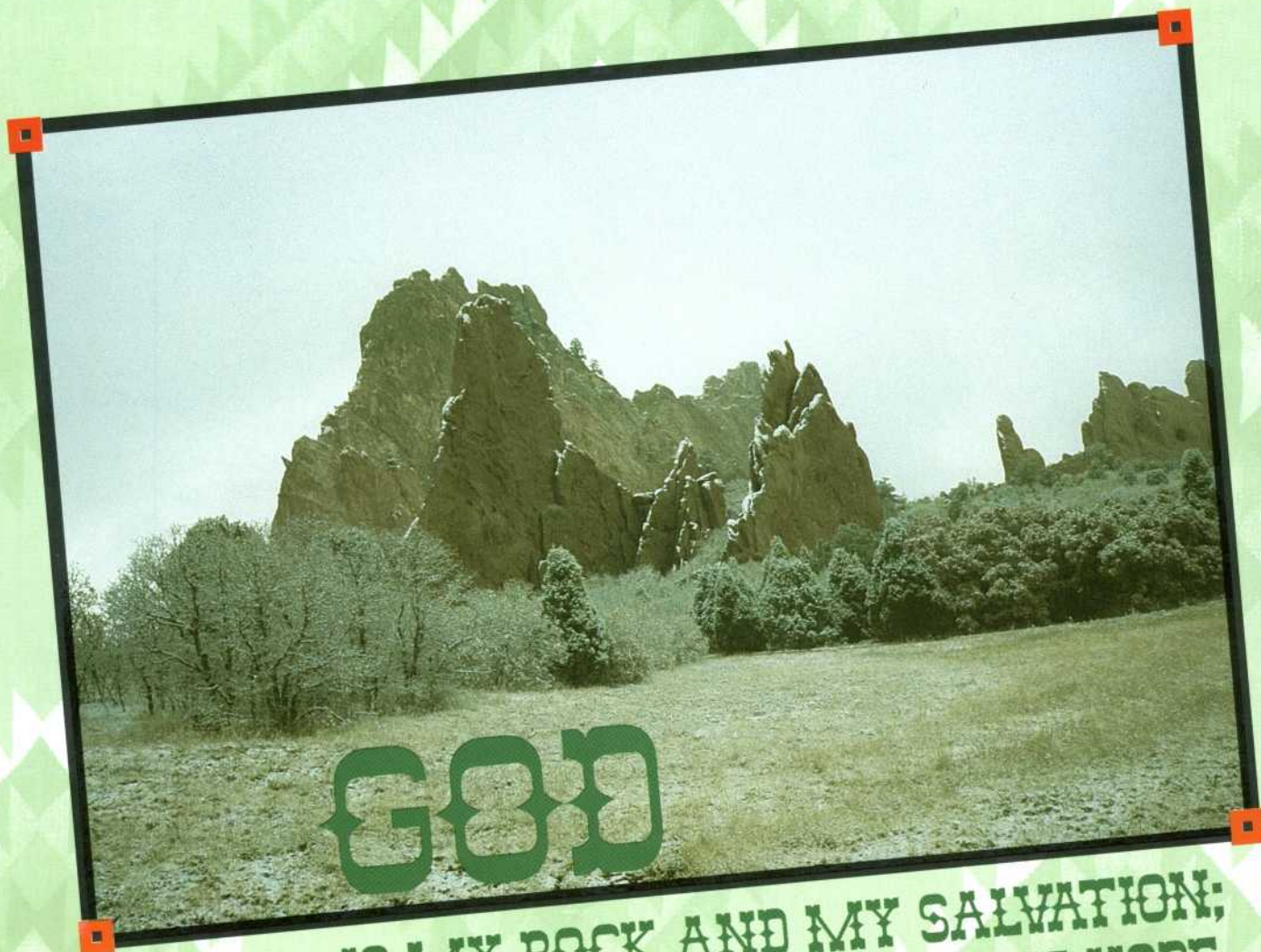


# Megiddo Message

Vol. 81, No. 2  
February 1994



IS MY ROCK AND MY SALVATION;  
ONLY HE GIVES ME HOPE.

—PSALM 62:5, 6 (NCV)

# Very PERSONAL

*We are not good  
enough as we are. You and I  
must become new.*

**A** better world begins with me." We all know it, yet somehow we prefer to think of reformation in less personal terms. *The Church* should be such and such. *The Church* should do such and such.

