

Megiddo Message

Vol. 80, No 2
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*This Lord of ours, who fashioneded
the remotest bounds of earth, is God eternally;
He does not weaken or grow weary;
he is wise beyond all our thinking.*

- Isaiah 40:28, Knox

Trust and Obey

*I*t is a common Sunday school song: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

A simple sentiment, but what of its meaning? What is this trust and obedience that brings genuine happiness?

Either term is relatively easy to define. Obedience means doing what we are asked to do, and trust means we have a measure of confidence in the one who is requesting our obedience.

But when we come to applying these terms in the light of the law of God, we may encounter difficulties. Obedience may be much easier to define than to practice.

One of the distinguishing marks of every true life-seeker is his or her commitment to obedience. For such a one, the law of God is supreme. What the law says, we do, without hesitation, whether we feel like it or not.

But when we are serving God there is trust as well as obedience, because we agree *in advance* of knowing all that we will be asked to do. This is why we must "*trust and obey*." Convinced that God is fair, that He will require only what we can give, and that He will reward accordingly, as we obey.

This was the pattern in ancient Israel. The command was definite: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it" (Deut. 12:32). There was no way of knowing in advance all that that term "what thing soever" might include, but still the people promised, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and be obedient." It was an agreement in trust.

The young Samuel made a trust-commitment to God, even when he had no idea of the type of service that lay ahead for him.

The newly converted Saul of Tarsus made a commitment of trust. When he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he

was saying in essence, "However you wish to use me, Lord, I am ready."

When the youthful Jeremiah answered the call of God to the role of prophethood, his consent was likewise in trust. Little could he imagine of the life of a prophet—though he knew enough to know that it was not his natural career choice. But he consented, trusting God's promise, "I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee" (Jer. 15:20).

When the three Hebrew children in Babylon decided to obey God and go contrary to the command of the king, not bowing down to the king's golden image, there was trust as well as obedience. How long could they have stood against the decree of the king, threatened by the fiery furnace if they had not learned implicit trust in their God? God might deliver them, or He might not. But in either case, they would obey, because they had implicit confidence in God. And even when the fiery furnace was behind them, they could still go on trusting and obeying, knowing that the God who had been with them through the fire would be with them in any other trial they might confront.

They were willing to obey, and leave the consequences with God.

Jesus did not find out in advance all that His Father wanted Him to do, but He could say, "I do always those things that please him." There was no reservation, no exception, no judgment depending on the nature of the command. He was ready to obey *whatever*, with full trust in the wisdom of His heavenly Father.

And so Jesus said to His disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). In other words, do what I say; you can trust Me to be faithful.

Obedience is the essence of love. And love does not say, I will obey when it suits me. Where is the trust in such a commitment?

(Continued on page 27)

Megiddo means

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in warfare against sin and wrong gather to renew their strength and courage (II Cor. 10:4-5).

We believe ...

- in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal to humankind the knowledge of Himself and His plan, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall be filled with His glory, His people, and God's will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Soon-coming events

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ... lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to full reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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Patience

While You Wait

***We grow in
character by
stress as trees
grow by tempest.***

Tribulation worketh patience," wrote the great Apostle. Life with any of us rarely runs exactly as we would like. Seldom is it a broad river, keeping unhindered on its quiet course, at last reaching the ocean of our expectations. Life is more often a dashing, boiling, turbid stream, crowded between narrowing banks.

Life lived to gratify the flesh is often a bitter disappointment. The seeds we planted do not yield the harvest we had hoped for. Sometimes the crop fails totally.

But life lived according to the plan of the great Life-giver is not a disappointment or a failure. It may have hindrances, interruptions, obstructions, even heartbreaking trials, but the apostle Paul, who endured trials and persecutions unknown to any of us and called

them "light afflictions," said, "Tribulation worketh patience."

Tribulation—that is, all these apparently hindering providences, these embarrassments, these interruptions, these irritations, these discouragements—**worketh patience**. Patience—that is, submission to God's will and a determined doing of one's duty, meekly, happily. And, **patience worketh experience**—that is, a larger and truer understanding of God's way of dealing with His human family. And **experience**, that ennobled view of the Divine plan, **worketh hope**—that restful certainty that God will lead all things to the wisest and most shining issue.

David's Lessons

Let us look at an example of such a providentially hindered man, who was every time providentially helped. And in the light of this example let us seek for ourselves more—much more—of the Christian grace of patient endurance, that quiet submission to the will of God, that steady doing of His commandments in the face of any and all obstacles. For in the truest sense, a patient man is a strong man, and a conquering one.

Consider David, a mere boy among the sheep. Yet he is the anointed king of Israel, chosen by the prophet Samuel from among his brothers, from

all Israel. David knew well enough the meaning of that ceremony. It was no usual thing for the venerable Prophet thus to call and consecrate. David knew what the Prophet had meant by what he did. David knew it meant for him the kingship.

But at present there is neither crown nor kingdom. David is but an anointed shepherd, out on the hill-sides, doing what all shepherds do, just as he had before the consecrated oil had touched his forehead. He is only watching sheep, and feeding sheep, and defending them from the prowling lion and bear—far removed from the throne to which he has been called.

But an evil spirit possesses Saul the king—not a literal demon, but a bad mood of despondency and brooding, most likely over duties undone, the work of the kingship neglected, the laws of God consciously broken, promises unkept. Failures such as these will open the heart of any man to such an evil spirit. And into the more thoughtful hours of king Saul came the haunting reality of his own flagrant disobedience, memories of the day when he had dared to offer the sacrifice fit only for priestly hands, or when he had saved the best of the spoils from the Amalekites under the false pretext that it was all for God's sake when he knew well enough it was for his own. He could still hear, too, those words of doom falling from the lips of Samuel, that still thrust their disturbance into every attempted joy.

And so an evil spirit possessed king Saul. To placate the disturbance, there was sought from among the people of Israel one who was skilled on the harp. Music might be medicine for the gloomy king. The young David was chosen, and in this way was introduced at court. He soon became the favorite of the king.

Surely now the road toward the kingship was opening for David. At court, the king's chosen friend—David could now certainly begin to see at least the first unfoldings of

Samuel's prophecy.

David's music charmed the evil spirits away, Saul measurably forgot his troubles, and regained his cheerfulness. So David, like many other court favorites, was dismissed, and sent home. His work was done, and he was soon forgotten.

Back to the sheep-feeding, and the sheep-watching, and the sheep-defending. The road toward the kingdom twists strangely. It seems even to double upon itself. David must learn in God's school the lesson of delay.

Years pass. It must have been many years, for David, a boy when he first came to Saul's court, had now so fully grown that Saul does not recognize him. During all these intervening years, only the quiet duties of a shepherd had filled his days. David now finds the army of the Philistines in rank against the army of the Israelites. Goliath, with his massive shield and spear and mountain weight of armor, is standing forth day after day, daring anyone to single combat. To this the young David, now mature and strong, with his shepherd's staff and simple shepherd's sling, appears as his antagonist. He flings the stone. The aim is true. The giant falls. Israel is triumphant.

Once again David is installed in court. He becomes the king's son-in-law. He is commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel. He is everywhere successful.

He is just one step from the throne. Surely the prophecy of Samuel hastens to its fulfillment! How wide, how smooth the way for David's feet!

But God's thoughts are not David's thoughts, nor are His ways David's ways. The hosts of the Philistines have been put to flight and all Israel is ringing with David's praises. From throngs of Hebrew maidens sounds the song, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

Saul is infuriated. His jealousy is aroused at the success and consequent reputation of David. Now David's place at court, his place in Saul's

Be patient.
Encourage yourself
in the Lord your
God. He has
meaning in your
discipline.

The fine art of waiting, properly mastered, will carry us through the difficult times triumphantly.

household, his command of the armies—all these are torn from him. Instead, there is the determination of Saul to slay David. So comes the hurried flight, the warnings of Jonathan, the secreting in the cave of Adullam, the resorts of Engedi, the pursuits and bafflings of Saul, the flight of David and his men to the Philistines, years of torturing anxiety, and danger, and fear.

At last the limit of wretchedness is reached, the last and bitterest cup is to be drained. These are David's thoughts. He says in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand" (I Sam.

