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." — Paul.

The greatest tragedy, as we have said before, of Paul's life was that the Jews would not hear him, though he was articulate and logical in their terms regarding what he knew to be true. His dream was to be the apostle to the Jews but they would not listen, and so he became the apostle to the Gentiles, a transition which is merely mentioned in verse 42. It is deeply ironic, especially when you look at it from the stand-point of the personality of the man, for then you see his own personal tragedy, which is as touching as his religious frustration. He was probably the loneliest man in the world in all areas of life. He was not attractive and came short of having a charming personality, and yet the dream of his life was to marry and have children, which he denied himself. He had a backbone and discipline which is formidable, for as we have seen, although the other disciples did their part, none of them had Paul's push, determination and fight, and without him there might not have been a Christianity. On practically every page of the book of Acts to the end of the Epistles we find Paul fighting with someone, in or out of prison, stoned, shipwrecked and in chains, and at the end of this fantastic life he chooses his own way of death. He decides that he will die in Rome, and as a Roman citizen he will be decapitated, because he believes then that he is worth more to the cause dead than alive.

I have always had a suspicion — because there has been nothing that could prove it — that Paul went through the balance of his life trying to prove that he was sincere. And probably, because he had a great sensitivity, he was at times terribly hurt by the way people reacted to him. I do not think he would have wanted people to say they thought he was wonderful — you know, that thing we call appreciation — but I am sure he was human enough

to have not wanted to be as reviled as he was at times.

In verses 22 and 23 we are reminded in the Bible's idiom of the story of Samuel and king Saul in the Old Testament. Samuel decided that Saul should be king, which was not according to the divine plan, so Saul was disposed of and David was brought forth as king. It was he, of whom the prediction had been made both in Isaiah and the Psalms, from whose seed the saviour would be born. And, according to the geneology of Jesus in the Gospels, he descended from the line of David. In verse 36, it says that David "saw corruption" which simply refers to the decomposition of his body.

There is one thing in verse 52 which I would like to clarify. What do you understand by the Holy Ghost in this context? I wish to bring this out for a specific purpose. Let us say for the sake of argument, we send out a mailing of 50,000 and we find that 50,000 people subscribe to the lectures. How would we feel? Elated, certainly, but what would we be elated by? Would we say that we were elated by the Holy Ghost? I am asking these questions because I want you to realize that here the Holy Ghost symbolizes the demonstration of and for God, which in turn brings joy and thankfulness.

If we are to understand the Bible, then we must understand the terms which are used. As before, "saw corruption" simply meant bodily decay, so the term used here simply refers to a feeling of elation, of enthusiasm, of joy. Incidentally, to my mind one of the minor tragedies of the human race is that we evidently experience so little joy. This is one reason too why, whenever it does happen, the Bible writers must speak of it as the action of the Holy Ghost. We seem to forget that text from Job "all of the sons of God shouted for joy." I want to make it very clear that this is not the action of an angel or heavenly being stirring them up as you would stir soup. It was a natural enthusiasm, a wonderful reaction and feeling of satisfaction because they had gotten the message across and the people were responding.

CHAPTER 14. In verses 1-18 we find the first record of Paul healing and it is instantaneous. This is interesting because, although healing was prevalent in antiquity, it was not taught in orthodox Judaism at that time, and Paul had not been with Jesus, so he had little background for this. He spoke the Word, yes, but we all

speak the Word in our lives and we do not always have instantaneous healings. First of all, there was no doubt of the fact that Paul had the desire to heal. Second of all, his personality was such that he would try anything at any time, for he had a magnificent courage. There may have been a subconscious questioning or nervousness as to whether or not he could do this, but the combination of the desire and determination raised such a power within him that the Word went out like an arrow to accomplish its purpose.

