

THE REIGN OF JUSTICE

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Mankind will be thoroughly re-educated

ANY education always has a fundamental factor which is the object to be gained, and to that object, the education followed is subordinate. All people on Earth are influenced in their behaviour by some sort of self-interest. Even when they perform a deed of kindness, the good they do still has a taint of selfishness. They like to advertise their charitable works. They thirst for popularity, and all those sentiments are keener in some than in others, although all men have them to some degree. This is due to the fact that the global trend is mainly based on selfishness. Consequently, the whole behaviour of men has that intoxicating and poisoned flavour, which acts as a corrosive agent on their organism.

Selfishness, or self-love, is in fact a spiritual force which is as deadly as can be. Mankind's education is made of that spirit. At first sight, it appears to be of great advantage to all whose actions come under its influence, the more so that, as I have just mentioned, the world is steeped in selfishness. That being so, one who is a little less selfish than others already appears as a light shining in the dark, as the benefactor of all around him.

The selfish spirit is all malice and spitefulness, but it is frequently so artfully disguised that it is not easy at first to identify the sentiments of people educated under its influence, so perfect is the imitation. Accordingly, one may be charmed by a person with whom one has only recently become acquainted. He appears very pleasant, amiable and easy to get on with. It is only little by little, as one gets to know him better, that the selfish thoughts and sentiments that fill his heart begin to show through the surface politeness and amiability created by what is called the good breeding of the world. Then gradually, you get a more correct idea of his true mentality, his character.

Every individual in the human race follows the policy we have just described. The same spirit is to be found in some sort and in varying degrees in a family, in a nation and between nations. It is the worldly spirit, and the world has been educated according to the principles of self-interest. Those who are saturated through and through with that spirit may go so far as to commit the vilest actions. They are called the great criminals. Whereas those affected by it to a lesser extent, that is to say, the people one generally meets with in the world, are considered to be good sorts, because they

do not do things that would be too great a nuisance to their fellows. Nevertheless, they are also evildoers, particularly towards themselves, because they destroy their own organisms without realising it. They do not know the disastrous effects that selfishness has on the human machine.

Man was not made for being selfish. His body lends itself in no way to that line of conduct. The slightest trace of that poison in his organism sets up slow poisoning, slow indeed, but sure, which finally leads him to total destruction.

The history of the nations shows us abundantly clearly the disastrous effect of selfishness practised both on a small and a large scale and how it causes any human being to degenerate. That mentality illustrates well what the Holy Scriptures call sin. They give the names of its effects in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. They are animosity, jealousy, disputes, enmity and excesses in eating and drinking. They indeed are all manifestations of selfishness. Those bad sentiments inevitably give rise to misunderstanding and disagreement between people, highly concentrated bitterness at times, and even wrath and fury, not only between individuals, but also within a family, within a nation and between nations. That is what leads to war and all its frightful aftermath.

We are at present living through a phase in the history of mankind in which the frenzied madness of selfishness is being displayed to a degree never before reached on Earth. The result of this outbreak of unchecked selfishness, both in the individual and collectively, is the annihilation of whole countries and of numberless cities, in which thousands and thousands of people are killed.

As we pointed out a while back, there are varying degrees of selfishness in the human race. There are moderately selfish people. They reason with themselves to some extent and do not carry that madness as far as those who set no limits to that devilish frenzy. The last mentioned override every restriction by giving free rein to their passions, whatever their nature. As we pointed out, the moderately selfish, in spite of all, bring trouble on themselves, because continual small doses of selfishness are a stealthy poison working unknown to themselves and finally leading them inevitably to their graves.

It is appalling to realise that the intellectual people, those who pass for scientists and scholars in the

world, have never obtained any helpful results in their research. They have not succeeded in identifying the power of selfishness as something horrible and deadly. Of course, selfishness has all sorts of subtleties in the way it is expressed. There are captivating aspects to it that disguise its ugliness and its frightful effects. The result, we repeat it, is final catastrophe, individually and collectively, preceded by a whole series of trouble and tribulation.

Selfishness makes itself felt everywhere. There is even no other power as selfish as the state, and it usurps the place of the Almighty. It makes numberless demands backed by threat on threat and punishment on punishment, for the very reason that the spirit that directs it, is selfish. The state also seeks its own interests, if need be, sacrificing many human lives to gain its ends. It is governed by "the god of this world", who is an enemy of the divine principle of altruism and consequently an enemy of the true God.

Altruism is a display of selfless love. It is the very essence of the Almighty's dispositions, which are entirely free of selfishness. That divine sentiment displayed by the great God of Heaven, is depicted in a practical sense in one passage from the Holy Scriptures as follows: "God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

The Almighty sent his servants to illustrate his glorious Work with the altruistic spirit, in other words, with love for the neighbour, revealed to us in the thoughts of peace, of kindness and of mercy expressed by the Almighty. He treats his enemies in accordance with the altruistic principle, touching their hearts and inviting them to repent and to turn their backs, once and for all, on the poisonous principle of selfishness and to step out resolutely in the principles of love for fellow men. The spirit of altruism suits our organism excellently well. It is most nourishing to our organism, for it creates and sustains life.