27:1-2). So David went over to the Philistines, and the king of the Philistines gave him a city, called Ziklag. To Ziklag David brought his own wives, and his followers brought theirs. And finally there began to come to David and his followers something of rest and peace.

But it was of short duration. David and his men are absent from Ziklag on a short expedition, and when they return, behold, it has been burned with fire, and their wives and children are taken captive.

"Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep" (I Sam 30:4).

David was now greatly distressed, for now not only was Saul his enemy, but his own people turned against him,

The Fine Art of Waiting

*T*he experience is universal: much of life is occupied with waiting. To be sure, there are the high spots, the peak moments of crisis and challenge. But each is usually followed by a period of waiting. Students go through the ordeals of examinations, then have to wait for the results. Authors work years upon a manuscript, then have to wait months for it to be published. Research doctors and scientists spend endless hours just waiting for the results of their tedious efforts.

On the more common levels of life, we all know what it is to wait—in traffic, in the line at the supermarket, at the bus terminal, or in the hospital bed. To many people, the word "wait" means tapping one's foot until something happens. Having been mentally programmed to be always busy, they think that standing still for a few moments is time lost.

But have we ever figured out how much we can gain from a few moments of waiting—what we can gain if we *don't just wait*? Moments of waiting can be turned into productive moments if we are prepared for them. The problem lies not in the forced period of waiting but in how we use it.

Waiting upon God is mentioned often in Scripture as though it were something to be expected, therefore something for which we should be prepared. God does not always work just when we think He should. It has never bothered Him to keep people waiting. Hear this word from Isaiah: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Isa. 64:4).

We have all observed how rapidly the time goes by when we are happily engaged—almost too rapidly; while waiting time seems to drag. What is the difference? The difference lies not in the speed of the passing moments, but in our degree of absorption. What is the solution to the elongated wait? It is to busy our minds in worthwhile thinking. When we do this, the moments will fly.

In other words, if you must wait, *think* while you wait.

Habakkuk knew this active kind of waiting when he wrote, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry,

"because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

Now, at last, God's time had come. Henceforth David's trial is over, and his reward begins. The burning of Ziklag is the turning point. The prophecy which had waited so many years now begins to blossom into fulfillment. The spoil is recovered from the Amalekites; Saul is shortly slain by the enemy. David goes to Hebron and is made king over Judah, and seven years later all Israel owns his sway.

So David was placed under, or rather carried through, tribulation. And through it all, David clung close to God. In the deepest trial he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He possessed his soul in

patience. And so did God bring him out at last to victory, into the kingdom, into honor.

The Lesson for Us

Is not David's life an example for us? How often we are thwarted, disappointed, seemingly thrust into the furnace, driven into exile. But this is the test of our faith: under the pressure of just those burdens, just that furnace, just that exile, to believe firmly that God will sustain and in His own good time relieve; to take to ourselves these words of inspiration, that God will not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able to bear, but will lead me out of this trial into sunshine and victory.

In David's example of patience let us find certain truths which will encourage us in this heavenly grace.

The vicious blows of life need not harm us. The qualities which absorb and dissipate the shocks are faith, trust and patience.

wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3). The Hebrew word he used for "wait" means literally to "entrench oneself," to stick to something, to "stay put" until the answer comes. Such waiting was not idleness but intense, concentrated endurance.

The Psalmist spoke also of waiting—perhaps we can learn something from him about how to not just wait. These are his words: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Ps. 62:5). The word "wait" here means "to hold your peace," to "be quiet." This verse might read, "My soul, be quiet and hold your peace, for your expectation is from God."

God's schedule is different from ours. The Psalmist learned this lesson: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way" (Ps. 37:7). Notice the phrase "wait patiently for him." We must learn to wait God's schedule.

And while we wait we can rejoice.

The fine art of waiting, properly mastered, will carry us through the difficult times, patiently, triumphantly.

We never need to fear waiting on God, for in due time He will

fulfill all that He has promised. Just as Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel and lived to see it come, so we can wait and know that our waiting will not be disappointed. Thus we can say with Isaiah: "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa. 30:18).

Years ago a French engineer named Ferdinand de Lesseps was refused permission to leave his ship on the Mediterranean for an extended period of time because of a forced quarantine. This was especially tedious for him because he was an active individual. But he used his time well during the enforced restriction, reading and studying with extra concentration. This led to a new idea: of constructing a great canal

linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. In the case of de Lesseps, a period of frustration was the cradle for the most creative thinking he ever did, the planning of the Suez Canal.

We see many who wait in that empty kind of waiting—the foot-tapping frustration waiting for that bus that never seems to

While you wait, *think*.
While you wait, *work*.
While you wait, *rejoice*.
While you wait, *meditate*.
While you wait, *pray*.
While you wait, *DON'T FRET*.

*If we value truth
and purity and
nobleness, if we
would have them
ours, then we must
be tried.*

First: We must grow.

Growing means waiting and struggling toward an end. In the Divine plan no one leaps into perfection. No one attains the stature of the Master in one bound. Even Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered. We look upon a godly life, and are fired with enthusiasm for holy emulation. Here is the plan of the life for me. I will be like that, we say.

We look at one side—the completed plan. We forget the other—the many steps toward the completing of that plan. We think we can bound into goodness, and are not willing to walk up to it step by step, moment by moment. We are like trees in our growth into the Divine image—first germ, then sprout, then rising trunk, then spreading branches. And the giant tree, shooting

its pinnacles of green far into the sky, is only the result of the continuous growth of many days and months and years.

David at Ziklag, where his destiny turned; at Hebron, at Jerusalem, where he wielded his scepter and wore his crown, was a very different person from David the shepherd boy on the hillsides, or the young David fingering his harp before the moody Saul.

We must grow, and growth takes time. Meanwhile, we must encourage ourselves in the Lord.

Second: Varied experiences are needful in our growth.

We grow in character by stress as trees grow by tempest. The unflinching resolution, the steady purpose, the real estimate of a merely outward possession compared with an inner integrity, of time compared with eternity—all

The Fine Art of Waiting

come, shaking our watches, passing minutes that seem endless. The lesson for us is, *don't just wait*. Every hour brings God's salvation nearer, every moment is precious. If we bring God into the waiting, we will find new momentum. We will begin to see new ways to make the situation positive and beneficial.

The Hebrew experts tell us that the word for "wait" indicates a waiting with confident expectation. If we wait upon God we are depending upon Him to fulfill His promise, and can wait with an elevation of life and spirit.

The significant character-forming episodes of life are not the pinnacle moments of drama and achievement. They are the dull times when nothing seems to be happening, when we—for one reason or another—must wait. Those are the times, more than any other, when we must hold to our goals. We must wait in patience and in faith, and to do this we must focus all our mental powers on things eternal.

With God's power we can rise above what we had imagined to be our ceiling. When we learn to bring to God all the little waiting periods of our lives, we will find we have much more power—uninterrupted power—in our striving for holiness.

We have committed to a long march, and it will have its less than easy moments. "In the world," said

Jesus, "you shall have tribulation." It will be real. But then He went on to say, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). That is where He is our perfect example. Through battles and adversities, around difficult obstacles, through dull waiting periods, be of good cheer. Hold to the faith because the faith will prove true. All else may fail, but our faith will prove true.

If we have set our aim to be like Christ, to be like Him in purity and goodness, we must accept every part of life as He accepted it, in the spirit of holiness, in the service of His Father. And can we imagine Jesus irritable, distraught, vexed by small periods of waiting?

God has given us everything we need to complete the journey successfully. When we encounter dull times, waiting times, we don't have to just wait. We can use those times creatively, bringing God and hope into those boring in between times, and find new power to gain spiritual momentum, power to scale the heights and amaze ourselves with what can be achieved. Do we wonder that the promise is to those who can "wait": "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). □

genuine understanding of these high matters—comes from experience. Sin in the human heart, righteousness in the human heart—these two opposites produce trial, and the result is the cutting away of sin and the growth of righteousness.