We have often discussed the fact that there are two kinds of healings: instantaneous and prolonged. We have seen that almost every instantaneous healing is achieved because of a crisis; a situation which must be immediately overcome. When we do not have a crucial situation we nibble away at it metaphysically; we make a little improvement and then slip back a bit, and then go forward again, and so it takes time. The interesting point in this instance is that it was not a crucial situation — for it was a chronic problem — for the man, but it was crucial for Paul. That is the unusual aspect. For instance, if I got very upset when I was called upon to heal someone at a moment of crisis, I would not be very effective. But here the person who was ill was not particularly aroused, but Paul is and Paul healed him. The principle behind the healing is the same, however, because we must reach the same point of a completely unified drive of power in order to be successful.

I believe that this was actually Paul's first healing. One reason is that there has been no mention of one before this, and I am sure a prior healing would have been recorded since Paul was such a controversial figure. He had seen Peter and John and the others heal, and now it was his turn. Do not forget that none of the other disciples were present, for if Peter or John had been there he might not have made the attempt. But he was with Barnabas, who had been commissioned as leader by the disciples and Paul, who felt that he had been commissioned by Jesus, had a strong desire to succeed in his metaphysical debut in the field of healing. He accomplished it, as we see, and he must have been very thrilled, even more so than the man he healed.

There is an additional factor here. When you make your first healing and you know that you have been the instrument through

which it has come, not only the memory of this, but the sub-conscious realization of it is never lost. It does a strange thing for a person: it completely alters his attitude towards anything that happens in the physical body. The body is never again something to be anxiously cared for and fussed over. It must be cared for properly: it must be dressed, cleansed and fed properly, but it should not cause any disturbance. If it does act up, the person who has experienced this is usually very surprised and takes the attitude that this is ridiculous and he will not be annoyed by it. This was certainly Paul's attitude from this point on, which comes out very clearly in his experiences of being stoned and the various hardships he later encounters. Once you have healed another person or yourself, you have a completely different attitude towards the physical world. It is one of the greatest gifts we ever receive, because one of our greatest fears is the fear of the body.

In verses 18-28 we get a rather clear picture of the kind of constitution Paul had — and he was stoned more than once. I am sure that his followers spoke the Word for him, as he did for himself, but it was nevertheless quite an ordeal. It is interesting to see that the people wanted to deify them. The Greeks worshipped a pantheon of gods, and they felt that these men must be gods in the flesh, so they brought their sacrifices to worship them. It is also fascinating to see that Paul, whose Judaic background incorporated sacrifice in worship, tells them how wrong it is and is horrified that they should want to do such a thing. Especially when you realize that until only recently Paul was an orthodox Jew who observed all of the temple rituals: and now he had a completely different outlook and belief. This too is part of his really great inner transformation.

We begin to see an inner softening, you might say, which is the result of spiritual contact. Not softening in the sense of weakness — quite the contrary: it is the softness which makes one tremendously strong. One of Paul's greatest statements, which I am perfectly sure came to him immediately after his experience, is "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is one of the most beautiful of his statements, and it is completely true.

Paul had three great disappointments in his life. We saw that one of these was the fact that he could not bring this teaching to the Jews, and we see here how they treat him. Another, which may

have been even greater, was that he had never known Jesus in the flesh. It must have been a deeply disturbing realization after his experience for him to know that he could have learned directly from Jesus, but he refused and even went to the extreme of trying to wipe out the teaching. And to the third was the personal life for which he longed and which he never had.

I wonder what he felt about these things. Did he know enough about the Law and about himself to realize that it was his fault? We could look at the first two points objectively and see how he brought them upon himself. But, on the other hand, he was completely sincere throughout: he was sincere as a Jew and he was sincere as a disciple. Yet the fact remains that he did not achieve the three great desires of his life.

Situations such as this one in the life of Paul remind me of a lovely Unity story of the little girl who prayed for forty dolls and received only one. When she was told "God didn't answer your prayers," she replied, "He certainly did. He said 'No'." Sometimes we feel, partly due to a limited understanding of the metaphysical teaching — that every time we decide we want a certain thing, this is what we should have. Then we sometimes find that we are unable to obtain it. It may not provide much solace at that moment to know that we will achieve what we have worked for in some lifetime or another: but we do not always obtain it in the time period we choose. Then the question arises — and it is a sore point — "what am I in metaphysics for?" That is a very good question. Of course, it is answered by another very simple question: "What do you want: do you want your demonstrations, or do you want God?" That is the question which I think Paul had to ask himself. I think it is the question which everyone must ask themselves when they do not achieve everything they want through metaphysics. Too, if we do not achieve a particular thing, there is no reason to say that metaphysics does not work, for we do not always know what is behind our lives or why we are in a particular position.