Every year, Christendom celebrates Pentecost, or Whitsun, spoken of by the Prophet Joel saying that when God establishes his Kingdom on Earth, He will shed his Spirit on all flesh. God's Holy Spirit is altruistic in essence, it holds no trace of self-interest. When mankind is rid of its blindness, God's Holy Spirit will be able to work in the hearts of all men. When the rod of the wicked and the sceptre of the rulers are broken by the great trouble which will precede the introduction of the Kingdom of God on Earth, they will understand how mad they have been. The fact is that that trouble is the automatic outcome of men's selfish conduct, accord-

God's ways are not our ways

ENGLAND in the late 1930s: "Sister Marie-Louise, we can't understand it! After the telephone call we had yesterday, telling us explicitly that you could stay in England, we've just received a letter from the Home Office refusing to renew your Registration Certificate. Perhaps, as you've finished your classes, you no longer have student privileges. So, you'll be leaving us in a week's time, and believe me, we shall be very sorry!"

"Matron, three months ago, you said it'd be a good idea for me to get naturalised. Well, I've got all the papers together. Do you think this would be the right time to complete the formalities?"

Matron grasped the young nurse's hand and answered kindly: "My dear, I forbid you! There are very serious events pending, serious for all people. You are lucky to be Swiss, stay as you are. To become naturalised, you

would have to swear on the Bible to give up your nationality, and that would be a pity! But listen to me: if, in a year from now, you are not happy in your beautiful country, then I'll do my utmost to get you back. I promise you."

Comforted by this assurance, Marie-Louise went to her room to muse on the abrupt change which was to take place in her pleasant life as a hospital nurse. Truth to tell, she had been feeling, for a month, that something was going to happen. The Bible's report of "Jesus and the rich young man", which she had read over and over again, had given rise in her to all manner of unaccustomed thoughts and aspirations. She would ardently ask the Lord to show her how to follow Jesus and give up her riches to him.

"What could I offer Jesus?" Marie-Louise would often wonder. In her desire to follow the Master, there was nevertheless a reservation: "Where You will, Lord, but not in Switzerland." Curiously enough, the coming of

the Home Office letter pointed unmistakably to the fact that it was indeed to Switzerland that she must go, for the time being at least, since she was being politely shown the door.

Having been attracted, even in her early years, by the affairs of God, Marie-Louise had made a habit, particularly since entering the hospital, of looking on the Lord God as a Friend to Whom one may talk without restraint. When faced with a serious case, a course to be decided on, or responsibilities to be shouldered, she would, with simplicity, seek help from the Lord, and she was learning to love Him. That help had never failed her. That gave her great confidence at work, and induced all around her to trust her.

Sitting on her bed with the letter before her, Marie-Louise was lost in thought: her job, which she had been given only a short time ago, and which she had so long wished for — the active and happy life she led in this hospital, into which she had been received

on an equal footing with the other students in spite of being a foreigner — and her many good friends, some 800 patients whose faces and sufferings were all familiar to her, and all the nurses it was her happiness to direct and to advise at night — all this was what made up her wealth, riches to which her heart was strongly attached... And this was what she had to leave behind? Yes indeed, how well she understood this, knowing that if the Lord had wanted her to stay, it would have been child's play for Him to direct the course of events along another line, so that her Registration Certificate would have been renewed.

Being by nature self-contained and particularly reserved, Marie-Louise had not confided to anyone her aspirations and her desire to consecrate her life to God's service. For a long time, she had thought that to be a hospital nurse would be sufficient to win her "the crown of life". Wishing to know more, she

ing to the immutable Law of Equivalents. At last, they will be able to perceive the splendour of the Gospel of Christ. They will be able to permit themselves to be influenced by God's Holy Spirit and to become enthusiastic about divine ways, as the Prophet foresaw. He said that mankind will then return to Zion with triumphant songs and that everlasting joy will crown their heads.

How easy things would be for mankind if their eyes were opened, and how easy they would find it to understand that God, the Almighty, has redeemed all mankind with the Sacrifice of Christ, and that they can now rally to that Work of mercy and charity by applying themselves to practise altruism! Then, all the insolence and all the demands of the overbearing spirit, which spring from selfishness, would be dropped in a trice. If all mankind would live out the programme of this splendid motto: "We will be a nation of brethren", there would soon be a wonderful display of fraternity everywhere. All divisions, divergences, religious sects and political parties, and other dividing forces, would disappear. People would clasp hands in friendship, in the way the Almighty held out his hand to us through his Son, our dear Saviour and Redeemer. The Kingdom of God could even now be established on Earth for the joy and the blessing of all.

For the time being, mankind have not made up their minds to carry out that wonderful divine programme. But the time is at hand when events will make them "wise for salvation". The haughty and the wicked will be in the thick of destroying one another. They will disappear from the face of the Earth in the course of the great trouble that they are making for themselves with their terrible selfish mentality, and that they will be powerless to avert. It will surely overtake them through the work of the perfect Law of Equivalents. Then, the wonderful and beneficial education of brotherly love will come into effect among those of mankind who survive the great trouble.

Those events are not far off, for so great will difficulties become, so scorching the fire, that people will long for the glorious Salvation provided by Christ and by God's true children who have lived altruistic lives and have overcome evil with good. After that, when those who have gone into the grave return to Earth by resurrection, these released prisoners will, in turn, allow themselves to be educated in altruism, so that they may inherit everlasting life and happiness for evermore. All those comforting prospects and gladdening assurances are the result of the Sacrifice of Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, who paid, with his blood, the Ransom of all mankind in order to, once again, set them on the road to life.