Sometimes it may seem to us that God's entire dispensation toward us is one of trial, as though the night were vastly longer than the day. The light seems almost to die out of the sky, and hope from the heart. Under such an accumulated wretchedness it seems as though the back of endurance must break. But wait, be patient! Character is a growth, and trial is an essential means of growth. If we value truth and purity and nobleness, if we would have them ours, then we must be tried, we must endure tribulation. How thoroughly David was tried, through years of exile and persecution and disappointment. Yet through all this time David's character was growing; God's hand was fashioning him for his destiny. Be patient, therefore. Encourage yourself in the Lord your God. He has meaning in your discipline.

Third: There is Divine and precise adjustment in all our trials.

Knowing the story of David, knowing the disorganized state of the kingdom when he received it, knowing the wars he had to wage during his whole reign, can we conceive a better method of discipline than that through which God was leading him? It took a great deal of costly training to transform the shepherd into the king. He would not have been the king he was had he missed this training. God knew his need.

We, too, are training for a higher kingship, a loftier empire—to become kings and priests to reign with

Jesus on earth when His power has conquered the unrighteous kingdoms of men. God knows just the discipline we need to prepare us for this high station. "Every man according to his several ability." The greater the ability, the greater the trial and the sterner the discipline. Our cross is the lightest one which God can lay upon us that is consistent with His magnificent design for us.

Let no aspiring Christian think he can escape trials and persecutions in this world. The haven of rest does not lie down a placid river but beyond a stormy sea. But think of the crown, not the cross. Never magnify the hardships. Remember that "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13). If the way of escape does not immediately appear, be patient. God is faithful. When we are sufficiently refined, deliverance will come.

The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, so why should we escape it? Are we better than He? True religion has been compared to the anvil upon which the hammers of criticism are constantly being broken and worn out. If this truth is in us and we in it, we become a part of the anvil and cannot fail to

feel the vicious blows of the assaulting hammers. But they need not harm us. The qualities which absorb and dissipate the shocks are faith, trust and patience.

If we are innocent of wrong doing, the darts of the enemy cannot hurt us. "Blessed are ye," said our Captain, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matt. 5:11). Watch carefully, lest impatience beget rebellion and give the adversary just cause for accusation. Remember Daniel, whose enemies could find no fault in him except concerning the law of his God (Dan. 6:5). Remember, too, that "It is better that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing.... For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (I Pet. 3:17; 2:20). To the one reckoned among the saints, the reproach of Christ becomes a badge of honor. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.... Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Pet. 4:14, 16).

The powers of evil may rage, but their time is short. Let them do their worst. "The Judge standeth before the door" (Jas. 5:9). Help is at hand. It will not be long. The hope of that long sweet rest will nerve us for the few remaining miles. When a way for action appears, act. When a blank wall confronts you, "stand still and see the salvation of God." Here lies the highest form of patience which the Christian can attain.

There is lofty preparation in patient waiting. "Be ye also patient." □

*God knows just the
discipline we need to prepare
us for the high station
He has in mind for us.*

Tomorrow... and Tomorrow—

*The story of a man for
whom a promising
tomorrow blended into a
more promising eternity:
Elisha the Prophet.*

It was a glorious morning. Last night the hoarfrost had lain thick on the hillside, but the genial, friendly sun had soon driven it away. For four days now there had been no rain, and the crisp air was like rare wine. From the bare trees by the river came the liquid warble of a lone and foolish bulbul, almost as merry in the lean days of Chisleu as in the mating-moon of spring. The brown landscape gleamed contentedly in the sunshine; the earth smiled its gigantic smile as the year seemed to pause that all God's creatures might enjoy its mellow mood. That man who fails to respond to such a day, whose soul does not expand with the sheer joy of living, must be either a dyspeptic or a soulless clod.

And so Elisha sang—loudly, carelessly, melodiously—as he followed the plow on this glorious morning. The moist earth, warmer than the air, felt good under his bare feet. He had removed his sandals that he might enjoy its warmth. A large field, this, as fields in this little land go. Half a mile long by half as wide, lying on the narrow fertile plain between the hills and the river, it was by far the best piece of land on this side. Shaphat's forbears had chosen their heritage shrewdly and well. To the east rose the gentle hill on which gleamed the whitewashed dwellings of Abel-meholah, his native village, with the mighty mountains as a background. Westward rolled the tawny flood of the Jordan, with the limitless plain beyond.

In a long slanting line up the field stretched the plowmen—twelve of them, with twelve yoke of oxen. Twelve shining black furrows, steadily eating into the great brown rectangle. Elisha surveyed the ordered line of men and beasts with approval. Twelve yoke! Not bad for a simple farmer. True, the beasts might be in better condition, but after three years of drought and famine, one was fortunate to have a draught-animal of any description. Most of his neighbors were destitute in this respect. The oxen were thin, but the spring sunshine would soon flush the lowland grass. Not long to wait, poor creatures!

To most of the village and countryside the drought had spelled ruin. Not so with Shaphat, his father. A time of distress had provided him with opportunities in abundance. Ready cash is power. His holdings of land had more than doubled. He had lent to a score of his neighbors. He had unbounded faith in the future of the country—and in the ability of his eldest son to administer his great estates successfully after he should be gathered to his

fathers. Elisha squared his strong young shoulders with determination. Some day—God forbid that it should be soon—these broad acres would be his. He would justify his father's faith. A successful farmer, a just, upright neighbor, and finally a great man would he be, living the life of a feudal landlord, with cattle and goods and lands in abundance. His name should be honored in the street and young men should rise up before him. His sons and daughters should grow up as olive plants about his table, and occupy posts of renown in the nation. When he should retire from active pursuits, Abel-meholah should be his special care. He would make his native town the wonder of the Jordan valley. Long would he be remembered as its wise and liberal counselor and benefactor. His secret ambition—

What ails that lead driver, that he should break his harness just at this time! Rest, Huz! Rest Buz! It's all a lively man can do to keep from running over these leaden-footed plowboys!

This drought—strange how suddenly it had been broken. Three long years and more of burning sunshine and dry winds, until the ground became like a millstone and the bed of the Jordan lay nearly bare. Shaphat's fields, being the best watered in the neighborhood, had produced a small crop the first year. The second season he had speculated in sheep, grazing them in the shaded mountain glens where grass still grew. The third, being a good farmer with faith and vision, he had devoted to improvements in his buildings and fences.

Then, when it seemed that the autumn rains would fail for the fourth time and even Shaphat's heart grew sick, came a joyful day when the skies grew black with clouds and wind and the parched earth welcomed the cooling torrents. After that came the gentle, penetrating rains, day after day, softening the soil and washing away the evil memories of the long thirst.

There was still time for both barley and wheat sowing. Shaphat had jealously conserved a goodly store of seed grain, and now his storehouse was opened, both for himself and for his neighbors. Those unable to pay were not refused; Elisha's father, though shrewd and a hard business man in some respects, was not unmindful of the poor. From dawn until dark the long slanting line of oxen crawled slowly up and down the fields, plowing under the precious seed. It was good to be able to work once more, with the hope of a reward. And so Elisha sang—a vintage melody from the wine-presses of Engedi.

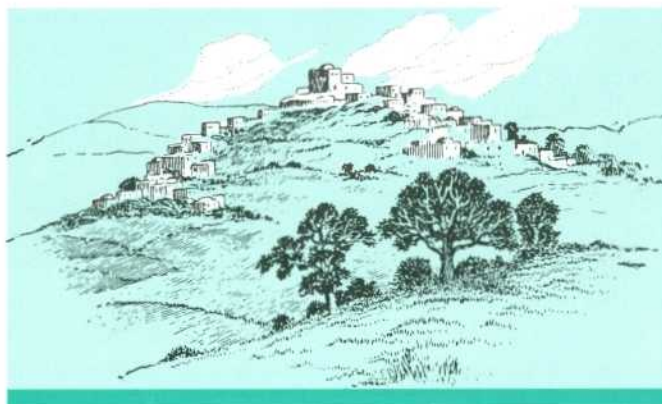
A few weeks of sunshine, and then the harvest. Elisha glowed inwardly. What a harvest there would be, after two years of rest—and what profits! Truly a gift of God, the opportunity of a lifetime. Samaria would pay well for corn. Damascus, too, had suffered, and

prices there would be high. Much depended on this year's luck and management. He must think about investments. For one thing, he would buy that long-desired farm across the river. The present owner was shiftless and incompetent, and would sell at Elisha's own price. Second, he would take advantage of the shortage of domestic animals. Half a talent of silver invested in Egyptian horses and cattle would easily be trebled in this stricken land. He should be seeing to that now, while the need was the greatest, but this plowing was more important. He hoped he would not lose all this tempting market to the Canaanitish traders.