CHAPTER 15 points out how difficult it must have been for the disciples and those of their followers who had been reared in orthodox Judaism to suddenly realize that the religious forms were unimportant. This is one of the very great steps of the early group and Peter, who had so recently refused to touch food which was

offered to him in a dream because it was not clean, is now urging them to take this step. The change in him was so extensive that even when it came to a rite which was considered to be the heart of Jewish ritual — circumcision — he is able to say that it was no longer necessary: that it was not the outer form that mattered, but the inner.

We have discussed the esoteric meaning of the rite of circumcision, but Peter is discussing it from the point of view of an outer religious symbol originally ordained by Moses. He realized that the physical act of circumcision is not going to make a person better, nor is it going to do anything for their soul, so in that sense there was no religious import to it. The inner change was what counted.

However, we see in verse 20 that the Gentiles are asked to be “kosher” in their eating habits. It is quite ironic, for in one breath they are told that they can forego circumcision and in the next they are asked to abstain from “unclean” food. Peter must have been a bit unsure of himself, because the congregation of the disciples had apparently voted on this. I am sure that Paul, who was usually the most positive and assertive of them all, must also have been a bit confused at this point. James gives the order that they should eat the proper foods and refrain from fornication. Actually, that does not necessarily mean celibacy, for morals among the Greeks in particular were as strange as some of their religious rites. The Greeks of that time were quite amoral, and the traditional Jewish as well as Christian view was that sex was only to be used for procreation. It is in this sense that abstention from fornication is meant here.

Verses 36-41 provide a very interesting insight into human relations. It always interests me to see that metaphysical beginners usually feel that the worst thing that they can ever do is to disagree with somebody. The idea that we must always be the apostles of sweetness and light is completely untrue, because it is not a part of human nature. No one knows the details behind the situation which arose here, but apparently Paul did not like Mark, for one reason or another. It could be that Mark was one of those who was extremely critical of Paul after his admission as a disciple. I have no doubt that Paul would have remembered this, so that if he found it possible to do without Mark, he certainly would. This

is one of the instances where we realize that these men who are supposed to be the elite of God, and certainly were in their own way, still act like, and are, human beings. I think this is very important for us all to realize, because we do have a tendency to regard these people as supernatural, and they most definitely were not.

For the sake of argument, if Paul were really resentful of Mark and bore him a grudge, whether he were Paul the apostle or plain John Smith, he would be wrong. He would be holding a wrong thought for himself which in turn would react in his own life, not in Mark's life. He undoubtedly had some sort of resentment about him or he would have said "Fine, come along. The more the merrier." Remember it was a most difficult thing that they were trying to do. But — he was human. The one thing I find so wrong about most Bible teachings is that they put these people on pedestals. If these people are to be examples for us, and they are great examples, then we must approach them as human beings, not as gods. It comes out quite clearly here that, even after his spiritual experience, Paul could still be quite petty.

CHAPTER 16:1-19. If you notice, in verse 10 there is a sudden change to the first person plural which indicates that Luke has joined Paul at this time. The most important point is in the beginning of the chapter, however. In verse 1 we are told that "a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus" the son of a Jewess and a Greek father. Of course this is Timothy, who was the son Paul always wanted to have. He was probably about 21 or 22 at this time, and all of the love that was pent up in Paul was lavished on this boy. It is a very beautiful relationship. From here on Timothy is almost constantly with Paul until he finally sets out on a mission of his own. Then we have the two very wonderful Epistles to Timothy, and in the second that beautiful text: "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Timothy became his right hand, and, so far as we know, he was the first disciple Paul had ordained on his own.