Dog and rabbit!

From the German newspaper *Hamelner Wirtschaftszeitung*, we quote the following report, written by Ulrich Behmann, which is accompanied by an expressive photo that eloquently speaks for itself:

Polly and Nini: a different couple

Polly, a female wire-haired dachshund [wiener dog, sausage dog], and Nini, a little wild rabbit, really are an unusual couple. This hunting dog, which the Bütthe family in the German town of Hamelin has owned for more than eight years, one day decided to become a mother. Not that Polly had set her sights on a beautiful male of her own breed: this bitch, with her loyal eyes and specialized in hunting foxes and hares, simply "adopted" a baby rabbit.

Barking without restraint, Polly had broken into the neighbour's garden again, scared off a mother rabbit, and then started digging in front of the house.

"At first, we thought that her hunting instinct would triumph," said Mr Bütthe. But the bitch didn't think for long and grabbed one of the newborn rabbits, which was still blind. She carefully brought this tiny animal into her kennel, and licked it thoroughly.

From then on, Polly changed completely. She didn't let anyone get close to her and her little one. If little Sylvia Bütthe or her friend Marion, driven by curiosity, wanted to come closer to look at this unusual couple, Polly would bark furiously. "We watched Polly and her protégé from a reasonable distance. We were wary of this apparent peace. After all, Polly was a hunting dog, and Nini was choice prey," said Mrs Bütthe. But Polly's maternal instincts were stronger, and the most surprising thing of all was that Polly even began to produce milk! Her mammary glands filled up more and more. Nini began to accept its new mother. When our long-eared rabbit opened its eyes, it followed the female dachshund's every step. Mr Bütthe built a comfortable nest for the couple in an old cupboard. As time went by, Polly became more and more trusting, and Sylvia was even allowed to play with the young rabbit. If Polly's protégé was away for too long, all she had to do was bark loudly, and Nini would come running and let itself be caught, without any resistance, in the mouth of its "mother", to be brought back into the nest.

This animal idyll lasted until Nini became a fully grown rabbit.

Nothing could be indeed stranger for humans accustomed to looking at things from the limited angle of teachings received in a society conditioned by selfishness, in which one sees the weakest being devoured by the strongest, than to be suddenly faced with a case like the one mentioned above.

For a bitch expressly trained for hunting, to adopt, on her own initiative and decision, a newly born bunny, is obviously an unusual fact. That was certainly something surprising and astonishing for her master. And it would perhaps be even better to dissuade the dog from hunting...

This spontaneous and intensely felt need by Polly to show her tenderness and care for the frail little creature that its mother had to hastily abandon because of her untimely arrival, shows us that benevolence can gain the upper hand over antagonistic and aggressive training. A training that largely comes from man, stirring up an instinct that the curse, which also came from him in the Garden of Eden, has already developed more or less in many animals.

Until then, there was perfect peace, and all creatures lived in harmony. It was after the Flood that everything was upset and that hostility began to rule among species. Hostility that man increased by becoming a hunter and then made even worse by starting terrible wars, which only further increased in murderous power as "progress" and "civilization" grew...

If we think about the millions of children who have been orphaned and deprived of everything by war, which is still going on in many places all over the world today, we realize how much more desirable it would be for pity to prevail over the bellicose spirit, just like in the Bütthe family's dog, and that a benevolent and loving gesture would fill in the immense emptiness that surrounds these little ones. That would be a first step towards peace and brotherhood, as well as a return to life that is dependent on it and constitutes the most precious good for man.

When a habit holds on to us...

The following report, written by Aurelia Jane Lee, is from the Belgian-French magazine *En Marche* No. 1651 on the 20th of May 2020. It led us to think about a subject that greatly interests us: our habits. We would also like to share our thoughts with our readers:

Let us make it a habit to check our habits

Containment measures [movement restrictions due to COVID-19] have changed our habits, be it in our way of working, of shopping, of getting around... There are new routines and alternatives imposed by this particular context, and they will probably not remain once this crisis has passed. Though...

Faced with this unprecedented health situation, we have no choice: it's about organizing ourselves and finding a way. The solutions found are not necessarily ideal or lasting: some will be discontinued as soon as possible. But others can be inspiring and effective, and profoundly change how we see things and act on a daily basis.

The power of experience

"The experience of a change of use, is extremely effective in creating a new service, in promoting new behaviour and in starting an activity," writes Julien Dossier in a book about ecological transition. In other words, taking action banishes fear and reluctance that were felt about an unusual way of doing something.

For example, movement restrictions provided the opportunity to try out other work routines: with social distancing, different work schedules and changing priorities. One has also adapted to ways of relocating; one might buy more locally; one rediscovers activities that one had neglected (gardening, sport, cooking, and arts and crafts...). The line between essential and trivial is fading; connections are being established; new possibilities are showing themselves through more or less sudden changes.

One might be slowed down by the fact that, for most of us, one is forced to question and to change one's habits. On the other hand, one must admit that, apart from times of crisis, one does not always profit from collective or political support if one is innovative, and that can be discouraging.

It therefore needed the coronavirus so that things which were declared impossible, would suddenly be socially and individually possible, because it is a matter of a threat of global importance and especially because this threat is concrete and immediate.

What can be expected?