But Christianity is basically personal. The Church's duty is to show men and women how to be Christians, and to teach them how to live as Christians should. But the rest of the work is on the personal level, to become "*blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world*" (Phil. 2:15, RSV). It is *I* fulfilling *my* obligation to God. And it is God judging *me* for what *I* do.

It is easy to say that the Church should be pure and holy, but what we really mean is that *the persons making up the Church* should be pure and holy. And that means *you* and that means *me*. The apostle Paul spoke of the bride of Christ as being presented to Him "*a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*" (Eph. 5:27); but again he recognized no wholesale process. Each individual—each *you* and each *me*—must become "*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, . . . holy and without blemish*." Very personal.

Again we read, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (II Cor. 5:17). The Living Bible is even more explicit in its phrasing: "*When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!*" Here again is the task, and again it is very personal, as dear as life itself. It tells us that we are not good enough as we are. You and I must become new.

The work of the Gospel is *for* us, *through* us, *by* us, and *in* us. And we will be judged as individuals. "*So then every one of us shall give*

*account*

*of himself to*

*God*" (Rom. 14:12). Note that Paul is writing to brethren, and he says "every one of us." When Jesus in parable described the judgment, He pictured the great Shepherd separating sheep from goats—a one-on-one process. "*He shall separate them one from another*" (Matt. 25:32).

All this means that we must look to ourselves. Very personal.

Our sins are also very personal. They are as close as *my* thoughts, and *my* words, and *my* deeds.

Because we can usually—quite successfully—hide our *thoughts* from others, we may pose as saints while our thoughts flit hither and yon on the garbage described by our Lord: "*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man*" (Mark 7:21-23).

Do we wonder the prophet Isaiah pleaded: "*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God for he will abundantly pardon*" (Isa. 55:7). Both the problem and its solution lie right in our thoughts.

The apostle Paul recognized this same need for a regeneration of our thoughts: "*Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect*" (Rom. 12:2, NEB). He said also, "*And now, my friends, all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, whatever is excellent and admirable—fill all your thoughts with these things*" (Phil. 4:8, NEB).

(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 spiritual warfare 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 His knowledge to humankind, 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 providing 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 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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Cover photo: Taken at Garden of the Gods in Colorado by Clifford and Donna Mathias.

# Megiddo Message

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# Holy IS as Holy DOES

The sage who gave us the adage, "Pretty *is* as pretty *does*," did not have holiness in mind, but the statement is true. For it is impossible to separate holy doctrine from holy deeds, holiness concepts from holy character, or holiness principles from victorious, holy living. Holy *is* as holy *does*.

When Isaiah, in a transcendent moment of heavenly vision, beheld "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," he heard these rapturous words: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:1-3). What impetus, what spiritual propulsion must have been his through the days and years to come as a result of this grand experience, this brief glimpse into the holiness of God!

Holiness is a quality that we instinctively associate with God and heaven. We think of it as something above and beyond us, a term fraught with meaning and vibrant on the highest levels of life. Holiness speaks to us of saints and angels, of glory and glorified beings; of those who know life and everlasting bliss.

But we do not have to read long in the Scriptures to realize that God intends us to bring the concept down to earth and set it in *our* environment; for the people who profess to belong to a holy God must, like Him, be holy, or they are none of His. Holiness describes the character of God and all that pertains to Him.

Holiness must also describe the character of those of the human family who belong to Him, who are seeking to be His eternal sons and daughters. When we begin to realize that holiness must be *our* possession before we can belong eternally to God, immediately the term is removed from the realm of the heavenly vision and becomes a practical term

meant for everyday application. We must model our characters after the God we serve. *We* in *our* circumstances, in *our* setting, in our homes, in our offices, on our farms, on our streets, in all our places of activity, each and every day, must become holy. God Himself has set the standard. He wants a people morally like Himself. "You must be holy," He said to Israel and to all who would be His, "for I am holy." Not "You *may* be" or "I would like you to be" or "It is best that you be holy," but "You *must* be holy." Only upon such will He bestow His eternal blessings.

## ❖ Holiness A Distinction

Holiness is a highly distinguishing quality. Back in the days of the Children of Israel, God's holiness was thought of as that which separated Him from all other gods. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness" (Ex. 15:11).