A flock of partridges, emboldened by hunger, stole furtively across the furrow and fed in the newly-scattered grain. Elisha did not drive them away; let them eat, poor birds; their pickings had been slender enough for a long time. He would never miss what they took. High overhead, a dot in the blue on a darker silhouette against the newly-washed clouds, wheeled the inevitable vulture. Life for him had not been so bad these three years and a half; he and his tribe had gorged and fattened on every hillside and plain in Israel.

Up, Huz! this is no time to lag! The day is young, but darkness comes so soon.

Yes—pleasant thought—with this harvest reaped and sold, he would first provide for the poor in his town; then with his father and mother and a substantial offering, he would appear before the Eternal in Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement. A long journey, and harder to



find time for, now that he had undertaken the management of this farm. For the life of him, he didn't see how he could get away next Passover. Well, he would go, even if something else suffered. What a pity that Israel had forsaken the true and living God! Nowhere in the land was there a temple or synagogue for His worship. In every city and village stood altars to those imported abominations, the Phoenician Baal and Ashtarothe. Not in Abel-meholah, however. Shaphat had too much influence there. A little group met secretly in his house each Sabbath to hear the law read and expounded by a man of God, a fugitive from Jezebel's massacre of the sons of the prophets.

His secret ambition—if the Eternal should continue to prosper the work of his hands, and it became safe to do so, he would some day build a modest house for the public worship of Jehovah in Abel-meholah. His native town, nestled on the knees of Gilboa, might yet be a rallying point, a place of pilgrimage, a center of religious life and vitality, known and respected to the farthest boundaries of the kingdom. And in the background, smiling in fatherly satisfaction, would stand Elisha. He craved no glory of men for himself, but how could a successful man better employ his time and means? Only a dream, but a pleasant dream. He sang again—a psalm of David which he had learned in Jerusalem a year ago.

Under present conditions such a thing would of course be impossible. The times were about as bad as they could be, but better days were coming. In fact, it seemed that the reform had already begun. Eight hundred and fifty of the foreign priestly parasites would never again seduce the people or eat at Jezebel's table. It looked like a death-blow to idolatry. His pulse quickened and his hands closed hard on the handles of the plow as he thought of the stirring events of the day of the great rain. He had heard of it from eyewitnesses. It must have been magnificent beyond words. He himself had been bid-

den to the test on Carmel, but on that day his strongest ox had fallen sick. He did not go, and he had regretted it ever since. Jehovah had never forsaken His people utterly. When the time was ripe He had always raised up a deliverer, from the time of Moses to this day. And this new champion was truly a champion worthy of and equal to the task. Elijah the Tishbite! If any man could turn an apostate king and people back to the faith, it was he. A strange man, stern and inflexible, whom even Ahab feared and respected. At the thought of his great deeds, a scrap of an old battle-song from the book of Jasher mounted to the farmer's lips.

Elisha knew him; twice Shaphat's home had been honored by his presence as the Tishbite journeyed up and down the land. Under the spell of his words and personality, young Elisha had almost been tempted to leave all and follow him. Elisha—a prophet! He smiled now at the thought of his youthful absurdity. In fact, even his father had at one time urged him to enter the school of the prophets, Israel's only reserve of spiritual leadership since the days of Jeroboam. For a time Elisha had entertained the thought—then came the winter plowing. Well, it would have been a grand thing, a life of active service to the Eternal, but that was clearly out of the question now, with all these farms to oversee. He was no prophet, but would strive to serve his God by tilling the soil well and using his gains to his Creator's glory.

Another corner! The sun was high; the oxen must be rested more frequently. His eye rested on the rich plain across the river—his future possession. Next year—. A beautiful procession of clouds, like white sheep, was straying down from the peaks of Gilboa and spreading over the valley. Down the narrow road Elisha espied a lone foot-passenger trudging toward the ford. He hoped it might be a vagabond laborer with a strong back. He needed men today; some of the

small hillside fields must be broken up with mattocks; his sowers could scarcely keep ahead of the plowmen—everything seemed to be behind, and the work progressed so slowly! Up, Buz! we shall rest at the great stone where the water jugs lie!

The traveler was at the river's brink now. He should be careful; the ford was treacherous in flood time. Elisha paused to watch him as he waded the swift brown current, thigh-deep, and took the road toward Abel-meholah. No help from that quarter it seemed. Then on, on, up the field crawled the long slanting line of men and oxen. Tomorrow, if the rain held off, this field should be finished. Then the few hillside plots, while the weary cattle rested in their stalls until another break in the weather should permit the sowing of the later crops.

His mind went back to the great scene on Carmel, and its meaning to the nation. He had hoped that the reform movement would immediately sweep the nation, but such was not the will of the Eternal. Jezebel's wrath had known no bounds, and the Tishbite had fled, a hunted man. However, Elisha had no fears. He would come back, and suddenly. Such was his custom. And when he returned, who could tell what help from on high might accompany him? Right would triumph; there must be many in Israel who secretly confessed the true God. Jezebel could not live forever, and when it pleased the Eternal to remove her, the church, driven forward by the tremendous impact of Elijah's preaching and power, would again blossom and bud. Elisha's dream of a house of worship in Abel-meholah

would be a reality; no longer need men bow before the Baals or the golden calves because the journey to Jerusalem was long and hard. In the meantime, this plowing—the days were so short. Tomorrow—and tomorrow—and tomorrow—

He had raised his head, to behold the lone traveler approaching. A rough garment of sheepskin; shaggy, flowing locks—instantly he recognized Elijah the Tishbite, the avenger of Carmel, the fugitive from the murderous wrath of the queen! At the word of Elisha the grateful animals stopped. The entire twelve yoke stood in their tracks. The drivers one and all gazed in awed wonder at the strange and impressive figure of the Prophet, whose exploits had so recently been on every tongue. A character almost legendary, and now they beheld him with their own eyes!

Elisha wondered. Coming to see him? Apparently. Would he ask a refuge? He would hide him, even at the risk of his own life. If the Prophet required money to further his work of reformation, all Shaphat's fortune should be at his command.

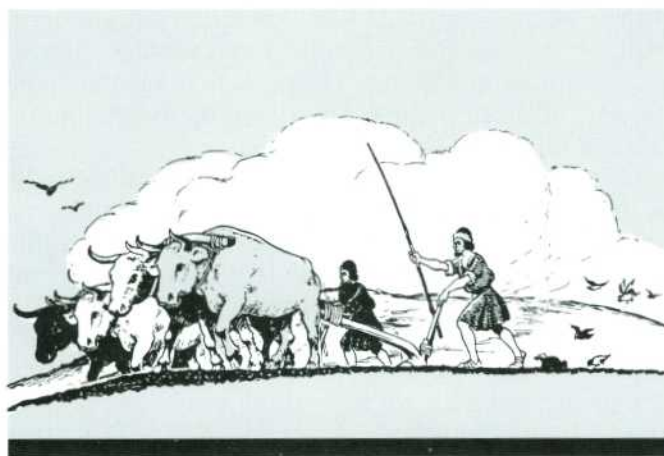
Anything—everything—

As he drew near, Elisha trembled at the look in his face, for in it was still reflected some of the glory and ecstasy of his experi-

ence with the angel in the awful caverns and heights of Horeb the mount of God. He spoke no word of greeting, but came swiftly on, while Elisha stood quaking, his knees smiting together as a premonition of some great change held him rooted to the spot. This was to be no ordinary visit, that was certain. Tomorrow faded, blended into eternity....

Face to face with the son of Shaphat, heir to the broad estates of Abel-meholah, the Tishbite turned aside as if to pass by without recognition. With one swift movement, he flung his mantle about Elisha's shoulders, and without a backward glance, strode swiftly down the furrow.