Because another scourge that is also deadly (and perhaps even more deadly) has been occupying us for a long time: climate change. The alerts have been increasing for years, but we only react slowly. That awareness has certainly been growing, but it is clearly insufficient.

Ten years ago, Jeremy Rifkin wrote about that: "At a critical moment, we will realize that we share a common planet, that we are all affected by it, and that our neighbour's suffering is also ours. At that point — and in view of the extent of the immediate crisis — accusation and punishment will not help much."

In order to face the environmental challenges and problems, many changes must be implemented and behaviours must be modified, in a very short time, be they in our methods of energy production, in our consumption habits, in our mobility, in our regional planning...and in our awareness.

Reconnect with the creative spirit

Why not see this pandemic as an opportunity to realize that changing our habits is possible...and even great?

We have to be creative, inventive, imaginative, innovative, individual and collective. If some people, after the gradual lifting of restrictions, return to their former habits without asking a question, we can bet that other people will voluntarily continue doing things in a new way. They have happily experimented.

This downtime, this suspension of a part of our activities, has enabled us to rethink certain habits that we no longer questioned, and to recognize that acting differently is possible, necessary and also rewarding.

had looked into every religious denomination, seeking people who conformed to the idea she had in her mind of a Disciple of Christ living up to what he says and also living by faith, as they did in Gospel times. She knew all the up-to-date and popular religions, but felt at home in none, and was much troubled by it. Where in the world was she to find someone who would answer the questions that had for years remained unanswered in her heart, and who would explain what death is and why, that "king of terrors"? Contrary to her fellow workers who grew accustomed to it, she always received an awful impression from those inert bodies. "There are so many enigmas in the presence of the sick and the dying! There are Catholics, Protestants, Israelites and also others. Each have to be treated differently at the point of death, according to the form his worship of God has taken. What do you to tell them to ease their last minutes? And what do you to say to the grieving parents?"

she thought. Alas, she had never found the right words, and she also found it impossible to utter the ritual phrases when she herself had to christen a baby when it was in danger of dying before the arrival of the clergyman. "Christen a child? But by whose authority?" she asked a fellow nursing sister.

"But if you don't do it, Sister Marie-Louise, its soul will be lost forever!" the nursing sister answered.

"No, really!" she responded, to that nursing sister's great astonishment, and she continued: "Do you really believe that that drop of water on the head of an unknowing child, and a ritual of words uttered by a simple mortal like me, have any value in the sight of God? ... Do you really believe it? Well, I don't anyway! And what I hope, if the child is to die, is that it does so when I'm not on duty, or else that it gets well soon, so that I may have no more to do with this business which goes against my conscience."

A week later, Marie-Louise was coming to the end of her last night on duty, and for one last time was closing the eyes of a youth who had died suddenly, as inwardly she was taking leave of the place. To avoid painful good-byes, questions and tears, a lot of things that she disliked, she had only informed the management of her departure, and left London on a foggy December afternoon.

Aboard ship, watching the White Cliffs of Dover recede in the distance, she did not feel so brave and went down into the saloon, saying in her heart: "There it is, Lord. I'm trying to follow you and to obey, but please console me! It grieves me so much to leave them all."

She took out her Bible and opened it at random and read: "Everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake, shall receive a hundredfold."

"No," thought Marie-Louise as she closed her Bible, "it's impossible! How can I find a

hundredfold of what I'm leaving behind? A hundred times as many patients, a hundred times as many friends, and a hundred times as much joy at my work? No, no, it can't be: the Bible is full of passages that poor people like me cannot understand! Might I have made a mistake?" She then gave vent to her grief and wept bitter tears.

Back in Switzerland, our exile is a little sad, asking the Lord to show her what He desired of her, while applying at home and abroad for work. She thinks: "Heaven helps those who help themselves." Her thoughts turn over and over again to London, taking her along the corridors, into the wards and next to the sick beds of the patients in whom she is most interested. As she was quick in everything she did, and still having everything to learn about divine ways, Marie-Louise felt time hanging heavily on her hands, and the Lord in no haste to settle matters for her.

It is up to each of us to eventually make it sustainable by continuing to show imagination and cooperation in the face of challenges that will follow. "Now is the time to fight, so that the economic recovery, after the end of the crisis, does not bring back the same old climate regime that we have vainly fought against until now," pleads Bruno Latour. He presents a very concrete plan to get back to basics: firstly, individually and then in groups, make a list of what we are really attached to, and conversely, of what we can free ourselves from...

That report interested us because it raises a fundamental question: the role of our habits in our life, which are decisive.

As we know, we human beings have a character that is the sum total of all our habits, which, for their part, consist of impressions that we register in us. The impressions condition our thoughts, which become the source of our words and actions. Their sum total forms our mentality, which eventually determines our destiny.

We therefore understand how important it is to pay attention to our habits that we take up. In general, we do not occupy ourselves with all those considerations. We follow our instincts, tastes, wishes and sometimes even certain influences that we cannot clearly define.

It is useful to know that human beings are constantly under the influence of a spirit: the Spirit of God, or the spirit of the Adversary, Satan. The Adversary influences people most of the time through suggestion, almost without their knowing it.

The above article shows that the COVID-19 crisis had effects on our habits, and forced us rethink our way of living. That could be a reason for hope, and make us think that we will not return to the same mistakes as before the crisis. As the report writer correctly says, another scourge awaits us: climate change. It places before us an even more difficult problem to solve, because it questions our methods of transport and of mining, processing and exploiting natural resources. It eventually affects everything or almost everything related to our way of life.