And when He says, "Be ye holy," He is calling upon His people to be different, to be separate, to be set apart from all other people with their ungodly interest. "Ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (Lev. 20:26).

We know that we cannot match God in might or majesty or power, but God requires that His people be *morally* like Him. And just as the holy God is distinct and separate from every idol, so His people must be separate and distinct from God-despising or God-forgetting people who live to please themselves.

This separateness, this distinction, is the basic requirement of the root meaning of the word "holiness": spiritual wholeness, "otherness," separation, dif-

Holiness  
is a willing  
separation from  
all that God calls  
evil, and a loving  
dedication to all  
that God calls  
pure and good.

ference. This quality is a direct result of what holiness does—it separates, it distinguishes by its superior quality of character. “Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness,...doing wonders?” Likewise, the holiness of God’s people is to be shown by what they do, by how they live, by their superior quality of character. Holy *is* as holy *does*. Thus God could say to Israel, “After the *doings* of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do....Ye shall *do my judgments*, and keep mine ordinances” (Lev. 18:3-4).

The apostle Peter recognized this Divine arrangement when he said the Lord’s people are to be “obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance” but to be “holy in all manner of conversation,” that is, in “all your behavior” (NASB). Holy people are to be distinguished by the moral quality of their deeds.

But before we can claim this Divine distinction, before this holiness can be part of us in our environment, something must happen. For by nature we are *not holy*. When God says “Be ye holy,” He means for us actually to change, actually to be sanctified, actually to be made over into totally new creatures. This comes about by obedience: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth” (I Pet. 1:22).

#### ❖ What Is Holiness?

What is this Divine distinction, this true, practical holiness?

Holiness is not knowledge—Balaam had that. Nor is it great profession—Judas Iscariot had that. Nor is it doing many things—Herod did that. Nor is it zeal for certain matters of religion—the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day had that. Nor is it talent and great wisdom and knowledge—Solomon had that. Nor is holiness an outward respectability of conduct and morality—the young ruler had that. Nor is it taking pleasure in hearing the Word of God spoken and read—the Jews in Ezekiel’s time had that. Nor is it keeping company with

godly people—Gehazi and Demas both did that. These things alone are not holiness. We might have any one of them, or all of them, yet never attain that holiness by which we may someday see God.

What, then, is holiness? Holiness has in it both a negative and a positive aspect. Holiness is a willing separation from all that God calls evil or carnal, coupled with a loving dedication to all that God calls pure and good. It is moral and ethical perfection. Jesus stated it simply when He said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Be total in your commitment. Make no reservations for any self-gratification. If you are holy, you are set aside exclusively for Divine service. You are consecrated to Him to reflect His will and perform His service. Jesus put it this way when addressing His followers: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

Becoming holy means removing from our lives every trait, inclination, tendency or habit that is contrary to the nature of God, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit and “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Cor. 7:1), for God is perfect holiness. Holiness means transforming heart and mind and life to meet the uncompromising moral perfection of the “high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isa. 57:15). It means purifying our lives from every trace of sin until we are fit to dwell forever in the presence of a holy God.

Holiness, then, is more than a lofty quality of God to be extolled. Holiness is something you DO. Holy *is* as holy *does*.

Why so uncompromising a standard? Why so high a demand? Why such a straitened attitude toward sin? Because this is God’s attitude toward it. The standard is His.

God is consistent, and He wants us to be consistent also. It has been said of Israel of old that the only thing constant about them was their *inconstancy* before God. If we believe in holiness as it belongs to God, we must be constant

**H**oliness must also describe the character of those of the human family who belong to Him.

If we bear a  
Christian name,  
we must have a  
Christian character as well, or all  
is for naught.

in our effort toward His holiness. If we bear a Christian name and a Christian knowledge, we must have a Christian character as well, or all is for naught. If we would be saints granted the right to live in the world to come, we must be saints here and now. And holiness is the standard we must meet.

The ancient Prophet expressed it vividly when he spoke of the "Holy One," the God of heaven, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:12-13). Would it be reasonable for such a holy God, who cannot look with tolerance upon any iniquity, to say to us, "It doesn't matter that much; you can sin—just a little—and I'll still accept you to live in my realm eternally"?

#### ❖ Absolute Holiness—Why

God is holy. His angels are holy. And if we are ever to dwell with the angels—rather to *be* angels *ourselves*—we must be holy. Holiness is written on everything in God's heavenly realm. And when heaven and earth are joined and earth

becomes an eternal part of heaven, holiness will be written on everything on earth! The book of Revelation describes that glorious time: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. 21:27).