Timothy apparently supplied many things that Paul lacked in terms of personal relationships. Paul felt that he was not only his spiritual son, but also his physical son. And the fact that Timothy agreed to be circumcised in order to make it easier for Paul — for as we saw circumcision was no longer an issue with Paul — shows

a tremendous love on his part, and a great understanding.

Verse 14 is reminiscent of an incident in the Gospels. When Jesus entered Samaria, which was also a pagan city like Thyatira, there was a woman by the well through whom the teaching was introduced. Lydia was a follower who played quite a part in Paul's life.

The situation beginning with verse 16 is interesting in two ways. Firstly, that they were able to stop her psychic ability, and secondly, that she must have been very close to a spiritual realization since she was able to recognize them. One of the tests used by the Society of Psychical Research to determine your intuitive ability is a pseudo game. Evidently this girl was a slave owned by two masters, who brought them considerable fame and money by being able to correctly predict the results of whatever was equivalent to our races of today. It is possible to do this, but you pay dearly for this misuse of the ability, and I would never recommend utilizing intuitive power to win at bridge or in Las Vegas.

Then the men discover that Paul had caused her to lose this ability, and so they take Paul and Silas before the judges. It would be interesting to know how many times they were beaten, for even those instances which are recorded show that they must have had a fantastic inner strength to be able to withstand it. Aside from that, they were far from well fed in prison or on their travels, so it must have been purely the energy of the spirit that kept them going.

In verse 26 we are told that an earthquake occurred, and a very interesting point arises here. Coming as it did, after what they had just gone through and their own prayers, most people would have taken this as a demonstration which set them free, but Paul does not choose to leave and they both stay. And, when they see the jailer about to take his own life, they tell him not to harm himself because they are still there. Now compare Paul's attitude here with his attitude towards Mark: the situation with Mark was a personal grievance, and here he is acting in the service of God. This raises another point. In metaphysics we try to see the Presence of God in every situation, no matter what it is or what we are doing, but apparently Paul still made, consciously or unconsciously, a distinction between what it meant to be in God's service and his own personal life.

Paul's personal reactions to people were still a very powerful influence in his life, and his likes and dislikes were quite strong. I am sure there must have been quite a scene between he and Mark when he refused to let him accompany him. But here we see one of the most magnificent gestures in his life, because both his and Silas' lives were at stake, as well as the completion of the mission, and yet he chose to stand still. One could say that, knowing the elements involved in the situation, his faith was so great that he was certain that they would both be unharmed. But it is nevertheless a very great gesture and one which few people would have made.

It is interesting to speculate as to why Paul did not remain in this town under the circumstances described in verses 34-40. The town offered a tremendous opportunity for establishing a center — Lydia was only one among many who wished to follow him. One reason why Paul raised the issue of his Roman citizenship could have been because he wanted to remain and teach, but he did not remain. Since we are not told why we can only speculate about the reasons on the basis of what we know of his character.

Did he mention the fact that he was a Roman in order to frighten or impress them? They were certainly upset when they learned it. He does not use the power this gives him, so what did he want — personal satisfaction or an apology? It is possible that he mentioned it believing that it would afford protection for the followers who remained, but this does not seem likely since they would have little protection unless he himself had remained.

The possible reasons for this have always interested me for, as we have seen before and will again, Paul will frequently bring out this bit of information when he gets into a tight spot. We know that Paul was not only highly developed, but he was quite cosmopolitan. In contrast to this we see him submit himself to every form of cruelty. He could have told them he was a Roman when they started to beat him, and they would have stopped, because it is true that the fear of Rome protected its citizens throughout that part of the world. But he did not say it then. He tells them only when they order him out of the city and tell him he is free to go. This does not suit him, and so we see that he uses it for his personal convenience. This gives us an insight into his mind: it was a fast and shrewd mind which knew exactly what it was doing.