But we should not forget that our society's way of functioning is closely associated with money, not to say that we are slaves of money or that it controls our life. Mammon (money) is the sinews of war, and controls the world. Only very few people escape its power. It is mainly because of money that we are polluting the planet, that wars are fought, etc. To think that we will radically change our habits after the COVID-19 crisis, or more precisely said, that we will not take up our former habits again, is a bit naive. That would be wonderful, but it is not realistic. It demonstrates a misjudgement of human nature.

In fact, to change habits requires much deeper work of the heart than most of us might imagine. The example of Apostle Paul is sufficient to support our point of view. As a zealous Pharisee, he said, when speaking about himself, that he was "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; a Pharisee according to the law; a zealous persecutor of the church; faultless according to the righteousness of the law" (Philippians 3: 5 and 6). But then, after he had been touched by the light, he completely changed his opinion about himself. In his Letter to the Romans, one can read his cry of despair: "What a wretched man I am! Who will free me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7: 24 and 25.

That confession is interesting in two ways: firstly, it shows us that we do not know ourselves. Apostle Paul, when speaking about his former mentality as Saul of Tarsus, said that he was "faultless according to the righteousness of the law". As soon as he was touched by the Lord Jesus Christ, he recognized his wretchedness. Yet he was the same man. But the Truth, when it touches us, not only lets us see the divine promises, but also our own condition as sinners, condemned and

dying. The second interesting point in Apostle Paul's declaration, is that he said: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" That shows us that we cannot save ourselves and that we need the help of our dear Saviour, which also means that faith is necessary to make a change.

We would also like to emphasize that that great work of the soul, that change of our habits, which the Bible calls "sanctification", is not impossible, but requires particular dispositions of the heart, especially sincerity and honesty. God, Who is all-wise, did not, during the Gospel Age, call all people to sanctification, but only a class of people who formed his Church. He gave them faith and brought them to spiritual nature through the Bible. In their heart, He placed the glorious gift of the "new creation" to be born to the glory of divine nature, after the entire process of sanctification and of the giving of their lives.

Those true Disciples received, through faith, from their Master, the invitation to give their lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, for the benefit of their fellow people. Through faith, they learnt to love their neighbour and even their enemies, to renounce themselves and the Earth, and to put to death the flesh and all its desires. When they reach the end of their earthly race, completely overcome their "old man", and faithfully give their life on the sacrificial altar, the Lord promises them the "crown of life": the immortality of divine nature, the same nature as God. That is a promise that will be fulfilled at their resurrection with all their fellow servants, in glory.

At the end of the Gospel Age, which means, in our days, God gives another calling, which is not heavenly, but earthly. That calling is addressed to all well-disposed people who also have to change their sentiments, but unlike the Church of Christ, they do not give their life as a sacrifice, and they inherit eternal life on Earth if they are faithful.

We understand, from the above, that changing habits is no small thing. However, we can declare that it is the most beautiful prospect that can be placed before a human being. To undividedly give one's heart to God, means to attain the freedom and glory of God's children. That is a sublime destiny, which will be the share of all people in the Restoration of All Things, which is approaching, and which will soon be an accomplished fact for the happiness of everyone in the whole world.

Communion or communication

It seems as though our fellow citizens feel a great desire for a connection or a relationship with each other. However, the means which we have at our disposal for that and which we might excessively use, do not correspond to the expectations of their users, and leave behind a feeling of dissatisfaction. Why? We will examine that, but let us first read what the European magazine *En Marche*, on the 16th of September 2020, said on that subject:

The paradox of online connection

In "the age of the smartphone", people seem to be more "connected" than ever. However, one must come to an understanding of that term. Because, being bent over a screen, isolated behind a computer or forced to work from home, some people feel disconnected from reality, from others or from themselves.

Lockdowns have paid dividends to online-tech companies and social networks. "GAFAM [an acronym for the Big Five tech companies: Google (Alphabet), Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft] is the big winner in lockdown" has been a frequent headline in the media. In fact, being confined to home and separated from family, friends and colleagues, everyone had to develop new ways of staying in touch with their fami-

lies and friends, and of working, of having fun and of managing their affairs.

In these extraordinary times, the Internet and online-communication tools proved to be particularly useful. But the opposite effect also occurred: on leaving confinement, some felt the need to log off, to turn off their screens and to find real social connections — as opposed to the virtual connections — and to take a little vacation.

That desire to turn off devices, to quit social networks, a least for a while, if not permanently, is not new. Even in 2013, the French sociologist Rémy Oudghiri, in his French book Déconnectez-vous [Log off], analyzed the way that new technologies have entered our lives in recent years and have changed our relationship with the world.

Should we burn our smartphones?

Rémy Oudghiri mentions some extreme experiences: individuals and entire families have decided to completely stay away from computers for a month or for half a year, and have thus rediscovered the charms of silence, of shared meals, of mindfulness and of the present moment. But such a radical step, even if it is inspiring, is not for everyone. We also have to live well in our world and to recognize, as we have now seen in these times of almost worldwide lockdown, that the Internet also has advantages.

Smartphones are used as encyclopedias, the telegraph, cameras, compasses, payment cards, note books, music streaming... Giving them up means to deprive ourselves of handy features that we have become accustomed to.