A great calm settled upon the young man's wondering soul as he realized in an instant that this was indeed the parting of the ways, that his old life with its cares, its toils, its hopes and ambitions, was forever ended. The summons admitted no thought of disregard or disobedience. The die was cast; there was no turning back. Elisha the man of Abel-meholah had in that moment changed his relationship with the world and become Elisha the man of God. The things which had once bulked so large in his daily routine and his daydreams suddenly seemed childish and trivial in the face of this tremendous calling. The reaction was a sense of inadequacy, of profound humility, of the need of strength for the new life before him. Abandoning his plow, he ran after Elijah, crying in the unnatural voice with which we make the greatest declarations of our lives, "My Father! My Father!" □



How Do We Know That God Exists?

► *Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we headed?*

► *Shall we say that no Almighty Hand made the hundred billion galaxies our telescopes can see, each galaxy the home of hundreds of billions of stars?*

A correspondent in Virginia asks: "If we are to believe that God exists, why does He leave His very existence in doubt by forever hiding Himself?"

God does not have an office where we may go and meet with Him. Nor do the newspapers report His activities as they do those of the hierarchy of this world. In this respect, we might say that today He is silent. He is not working openly, nor are His threats of Divine judgment broadcast by the media. But does this mean that He is "forever hiding Himself," that the evidence of His existence is so obscure that we must live in doubt of Him? Not for a moment!

Just think about the unimaginable complexity of the world in which we live, and of the miracle of life that throbs in each of us, and you will realize that there are many questions for which we—of ourselves—do not have answers. And what about everything in our world that is beyond our power to control or direct—or even to know? Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we headed? We may propose one idea or another, but we have no authoritative answers.

What are the possibilities? We may say that everything about us just happened, that life developed by itself over a very long period of time. Or we may acknowledge a Creator, a great Designer behind all we see. Which position is reasonable? Which position is founded on evidence?

Can we look around us and honestly believe there is no Being higher than the human being? Can we think that everything around us is merely accidental? Shall we say that our expressways and bridges require the skill of an engineer; that the house in which we live was first a plan in someone's mind, then a drawing on a sheet of paper—but the earth and the universe and life itself is all the result of blind and directionless chance?

Look up at the heavens, the starry hosts that stud the midnight sky. How did all this grandeur originate? Shall we say that no Almighty Hand made the hundred billion galaxies our telescopes can see, each galaxy the home of hundreds of billions of stars? Shall we say that they made themselves?—for surely we had nothing to do with their formation!

Does the earth set itself spinning at just the right speed to keep the oceans from falling off? And does it turn itself on its axis, tilted at just the right angle to give us the seasons? Did we put the sun in its place so that it appears to rise and set every day, giving light and energy and heat to our planet?

Look at the trees that dot our landscape, each with leaves and branches and roots. Each tree is able to conduct water and food substances upward from its deepest root to its furthestmost branch—a feat that defies all logic and all known laws of nature. Then think of the marvel of how it produces leaves, blossoms, and fruit year after year.

Or look at the animals, each marvelously adapted to survive in a specific environment. What law of chance made the bones of birds hollow so that they could be lightweight for flying? What did polar bears do to keep warm before “chance” designed their heavy coat of fur?

How does “chance” impart instincts to migrating birds so that they return year after year to exactly the same location, flying thousands of miles over land or sea?

By what law of chance did the small flower invent its own pollen sacs so that it could attract bees, be pollinated, and reproduce itself?

What makes a seed “alive” so that, placed in the proper environment, it suddenly begins to multiply its cells, to sprout and grow?

Let the biologist tell of thousands of insects, fish, reptiles and animals all perfectly adapted to survive in a certain environment. Can we honestly believe that it all just happened?

Or consider the physical properties of matter. Raise the temperature of water, and it becomes lighter in weight. Lower the temperature, and it becomes heavier. But let the water in a pond freeze during the wintertime, and the ice floats, so that the fish and all the life in the pond does not die—is it not a lovely accident?

Think about the human body, a mechanism continually baffling researchers with its intricacies.

And what about the miracle of life itself? What law of chance decreed the composition of DNA, that precise “language of life” found in the cells of every living thing? In structure it is a

long slender thread about six feet in length, coiled and twisted around so as to fit inside a cell. In terms of an analogy, the DNA in a single cell in our bodies has been compared to a very large encyclopaedia of forty-six volumes, 20,000 pages each. The DNA code is precisely the same in every living thing, with identical letters, but arranged in different order to spell different “words.” With accuracy and precision each living cell is constantly manufacturing proteins and other substances under the direction of its DNA. Researchers tell us that in a single second the human body completes about 500 trillion copies of hemoglobin, a protein containing more than 570 amino acids. Who can even think about all this and honestly say there is no God?

Think, too, about the miracle of heredity, the detail of features transmitted from parent to child. And what law of chance decrees that the newly conceived human life develops the proper

*Can we look
around us and
honestly believe
there is no
Being with more
knowledge than
ourselves?*

*There lives a God! Each finite creature
Proclaims His rule on sea, on land;
Throughout all changing forms of nature
Is clearly shown His mighty hand.
In ev'ry place is heard the call:
"The Lord of Hosts has made us all."*

*There lives a God! Though storms are sweeping
Across our pilgrim paths of life,
More bright the morn that ends the weeping
Through nights of elemental strife.
Wherever God does choose my way,
I follow Him without dismay.*

number of fingers, eyes and ears, with different types of tissue for bone, and skin, and nerves, all in the right places, and all from the same single cell?

What undirected happenstance keeps the human heart beating for 70 or 80 years without faltering, resting only as it can rest between beats?

How does a kidney know to filter poison from the blood and leave good things alone?

What chance development gave our tongue flexibility to form words, or our brain the ability to record impressions that we can recall many years later?

Who of us is able to make the food that sustains our life—or a single drop of water? We may combine substances to produce others, but we do not create anything!

There are literally ten thousand times ten thousand miracles all around us, all remarkable, all different, all joining in a great swelling chorus of

thundering approbation to some Mastermind. We were not the designer, but can we honestly think that there is no design behind it all? Does everything just happen? We cannot even say that we have *discovered* it all! Scientists today estimate that less than 5% of the different species of plant and animal life extant on earth have even been catalogued!

Shall we discard the mass of evidence that fills the earth and the heavens, that literally screams to us that there is a reason, a purpose, a plan—a Designer, an Almighty and Omnipotent Creator—behind all we see?

What The Bible Says...

► *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.*"

—Psalm 19:1

And when we turn to the Bible, we find its pages pointing to this same type of evidence. We read in Psalm 19:1-2, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." Whether it be artist, or sculptor, or musician, or writer, is not an exhibition of his works the greatest proof of his existence and ability? Could our attention be called to a greater proof of the existence of God and His power than to observe the marvels that surround us, and realize that we have nothing to do with their existence, that they are visible evidences of His handiwork?

God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, directs us in this same type of thinking: "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." First He asks the question, then answers it: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isa. 40:25-26). Are there any on

earth wise enough or great enough to deny these facts?

Another prophet of God has spoken these words: "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning....The Lord is his name" (Amos 5:8). Those prophets so many years ago were inspired of God to know a little of the magnitude of the universe.

Many of the primitive people, even the inhabitants of ancient Babylon and Egypt, believed that the earth was flat. But at the same time, the Biblical writers were inspired to know the facts. As we read in Isa. 40:21-22, "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth." God through His Prophet declares that the earth upon which we dwell is spherical, round, yet even as recently as the Sixteenth Century, the Catholic Church objected vehemently when searching scientists discovered that it was round, and dared to say so.

“The Hand That Made Us Is Divine”

Even Thomas Paine, the noted infidel, was moved by the wonders of the universe to proclaim his belief in the existence of God. In his work entitled *The Age of Reason*, he says: “The creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language.... It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered, it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other.... Do we want to contemplate His power? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate His mercy? We see it in His not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful.... The only idea man can affix to the name of God, is that of a first cause, the cause of all things. And, incomprehensible and difficult as it is for a man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it.... It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time; but it is more impossible to conceive a time when there shall be no time.

“In like manner of reasoning, everything we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself, that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather....and it is the conviction

arising from this evidence, that carries us on, as it were, by necessity, to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist.... I insert in this place the 19th Psalm, as paraphrased into English verse by Addison....

