

Publishing Editor's column

THE CONTROVERSIAL whistle-blowing website, Wikileaks, has started to publish hitherto secret messages sent by United States embassies. It has obtained more than 250,000 messages from US envoys around the world. At the time of writing, 220 messages have been posted on the Wikileaks website.

As might be expected, the American Administration is critical of this action, claiming that it will undermine international relations. However, the immediate assessment by political analysts is that they are an embarrassment to the United States because the vulnerability of their security systems has been exposed rather than secret alternative policies revealed. With more revelations to come, this story is likely to run for a while. Of more significance to the disciple of Jesus is the prospect of our own secret thoughts and motives being made public.

A first principle is that our God is all-seeing and all-knowing. Before Him we have no secrets that we can hide. Perhaps even more significantly, He knows our motivation. Speaking through Jeremiah He says, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (17:10). The previous verse asks the question, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"—the implication being that all too often we do not; we need Divine insights provided by God's Word to look into our own hearts and discover the unpalatable truths about ourselves. So often it is true that "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"; and we can only find release from guilt because "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

Jesus, speaking to the seven ecclesias, reminds them and us, "I know thy works." This is both a challenge and a comfort. It provides a challenge to a complacent view of our discipleship. In the context of Paul's exultant tribute to the wisdom, knowledge, judgement and ways of the Lord, he urges believers, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God . . . And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." (Rom. 12:1,2). This is in line with his earlier words on the purpose of God's calling, that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (8:29).

The comfort comes from the fact that our God is merciful, gracious and longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. It is His good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. What He seeks from us is a faith in Him, His Son and His promises; a faith that works in us to control and direct our thoughts and actions.

Self-deception is a hazard of our natures. Being aware of this is made more difficult in a surrounding culture that prefers to blame others rather than accept personal responsibility. On three occasions Paul warns against self-deception:

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived . . ." (1 Cor. 6:9). 'Self-evident', we are inclined to say; yet Jesus warns us that there will be those who will say, "Lord! Lord!" but he will not recognise their claimed allegiance;

"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals'" (15:33, ESV)—a necessary warning about those with whom we choose to associate. By implication, the value of meeting frequently with brethren and sisters and those who value God's Word is emphasised;

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal 6:7,8). What we sow is what we do with our lives, and this comes from our thinking and motivation—hence the need to ensure that this is directed by Word of the Lord.

How appropriate that self-examination is expected when we remember Jesus' death and resurrection! The barrier to genuine self-examination is what Peter describes in his First Epistle as guile. Receiving the Word of the Lord in the gospel involves putting away guile by seeking the sincere milk of the Word. This pattern we see in our Lord, who by his delight in the law of God "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22). Whoever seeks to pattern himself on him will "refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile . . ." (3:10).

Such will receive the blessing of the eternal inheritance from the Lord in the day when he will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5).