However, it is clear to many people that these multi-application devices take up a little too much space in their lives, and that an addiction develops, which leads to strange compulsions. It borders on the absurd when one films the best moments in one's life and shares them on social networks, instead of actually living them.

"Digital burnout"

The experiences of recent years call for a thorough examination of the real benefits of being "totally connected", and of the dangers that misuse can cause. When ever-present screens reduce the capacity of memory or concentration, or the quality of sleep, health is at risk.

A complete disconnection can be a necessary path for people who have reached an advanced stage of addiction, close to what some call "digital burnout". Australian author Susan Maushart, who also encouraged her three teenagers with her on this adventure, spent six months without a smartphone or a tablet, and describes this adventure as a "technological detox": this experience allowed them to find time to read, to make music and to strengthen family ties.

Whichever way one does it, radical or measured, taking a step back from excessive connection can be healthful. The initiatives can range from a company that introduces the No Email Day, to the application that automatically cuts off Internet access for a set time. One thing can lead to another.

Are we facing a step back?

If the Big Five tech companies had not had so much success, then a completely different movement might have started. The craze aroused by new technologies, especially by the mobile Internet, seems to give way to a form of weariness.

The wish to reconnect with oneself, with loved ones and with the outside world, slowly sets in as a reaction to "digital overload", which, for some people, reached its peak during lockdown. Whether this translates into a return to nature, to family activities or to a less stressful rhythm of life, the wish to distance oneself from technologies, which, over time, sometimes prove themselves to be detrimental, seems to increase with the awareness that human beings, above all, need to connect with each other, without technological intermediaries.

When she had been home about ten days, her mother suggested she should go to Mrs R's place to make a few items out of leather, to send as presents to her friends: "That will occupy your time and turn your thoughts to another direction."

No sooner said than done. Every afternoon, she would go to the warm and welcoming little room and at first spent more time relating her recollections than making presents. It was there that Marie-Louise received the testimony of the Truth with the clarity of detail most suited to her nature. Distrustful at first, she remembered this text: "If anyone says to you: 'Look, here is the Christ!' or: 'There he is!' do not believe it." However, having asked her some tactful questions, the beloved sister in the Lord (Sister R., Mrs R.) had come to understand the intimate reasons for her return in such unexpected conditions. She replied to all Marie-Louise's queries with indisputable authority. So at last, she learnt where

the dead were and where real Disciples of the Master are to be found. Better still, she learnt that there was still a Prophet leading God's people...

She would like to meet that Prophet, hear him speak, and who knows, maybe even talk with him! What joy, too great for words! With all her heart, she longed to be in touch with that Faithful and Wise Servant, the author of *The Message to Humanity* (the Book of Remembrance), out of which she would read the chapter on the Resurrection several times a day. What good it was doing her! Everyone whose death she had witnessed, then, was to come back from "the land of forgetfulness", each and every one of them! Whether they had been christened or not, they would return.

Marie-Louise had transports of enthusiasm, never before experienced. However, there was still something lacking in her happiness. "Is the Lord truly inviting me to collaborate in his glorious Work? How am I to know?" she

thought. The Lord is faithful, and with wonderful humility, He lets us try Him. Therefore, the assurance she so much desired did not keep her waiting.

Late one afternoon, she had been reading the *Heavenly Dew* daily devotional book with Sister R., and felt she would like to know the Bible text and its commentary of her birthday, but dare not ask. The suggestion was made quite simply by dear Sister R., who read out with some emotion: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go. I will advise you with my eye on you." Psalm 32: 8.

And then dear Sister R. read out the Faithful and Wise Servant's commentary on that Bible text: "The Lord will teach us through his Spirit on condition we accept everything He proposes, that is, to live in the Body of Christ, to lay down our lives for our brethren... [The Lord] says: my son, do you love me enough to follow the ways I Myself follow? If you have come to perceive how greatly I love

you, you are bound to lay down your life for your brethren (1 John 3: 16). Fear nothing, my eye is on you. You are the blessed child of my heart, and no one shall hurt you, for I love you, and since you love my ways, I will show you my salvation (Psalm 91: 16). ..."

Nothing could be plainer, and Marie-Louise followed the invitation with enthusiasm. She attended the New Year congress in Geneva, and henceforth became an evangelist. It is her happiness to let all the hearts thirsting for justice and truth, know about divine ways, which are so wonderfully detailed in the books *The Message to Humanity* and *Eternal Life*.

Great is her joy to be able to explain to people their true destiny, which is not in the grave, but eternal life on Earth restored. She exerts herself, with all her heart, to change her dispositions by developing the divine sentiments. Her experiences as a Disciple of Christ, have unmistakably shown her that

In fact, online connection, as is mentioned in the report's title, is typical of our time, which means that one is connected by means of a computer or smartphone, but not directly, which is the paradox. "To be connected" means "to be connected with others". But what is connected here with others? When we have a mobile telephone or a computer in front of us, we are not connected to other people, but to our device, by means of which we can communicate with one or more other people...over a distance. We are not connected to each other, but separated from each other. If it were not so, then why would some people seek to "disconnect" from this technology in order to "reconnect" by bonds, by old bonds, that have been replaced by these new technologies.