*The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim.
The unwearyed sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to every land,
The work of an Almighty hand.
Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth,
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that 'round her burn,
And all the planets, in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole....
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine,
THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.*

“What more does man want to know, than that the hand or power that made these things is Divine, is Omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course....



God's Writings

*Lord, written in rocks and in woodland,
In mountain, and plain, and in sea,
Is the record of earth's long existence,
The story of mankind and Thee!
For Thine is the finger that wrote it -
Thy symbol each valley and hill,
And we are a part of the story -
O Lord, wilt Thou be with us still!*

*Yet this is not all of Thy writing;
Far greater the message we glean
Of hope and salvation and glory
Beyond anything we have seen;
'Tis scribed in the Book Thou hast given,
Revealed through Thy prophets and seers,
A message of life everlasting,
A message that shines through the years.*

*So now with a new reverence throbbing,
With a sense of Thy glory athrill,
We long to obey ev'ry precept:
O Lord, make us part of Thy will!*

*Bright pathways are opening before us,
New wonders our eyes soon will see,
When all shall be part of Thy purpose,
All hearts be united in Thee.
O God! keep our spirits undaunted,
Keep glowing our faith in Thy will!
Oh, bring in Thy King and Thy Kingdom,
And all of Thy promise fulfill!*

"I recollect not enough of the passages in Job to insert them correctly; but there is one occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon: 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?'... This passage...contains two distinct questions that admit of distinct answers.

"First—Canst thou by searching find out God? Yes; because, in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by searching into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is, that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

"Secondly—Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? No; not only because the power and wisdom He has manifested in the structure of the Creation that I behold is to me incomprehensible, but because even this manifestation, great as it is, is probably but a small display of that immensity of power and wisdom, by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist....

"The Almighty Lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and to imitation. It is as if he had said to the inhabitants of this globe, that we call ours, 'I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, AND LEARN FROM MY MUNIFICENCE TO ALL, TO BE KIND TO EACH OTHER'....

"Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator, but of His wisdom and His beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe.... But in

the midst of these reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, and that of no greater extent, as is before shown, than twenty-five thousand miles?... Alas! what is this to the mighty ocean of space, and the almighty power of the Creator!"

These words of Thomas Paine reveal the problem that many people experience with religion—not the problem of a belief in God, but the problem of false and unreasonable doctrines which have been credited to the Bible.

Did the Prophets, Jesus or the Apostles ever teach that the earth is the center of the universe? Never. They were constantly calling our attention to the wonders of God's vast creation. Jesus commanded us to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven, proving that God's will is now being carried out on other worlds just as it will one day be carried out here. The apostle Paul could exclaim: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14-15)—showing that God now has a family on other and more glorious worlds.

Mr. Paine also said: "As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of atheism—a sort of religious denial of God...and is it not among the least of the mischiefs that the Christian system has done to the world, that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent, to distress and reproach, to make room for the hag of superstition."

Unfortunately, Mr. Paine's complaint is justified, but the "hag of superstition," however prevalent, can do nothing to destroy a true belief in a true, righteous and Almighty Creator. □

(To be continued)

The prophets, Apostles and Jesus were constantly calling our attention to the wonders of God's vast creation.

One day God's will shall be done on earth as now it is done in heaven—said Jesus.



Women's Role In The CHURCH



A subscriber writes:

"I have enjoyed reading and studying all the Megiddo literature and have found it informative and insightful. I would like to thank you for the time spent in preparing and sending them. I am particularly impressed with the analysis of free will, the Atonement and the Devil.

"I would also like some help in obtaining information on the Megiddo's position regarding the role of women in the church, for example, in speaking, teaching, and holding office. I understand that the Megiddo Church allows participation in these activities, and I would like to know more about this. Thank you in advance."

*In Christ there is
neither "Jew nor
Greek,...bond nor
free,...male nor
female: for ye are
all one in Christ
Jesus"*

— The Apostle Paul

The role of women in the church is a subject often discussed with a high level of religious fervor and conviction, and—too often—with a minimum of Scriptural information. In many churches, women are barred from church boards and ministry, teaching and preaching on the grounds that Paul did not permit women to teach (I Cor. 14:34–36), and that Eve was deceived and became a sinner (I Tim. 2:14).

Before drawing any conclusions, let us review a few basic principles of Scripture which would seem to indicate its teaching, then discuss the few passages which appear to contradict this position.

First, observe that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34–35;

Rom. 2:11). He does not respect nationality, color, race, or any physical quality—how then could He discriminate against anyone because of sex? All are His creation, all are by His design.

The apostle Paul goes one step further and says that in Christ there is neither "Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Paul repeats this point in his letter to the Colossians (3:11), although in this passage he omits the mention of male and female, but his last statement is all inclusive, that "Christ is all, and in all."

Passages that Raise Questions

Now what about the passages that raise question, such as I Cor. 14:34: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak"? A cursory reading of these words by the apostle Paul might leave the impression that the Apostle did not allow women to speak or teach in his churches. However, the context reveals another thought. Paul was addressing a specific issue: not general teaching in the church but *the proper use of the gift of speaking in tongues*.

Apparently some in the church had been abusing the gift, or using it for purposes not edifying, and Paul was writing to correct the problem. Accordingly, he saw fit to forbid all women speaking in tongues in the church. We are not told whether this was a man-

date for all churches in every age, or whether it was a local directive to the Corinthian church. At the same time he placed severe restrictions on the use of gifts among men: 1) that only one man should speak at a time, and 2) that no man should speak in any unknown tongue in a public meeting unless a qualified interpreter were present.

His strongest central point was that all things should "be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). All speaking should be "edifying," for purposes of instruction, not simply to impress the hearers.

In this context Paul addressed the subject of women speaking in public when he said, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak [in an unknown tongue]" (I Cor. 14:26-28, 34).

Another passage often questioned in this regard is found in I Timothy 2, where Paul says, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:11-12).

This passage deserves closer scrutiny. Paul, speaking as an ordained preacher and a teacher of the Gentiles "in faith and verity" (I Tim. 2:7), writes first a specific admonition to men, in which he addresses their most common besetments: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (v. 8). Then Paul addresses women, again pinpointing what is an outstanding weakness among women: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness

and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (vs. 9-10).

Then, having addressed issues which are specific problems to both men and women he takes his thinking to another plane (v. 11), to talk about a specific representative woman and a specific representative man, the "woman" being the bride, and the "man" being Christ. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." This "woman" must be always in subjection to Christ her husband. This was the message to Christ at the time of His baptism, that His words must be heeded. "Hear ye him"; also on the day of Pentecost, when Peter quoted Moses, again speaking of Christ, "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:22-23). Hence

The Bible gives us no reason for believing that sincere, God-fearing women should be turned away from filling an active and vital role in the church just because they are women.

Paul says, "I suffer not a woman [this composite woman, composed of all prospective heirs of salvation] to teach, or to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (v. 12). This woman

must be silent, must not speak her own thoughts, must not assert any authority but be subject to the laws and commandments of Christ.

Then in the next verse Paul advances his thinking even further, confirming our application of the "woman" and "man" to a symbolic setting, as he cites the allegory of Adam and Eve. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (v. 13). "Adam," literally "man" was "first formed" by being the firstfruits from the dead, the first to be raised to immortality (I Cor. 15:23). Eve, the bride, will follow later, when her probation is complete and the time for her recompense has come. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:23).

Then Paul continues his reference to the allegory: for "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (v. 14). This "Adam", this one representing Christ (I Cor. 15:47) was not deceived.

He was our perfect example, He who "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:22), He who was tempted in all points "like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He did not sin, but the "woman", those of the bride of Christ, must learn to overcome temptation, must sin and repent, must stumble and then go on. Every member of the bride of Christ must "grow" into the stature of Christ. And during this process of growth, this "woman" will be "deceived" and will be "in transgression." Verse 15 follows naturally in the context of Paul's thought: "Notwithstanding"—this "woman" can be saved, in spite of having

*God's whole
concern is for
character, the good
and honest heart,
pure and upright.*

transgressed. She can overcome, she can be "saved" eternally if she "continues in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Quite naturally the "woman" is associated with childbearing, and in Paul's context the thought is spiritual childbearing. It is the duty of the bride to be bringing children into the faith, as Jesus, using another simile, said in His final letter: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Every child of God must be begotten by the Word (James 1:18), and all are called children, being beginners in the faith and needing to grow up to the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:19).