CHAPTER 17. In verses 1-12 we see that Paul still did not realize that Jesus was not God but that he demonstrated the Christ within to a far greater extent than any human being who has ever lived. This was one of the things which set Paul apart from the other disciples. They had realized by now that Jesus had never spoken of himself as God but that they had misinterpreted him, and that he spoke of the Presence of God which was in him as it is in every other human being. We have not yet come to the point where Paul takes himself off into the desert for three years to meditate. It is during this period that he begins to acquire the realization and the understanding of the other disciples. In the meantime the thing that guides him is the effect of his own conversion. This experience did happen to him, therefore he knew it was real. This is so true of all of us. People will become interested in metaphysics for one reason or another, but until the individual has made his own demonstration, not with the aid of a healer, but purely as a result of his own meditation and change in thought, he does not really understand metaphysics. Until that time it is a matter of faith. Paul had had this experience, and so he was completely fired with the excitement, the beauty and the great understanding he had suddenly been given. But he had not yet come to the point where his understanding was so great that he could differentiate between Jesus as God and Christ in Jesus. This he has yet to learn.

We also see what happens when he gets into cities. There was a certain segment of the Jewish population which resented him very much at that time and as a result, if he was not cast into jail, he was heckled or attacked. In Athens the crowd was so incensed that they sought out the house where he was staying to beat him or, possibly, even kill him. Jason, who was taken before the magistrates, gave financial security and, realizing their danger, got them out of the city at night. So we see that there were very few places where they went and were simply besieged by enthusiastic followers. They encountered something like this in practically every town they visited, and we once again must realize Paul's great courage and tenacity.

Verses 13-34 is a very beautiful and powerful section, and we begin to see some of the real teaching coming through Paul. Paul is speaking as only he can, and you find that knowledge begins

to come through him almost unconsciously. In addition, it was quite an undertaking for him to have dared to speak this way in Athens, of all cities. Yet, strangely enough, the teaching is basically the same. The Trinity is found in all religions. In the terms of Christianity it is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but for the Greeks it was Pneuma, Psyche and Soma. The Divine breath which gave man life is Pneuma; Psyche is the soul, and Soma is the body. And, in the philosophic tradition of Plato, the teaching is almost identical. This was three or four hundred years after Plato and Paul was an extremely well-educated man. He knew and understood the cultural and religious backgrounds of the various regions to a great extent, and it is interesting to see that he uses a completely different approach to the teaching in Athens than he has in the other towns. It gives us a very clear indication of his brilliance and the fact that he knew how to specifically deal with the people whom he contacted.

The Book of Acts is actually the story of the student using what he has learned. While basically it is the story of Peter, John and Paul, the other disciples also participated.

Let us remember that this group of men were really a mixed group. They ranged from a youth to a lawyer. They included fishermen and farmers, and if there is one important thing that stands out, it is the fact they all demonstrated the Truth of what Jesus taught. Background and academic training did not make any difference.

What can we learn from this? We know they were as human as we are - and far from perfect. But - they believed - and they acted on that belief.

Let us also witness to the Truth - and act on our belief - NOW.

M. M.

Seven Steps in Demonstration

Desire: Get a strong enthusiasm for that which you want in your life, a real longing for something which is not there now.

Decision: Know definitely what it is that you want, what it is that you want to do, or have, and be willing to pay in spiritual values.

Ask: [When sure and enthusiastic] ask for it in simple, concise language...

Believe: in the accomplishment with strong faith, consciously and subconsciously].

Work at it ... a few minutes daily in seeing yourself in the finished picture. Never outline details, but rather see yourself enjoying the particular thing ...

Feel gratitude. Always remember to say, "Thank you God," and begin to feel the gratitude in your heart. The most powerful prayer we can ever make are those three words, provided we really feel it.

Feel expectancy. Train yourself to live in a state of happy expectancy ... Act it until it becomes part of you, as it must and will.

These are the seven steps. Follow them and they will bring you whatever it is that you need.

***FORMULA FOR DEMONSTRATION**

(A demonstration is answered prayer..
the manifestation of the Presence,
Power and Love of God.)

" **A**sk And Ye Shall Receive,

Seek And Ye Shall Find,

Knock And It Shall Be

Opened unto you"

- *JESUS*

(*The formula is ASK Mildred Mann)

Thank you, and God bless
you.

Mildred Mann

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