One must recognize that, with the emergence of the Internet, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have been enthusiastically used by humankind in social networks and in other areas of communication, information and leisure. And it is also true that these devices have very interesting functions. Therefore, many people have begun to unreservedly communicate, being fascinated by new possibilities of communicating over distances, with whomever and wherever they may be. Some people say or write things that are so superfluous or unnecessary that one would not want to verbally dwell on them. The exchange of photos and videos on the Internet has also greatly increased.

However, the report also lets us understand that some people are tired of using these communications methods. It is worthwhile asking why.

The fact that they were a novelty was very enticing for us. The new functions offered to us were a great temptation for many. The online-technology companies did everything to feed and stir up the desire for knowledge and consumption. And today, we have to realize, as the report says, that we are dealing with a type of disappointment: our new devices have not brought us what we had hoped for. One must honestly admit: our relationships with other people have not improved with the use of computers or mobile telephones. The author of the report touches on all of that, including the harmfulness of these devices to our health, and asks the question: "Should we burn our smartphones?" If the ability to remember, to concentrate or to sleep, if those essential functions are affected, then one can rightly ask oneself: "What is the best thing to do?"

These new devices and communication technologies have created an unrestrained need to correspond with others. But that need is artificial, not vital. It is obvious that we also lived very well before there were computers and mobile telephones.

What a human being very urgently needs is divine communion, constant contact with their God. That is attained through the intermediary of his Son, our dear Saviour. For that, no communication device is necessary, only faith, which allows us to feel Almighty God's

presence and to have a relationship with Him, which is essential for our life, because the Vital Fluid emanates from Him, which gives and maintains life to all existing creatures in Heaven and on Earth.

With the emergence of sin, the father-and-child relationship, which a person had with their Creator, was interrupted. Since then, people have been cut off from the Source of life and become mortal. In order to restore the father-and-child relationship, our dear Saviour came to Earth to take the place of the guilty and to pay the Ransom for their sins. From now on, all, who wish to, can restart this relationship with Almighty God. This is the Good News that was announced by our dear Saviour during his earthly ministry: our kind heavenly Father wants to take us in again, with Him, as his children. And in the near future, all people will return to their God, Whom they will learn to love above all and everyone. Then, they will inherit eternal life on the restored Earth.

Holocaust in Australia

From the French newspaper *Ouest-France* on the 10th of March 2020, we quote the following article by Marie-Paule Barbaza Rousseau:

Australia: For whom does the death knell sound?

Environment: A billion animals perished in the flames that ravaged Australia. Will we learn a lesson from this?

Three rings of bells on the worldwide scene. Three rings of bells that sound like the death knell for one billion animals. When I look at the birds that landed at the well near me and that are looking for food, I tell myself that they are very lucky.

They at least have a chance of survival. But over in Australia, in the fight against the flames that never stop devouring the Earth, how many will survive? The price that we have to pay for what we are doing to our Earth, is terribly, terribly high. Nature is beginning to cut off our essentials by exterminating species other than ours. Is it to make us understand that we will not be spared either, because some cannot live without others? (...)

In the dust, you cannot find anything, but you can hear so far away. All you have to do is to listen to the crackle of the burning forests, to the beatings of the birds' wings that make the sky red with their blood, and to the quiet and the loud cries of various types of animals, which will never become the phoenix of mythology, and which make a painful noise, a cry for help, coming from the bowels of the fire, before disappearing.

If our tears here could put out the fire there, it would only be postponed because other fires would start elsewhere. The lessons of today, like those of yesterday, mean very little in view of the money of the powerful. I do not have the sting of a wasp to awaken the conscience of the leaders. I can only say that we

should never put up with an end. Ghosts are never witnesses.

That text is accompanied by a photo that shows a dead koala cradled in the arms of a vet. Our heart bleeds at the thought that a billion innocent animals paid with their lives for our destructive madness, because these fires often have a criminal origin. But let us be aware that the sacrifice of all these innocent animals does not have the power of a ransom for us. We will certainly have to endure the equivalent of our excessive line of conduct. "Will we learn a lesson from this?" Probably not.

As the author of the above article also well says: "The lessons of today, like those of yesterday, mean very little in view of the money of the powerful." That is unfortunately exactly the case. What sort of devilish power, which certainly can be said here, does worshipped money have? Its enormous power is proportional to the extreme weakness of our selfishness. Few people can resist it. What isn't done for money? It certainly is "the god of war and of despotism".

One can also actually ask the question: "For whom does the death knell sound?" It is not for all those animals, because they can no longer hear it. We are the ones for whom it sounds. Will we hear it?

The distressed cries of nature and its animals, which are the victims of the erratic climate and other imbalances for which we are responsible, are not heard in the luxury offices of powerful financiers and companies. There, it is the voice of profit and earnings, that is listened to.

That reminds us of our dear Saviour during his ministry on Earth. He gave his testimony and warned those who listened to him, that the equivalents of their actions and their line of conduct, would not remain unseen. But few really listened! He said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the Prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I wanted to gather your children together, like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Behold, your house is left to you desolate." Matthew 23: 37 and 38.

Because God does not punish, He sent his Son to save us, which shows the indisputable proof of his love for us. However, a person must reap what they have sown. How? Not in the form of God's punishment, as the religions teach.

A person forms their character with their thoughts and their line of conduct, and their character determines their destiny. It is that simple. Fortunately, we know that God's judgement is forgiveness. One day, all people, once they have been delivered from the suggestion of God's Adversary (Satan), will return to their Creator, bend the knee to Him, and live according to the Universal Law. They will become benefactors to each other. The animals will no longer have to suffer under the bad conduct of humans. The Earth will again be Paradise, where everyone will be happy.