We should notice another point in I Tim. 2:15 which indicates the symbolic nature of Paul's illustration: "Notwithstanding *she* shall be saved in childbearing, if *they* continue in faith"—"she" and "they" are one and the same, the bride representing the many members of the body of Christ, the true church, those responsible for bringing others into the faith. But notice the responsibility upon this "woman": They must "continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Paul is setting the standard at the very highest level, the level demanded by Christ her husband.

Another Symbolic "Woman"

Paul used this same symbolic woman representing all members of the body of Christ, both men and women, when he wrote to the Corinthians: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (II Cor. 11:2). And again in this context, just as he did in I Timothy 2, he drew a lesson from the Genesis allegory: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (v. 3). Again he is

confirming the role of Eve as representing believers who are tempted—in the same way that our minds are corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

In the New Testament Church

There are many indications in the New Testament that women were not restricted in giving service to or within the church. For example, Philip the evangelist had "four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts 21:8-9). To prophesy was to teach, and these four women were teachers in the church.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul spoke warmly of "those women which labored with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4:3). Whatever Paul was doing, they were doing also—there was no discrimination.

In Rom. 16:1-2 Paul writes of "Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea," and tells the brethren to "Receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." In Paul's first description of Phoebe, he refers to her as *diakonos*, the same word which Jesus used of Himself when He said that He came to "minister" unto others (Matt. 20:28; 25:44; 8:15); the same word Paul used of himself when he said, "Now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints" (Rom. 15:25); the same word used by Peter in describing the work of the prophets, that "They did minister the things, which are now reported...by them that have preached the gospel...with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven" (I Pet. 1:12); the same word Peter used when he said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth" (I Pet. 4:11).

Paul used another word in this same



passage which says even more of Phoebe's work: that she "hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." The word translated succourer is *prostatís*, and its verb form *proistemi* is used several times in the New Testament in contexts suggesting positions of leadership and responsibility. For example, it is the word Paul uses in Rom. 12:8 when, describing the various gifts given to different members of the body, and their responsibility to use those gifts properly, he speaks of one who "ruleth," that he should rule "with diligence." It is the word Paul uses in I Thess. 5:12, when he mentions those who "are over you in the Lord." Again it is the word Paul uses when he tells Timothy that an elder should be one who "ruleth well his own house" (I Tim. 3:4-5). He states the same requirement for deacons (v. 12). It is the same word he uses when he says that "the elders that rule well" should "be counted worthy of double honour" (I Tim. 5:17). The word has the double idea of guiding and caring for.

In Old Testament Times



Even in Old Testament times, women were not excluded from active roles. Miriam, sister of Moses, was a "prophetess" (Ex. 15:20). Apparently she was a leader among the women. We read also of Deborah, who judged Israel, and who went to battle with Barak to encourage him (Judges 4 & 5). Huldah was a prophetess in the time of King Josiah, and her counsel was held in sufficiently high esteem that the king sought her judgment (II Kings 22:13-20). The prophetess Hannah was a woman through whom God spoke, setting the supremely high standard of God in these words: "For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (I Sam. 2:3).

God's whole interest is in character. He is looking for the good and honest

heart, the one who is pure and upright, who will purify himself even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3). He is no respecter of persons. Male or female may be accepted accordingly as he or she fears God, hates evil, loves righteousness, and is willing to submit to the law of God.

The Bible gives us no reason for believing that sincere, God-fearing women should be turned away from filling an active and vital role in the church just because they are women. We have no Scriptural authority for limiting the role of leadership and service to men. □

Cooperate!



The process of recreating a human being in the mental and moral likeness of Christ may be long, even tedious, but the Great Designer knows what He's about. What we have been need not be as mighty as what we can become.

We cooperate in God's molding process

- not by nagging but by nurturing,*
- not by needling but by kneeling,*
- not by deflating but by praising.*

So thank God for every opportunity to grow.

Remember that the quickest way to transform someone else is to change yourself. You'll be amazed how much they changed!

When you are tempted to feel distressed at someone else, face yourself with these questions:

- *Is the issue really important?*
- *Why do I feel this way—because my own ego is hurt, or because I truly feel for someone else?*
- *How could I have handled this conflict more maturely?*
- *Have I prayed about this conflict, and am I determined to accept God's answer, whatever it is?*
- *If the situation were reversed and I were in my opponent's place, how would I feel?* □

Who Are Amenable to Eternal Life?

God shows no partiality, but in every nation he who reveres Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.

— Acts 10:34-35, paraphrased

"I want to ask you if I understand your position correctly. I am a subscriber to the Christadelphian Tidings magazine and have read with considerable interest the 'debate' between yourself and Mr. Heaster on the subject of the Basis of Salvation.

"My understanding is that you believe that the work of Jesus Christ consisted solely of demonstrating to mankind the perfect mind of the Almighty. In other words, He was a perfect example of how we ought to live a sinless life. Those who follow His example perfectly will be awarded with eternal life.

"If this understanding of your position is correct, then am I correct in assuming that a Hindu, Mohammedan, Shinto or Roman Catholic are in exactly the same position as those whom the Bible describes as being 'in Christ' as far as salvation is concerned? In other words, a Hindu, who has never heard of Christ but by instinct or by being possessed of a wonderful set of genes, happens to be leading a very circumspect life, would be (in Biblical terms) amenable to eternal life.

"If you could answer the above question, I would appreciate it."

We appreciate your inquiring further into our position on the subject of the basis of salvation. Unfortunately, in a debate such as we conducted with Mr. Heaster, space did not permit us to publish much about the basics of our teaching, which is essential to a complete understanding.

You are correct in your understanding of our position, that the work of Jesus Christ in our behalf consisted in His demonstrating to mankind the perfect mind of the Almighty, being the "perfect example of how we ought to live a sinless life." And all who follow His example perfectly will be rewarded with eternal life.

However, to arrive at such a perfect following of His example would be wholly impossible without first acquiring a complete knowledge of Jesus Christ, how He lived, what He taught, also the impressions that He left upon the minds of His followers—all of which is recorded for us in the Word of God. To become amenable to eternal life, to qualify for the eternal rewards God offers without this thorough and dedicated knowledge of Him and His teachings would be very much like trying to pass the final exams at a university to obtain a certain degree without having submitted to the specified program of study. Either the degree would be worthless—if no effort or preparation were necessary—or it would be impossible to obtain.

God does not close His doors against people of any ethnic background or nationality. Peter made this clear when he observed that "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). A Hindu, Mohammedan, Shinto, or Roman Catholic could come to the state of being "in Christ," but only by learning of Christ, His teachings, and

His example. Jesus Himself said, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). The apostle Peter confirmed this when he said that "All things that pertain unto life and godliness" come "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3). It would be utterly impossible for anyone who had never heard of Christ to live completely by the law of Christ, a law which is in almost every respect contrary to nature. One might be living respectably, might obey many aspects of the law of Christ, but without a knowledge of that law could never come to the full obedience that Christ requires, even the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Paul discussed this very point in Romans 2, that those who are outside the law die outside the law and will not

be judged by it; however, those who subject themselves to the law and agree to live by it will be "judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12-13). And all such will receive either eternal life or eternal death on the basis of their adherence to that law.

Paul speaks also of those who "have not the law," but "do by nature the things contained in the law," that these, "having not the law, are a law unto themselves...their conscience...accusing or else excusing" them (Rom. 2:14-15). But such instinctive adherence to the law does not fulfill the requirements for eternal life.

The law of God demands a complete obedience. "For if a man keeps the whole law apart from one single point, he is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10, NEB)—because a broken law stands between him and God.

Only a complete obedience will merit the reward of eternal life. □

Only complete obedience will merit the reward of eternal life.



A Mountaintop View

I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe" (John 14:29, NIV).

A mountain is a "high, elevated place from which one can see far and wide."