God is always faithful and that his promises are sure.

She has found a hundredfold of brothers, sisters and friends. In the human race, she has also found numbers of sick people to whom she is now able to point out the cure for all ailments by keeping the Universal Law.

When the fight against herself, against her former character, is somewhat arduous, she repeats to herself these words from a hymn by God's Prophet, whom she has had the great privilege of hearing frequently, and for whom she nourishes a profound and heartfelt sentiment of reverence:

*If, at times, the going's heavy,
O my soul, your peace preserve;
Never let the least anxiety
Overwhelm you or unnerve.*

*As the hart, by hunters driven,
Drinketh deeply at the ford,
Come, draw from the Dew of Heaven,
The assistance of the Lord.*

News in brief of the Reign of Justice

From the newspaper *The Angel of the Lord*, No. 11, 1924, we quote an exposé by the dear Messenger on gratitude, which greatly interested us, and which we would like to share with our dear brothers, sisters and readers:

The value of gratitude

"O my soul, praise the LORD, and do not forget all his benefits." Psalm 103: 2.

We have spoken several times about gratitude. We have said that gratitude is an important part of love. At present, this feeling is only developed by the Family of Faith, because people generally do not try to be grateful at all. They get a job done or work

delivered, and they pay for it: on both sides, they say thank you, but this is not a feeling of gratitude shown in the heart.

Humanity cannot have joy; its heart cannot vibrate with the glorious joy that is shown in God's Family; it is grateful, because otherwise it could not exist, not being in communion with the Lord.

The Almighty is the Author of every perfect gift, the Bible tells us. All beings are indebted to the Lord; they can only pay their debts through gratitude, being moved by love, the desire to show their deep gratitude to the One Who continually nourishes them, without tiring, and always shows them his tenderness, his benevolence and his love.

When we examine subject in depth, we see that within the Family of Faith, there is very little gratitude; it is therefore necessary to say so, so that we may strive to develop divine love. David, in his time — after having felt the glorious elevation that he received from the Lord, which consisted of him, from a small shepherd whom he was, becoming the great shepherd of Israel, its king — exclaimed: "How shall I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? I will lift the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the LORD" (Psalm 116: 12 and 13). How much more must the Little Flock — who have come out of the mud, out of sin, to be called to the freedom and the glory of children of God — be deeply grateful to the Lord for the honour, the glory and the ineffable blessings that are bestowed on them?

Then, the power of divine grace floods their heart, and they feel the breadth and the depth of God's love, revealed in Jesus Christ, our dear Saviour, the Founder and the Perfecter of our faith. It is therefore appropriate

for the Little Flock to be deeply grateful and to prove their gratitude to the Lord, not only in words or prayers, but in an effective way, through deeds.

David taught Israel the law, and exhorted Israel to be thankful to the Lord; David himself kept repeating this thought in his heart: "O my soul, praise the LORD, and do not forget all his benefits." The Apostle Paul, considering the experiences of Israel, also illustrates the same thought by writing to the Hebrews these exhortations that they ought to consider: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as you did in the rebellion, on the day of the trial in the wilderness." Hebrews 3: 7 and 8.

If ingratitude is dangerous for God's people, then gratitude is beneficial for them. It is essential for a child of God to be grateful. Gratefulness delights its heart and expands its soul, so that it can be penetrated by divine love, just like the Sun, penetrating everywhere on Earth, gives life and health to everything that lives in contact with it.

Divine love is poured out on all beings, with more or less power, according to the capacity of each one: they must therefore show gratitude, representing not only the benefit received, but also a deep attachment to the Giver. This attachment is crystallized in us by respecting the divine law; that glorious law is fulfilled by Christ, our dear Saviour, and by the members of his Body who give their lives out of gratitude, out of joy and out of happiness in doing the Lord's will, repeating what the Son himself said: "I have come to do your will, O God [your law is in my heart]." In that way, a sincere gratitude develops, in our souls, the divine love poured into our hearts through the communion with

the Holy Spirit. Therefore, by living the law with all our heart, and by fulfilling it in favour of rejected humankind, the Spirit of God will come to replace in us what has been spent.

The separation between the Lord and humanity, is immense, but love smooths out everything, that ineffable love revealed in Jesus Christ, our dear Saviour, which is due to the Son's gratitude to the Father for all the benefits that the Father has bestowed on the Son. The Son put everything into the scale pan to glorify the Father and to hallow his holy Name, by giving his life for sinners. That is what Apostle John expresses in these words: "This is how we know what love is: he laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren." 1 John 3: 16.

The Host of the Lord proves its gratitude by being determined to give its testimony, even if there is resistance on the part of sinners. It persists, and it does not tire, placing itself in the hands of the Lord, since it is his Army, and the Lord calls it the people of his pleasure. With all its heart and with gratitude, it supports the Little Flock who make atonement, because it wants, as David did in the past, to lift "the cup of salvation" and to call on the Name of the Lord. Like David, it believes that that is a way of giving back to the Lord a little of his blessings, and a magnificent opportunity to glorify his holy Name.

We indeed need to be reminded of those precious exhortations, because even in the midst of trials, we can always express our gratitude for the Lord's goodness, and that is precisely what contributes to our Salvation.

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