From a mountaintop the Lord permitted Moses to view the land of Canaan, the territory which the children of Israel were to inherit.

The achieving of holiness may be compared to scaling a mountain, and the view commanded by the summit is impressive. As the mountain of holiness is not literally a high point in the earth's crust but a symbol of a life wholly surrendered to God, so the objects that can be seen from this elevation are not literal. Nor are these views seen with the literal eye, but with the eye of faith.

Perhaps the most thrilling sight commanded by this mountaintop view is an understanding of the plan of God as confirmed by fulfilled and fulfilling prophecy.

A knowledge and understanding of the Word of God are always prerequisite to a holy life; hence, one who is dwelling on the Mountain of Holiness will have implicit trust in what God has promised.

- He will be able to look back over the years and see how the Divine predictions met their literal fulfillment.
- He will add to this his own observation of present-day fulfilling of Divine prophecy in current world events.
- With these views in mind, he will be able to confidently look ahead to the fulfillment of those prophecies which are yet unfulfilled.

He will know and believe beyond any shadow of uncertainty that the age-old prediction will come to pass, that God's glory shall one day fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). Still more, it is a promise sealed with the certainty of God's own existence—He says, "As truly as I live."

What a glorious mountaintop view! —Contributed

Don't Quit!

Most of us have programmed ourselves not to think about the possibility of failure any more than we have to, and the Scriptures advise repeatedly to think about the goal, about winning, to "press... for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

But at the same time we do not want to forget the high cost of quitting.

The Christian life is an endurance test. Perhaps after many years of struggling with a perverse and ill-disposed nature, we are tired of the daily battle, the daily attention to detail, the continual dissatisfaction with ourselves, the repeated admonitions and warnings and criticisms and chidings.

The struggle may be wearisome, but quitting is not the answer. This is where Jesus told us to count

the cost. Quitting will not make the struggle easier; it will only complicate it. Quitting will not make us less selfish, or less impatient, or less earthly-minded, or our lives less strained and stressed. Quitting will do nothing to develop our character. In most cases, we will only regret the lost time, besides endangering our hope of receiving the eternal crown.

With the help of God we can get through and beyond every would-be quitting point. And every time we keep going on, our endurance has become a little stronger, and the next time, even if the mountain is higher, we will have more strength to help us over it.

What did Jesus do when He might have quit? He "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." This didn't make it easy, but it made it possible. The shining "joy that was set before him," the glory of meeting His Father in heaven and receiving the eternal crown kept Him strong, steadfast and unflinching.

It can do the same for us. □

Abib and New Year

Once again the New Year is near, the sacred New Year as God commanded Moses to measure time.

According to Biblical records, the ancient Hebrews began their sacred year with the new moon of Abib, or Nisan (see Ex. 12:2, 13:4).

Abib is the first new moon following the spring equinox. The equinox this year occurring on March 20, and the first new moon following on March 23, the Megiddo Church will observe the beginning of the month Abib on Tuesday evening, March 23, continuing Wednesday, March 24, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). The day will be observed in recognition of its double significance—as the beginning of the sacred New Year and also as the anniversary of the birth of Christ. Members and friends set aside the day to reconsecrate themselves to God for the new year, and also to honor Christ, our coming King and Ruler.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Sunday evening, April 4), we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of April 7 (Abib 15) will be observed as the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave.

Fifty days later (May 26) will be the anniversary of the day of Pentecost, when the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples. □

Self-denial Week

This year, the week of February 7 will be the annual observance of Self-denial Week for the Megiddo Church congregation and all who wish to observe it with us.

During this week we will limit ourselves to three articles of food at each meal. Selection will be made from simple, plain, common foods, varied each meal as desired. We shall refrain from all specialties, all cookies, pastries, desserts, and fancy foods.

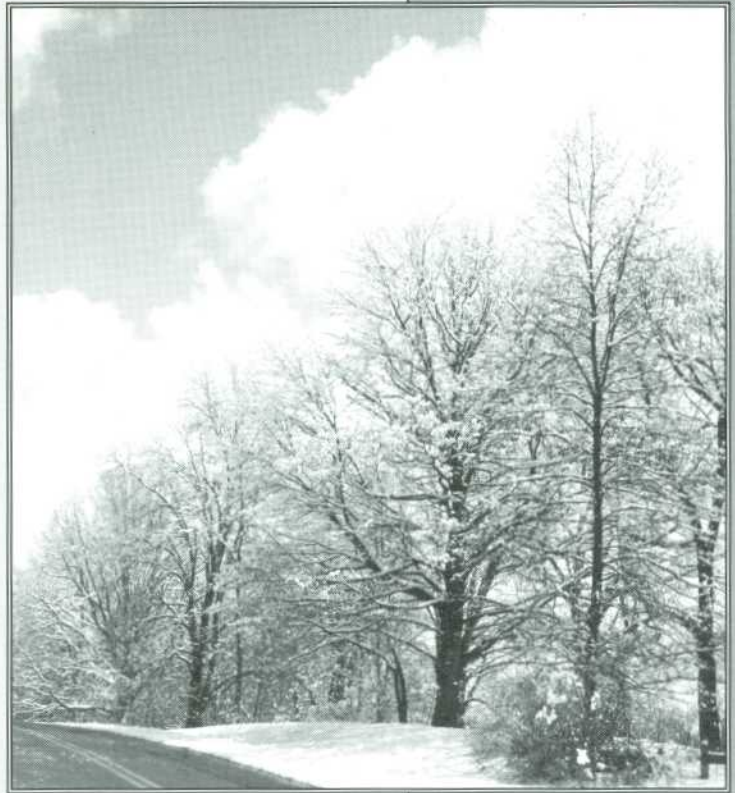
The practice of self-denial is a Bible principle. As disciples of Christ, we must be disciplined, and if we cannot control our physical appetites, how shall we ever be able to succeed in the things that pertain to our eternal welfare?

Let us strive harder to be more and more like Christ in all things, even in denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily, and following Him (Luke 9:23). This was the command of our Master. Let us follow all the way. □

RAPTURE!

*The days may yet be darker,
The nights more weary grow,
And Jesus may still tarry,
But this one thing I know:
The Lord will still grow dearer
And fellowship will be
The closer and the sweeter
Between my Lord and me.*

*Is our dear Lord we wait for—
Our hope! Our joy! Our Friend!
Himself we long to welcome,
And just beyond the bend
Hidden, perchance to meet us
Before the day is done,
The waiting will be over
And heaven on earth begun.*



Life is a grindstone. Whether it grinds you down or polishes you up depends on what you are made of.

Trust and Obey

(Continued from page 2)

"Trust and obey" was the action of Abraham, when he left the secure and comfortable to venture into the unknown (Heb. 11:8). He went out, "not knowing whither he went," but He did not go alone. He ventured with God.

In any human contract, there is always some reservation on both sides. Either party may prove unreasonable, unfair, or untrue. But agreements with God are different. With Him, we agree without reservation, because our trust is complete. And our trust is complete because His faithfulness is proven. When we agree to obey God, we are

convinced of 1) the absolute faithfulness of God; 2) the absolute demands He places upon us; and 3) the absolute surety of His promises. Like Abraham, like Jeremiah, like Daniel and his companions, we are ready to trust and obey. Isn't this what Jesus meant when He told us to count the cost? When we decide to pursue the eternal rewards God has offered, there is no possible way to know in advance the entire cost, anymore than the president who takes office can know everything that will happen during his term. But our venture is not blind, because we trust our future to God. That done, all that remains for us is to obey.

And when our obedience is complete, we can be sure of receiving the eternal rewards God has offered us. What more could we ask? ☐

The High Trail

*To strip the soul of all pretense;
To hold each day in reverence;
To keep my faith in God supreme;
To live for Him, not to be seen;
To take my lot as honor-born;
To help a brother hoe his corn;
To thankful be, and not complain;
To hold my tongue, my lips restrain;
To be at peace within my heart;
To never shirk to do my part;
To never speak in anger stirred;
To let the Gospel be my word;
To walk in stride without a strut;
To make a home in manse or hut;
To trust in God through gain or loss;
To master self and be its boss!*

*Who measures up to each of these
Can face his God with steady knees.*