What will not be allowed in that day must not be allowed in *our* lives now—or we shall find ourselves on the outside. Did not Jesus say to Peter that the same high standard would prevail in the true church that will prevail in the future world? "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). The same level of holiness, purity, truth, and uprightness that is demanded in the new world will be required by those sincerely striving to be part of that world—this is the only way they shall ever gain for themselves a place in that world.

#### ❖ Holiness NOW

The New Testament calls us to a life of holiness in the present tense: now! The

Dear heavenly Father, this new day brings us under renewed obligations to thank and praise Thee for the many, many blessings that we are receiving. We thank Thee for this goodly mortal frame, for the ability to engage in useful and constructive work, and to help others lift their daily loads. We thank Thee for reasoning minds, and for willpower to choose the right, and to refuse to take part in any activity that would displease Thee.

We thank Thee above all for the blessedness of hope, that we are not left to grope in darkness and wonder at the outcome of all we see. May Thy Divine promises act as an anchor to our souls keeping us sure and steadfast whatever our fortunes or misfortunes may be. May we count and recount our blessings, our eyes fixed on the glories that can be ours in the age to come. May this hope be a real thing to us, with a loathing for evil, and a bent for what is good.

Dear Father, may we be alerted to the reasonable proposition that to receive the unspeakable blessings which Thou hast offered there is some-

thing for us to do. These superb blessings cannot be ours with no effort on our part. Thou art a Being with Divine choosiness, Thou wilt not perpetuate any unholy thing.

It is Thy demand that we become holy as Thou art holy. While we cannot match Thee in wisdom and ability, we *can* match Thee in holiness. We can become pure even as Thou art pure; we can develop mercy even as Thou art merciful; we can always speak the truth even as Thou dost mean every word Thou speakest; we can be beneficent even as Thou art beneficent. We pray for the strength to develop these virtues in our own daily living, to become holy even as Thou art holy.

We pray for the sick, and for those in the throes of trial, who are leaning on Thy strong arm. Sustain, comfort and support as Thou hast promised. And may Thy interest be above every interest of our lives; Thy pleasure our joy, and Thy approval our highest goal, that our expectation may grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect Day we know is coming. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

apostle Paul, after reminding the Corinthians of God's supremely generous offers, writes, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). "Let us cleanse"—now. "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God"—now. It is all present-tense action. It is not something that happened at some time in the past, but it is something that is to be happening continually in the holy life.

Holiness is a life to be lived, not an experience to look back upon. Holiness is not a static concept of good and evil. It is a present, "now" demand. It is something that affects every motive, every word, every will in each situation of life as we meet it. To be holy we must learn to think in terms of holiness in everything we do—now. It is a concept we cannot lose sight of for a single moment. We are called to be holy people unto the Lord our God, and each time we fail to exhibit holy conduct in the everyday situations of our lives, we jeopardize our high calling and show disdain for the One who called us.

To be holy we must maintain a humble, submissive, yielded attitude toward God in each on-going situation we encounter. It is something to do—now. Holy is as holy does—right now.

Those who are not committed to upholding Christian principles are constantly judging those who profess to be, on the evidence of their holiness. They expect "holy" people to live as holy people should; and rightly so. "Holy is as holy does." Bad attitudes, questionable activities, petty rivalries, arguings, jealousies, harsh criticisms, strifes and fiery displays of passion are out of character for holy people. We know it. The world knows it. And—most serious of all—God knows it. How watchful we should be. We are no better than our lives prove us to be. Holy *is* as holy *does*.

Doctrine and deed must be parallel. "Holy is as holy does" must apply to our character and conversation before those who observe us can imitate our example. Character and concept cannot be separat-

ed. One questionable action can destroy more confidence than a hundred carefully directed acts can reconstruct. We may be able to explain why we did such-and-such, but examples travel farther than explanations. As the poet writes:

*What you are speaks so loud  
That the world can't hear what you  
say.*

*They're looking at your walk,  
Not list'ning to your talk,  
They're judging from your actions  
ev'ry day;*

*Don't believe that you deceive  
By claiming what you've never  
known;*

*They'll accept what they see  
And know you to be,  
They'll judge from your life alone.*

If we would prove our holiness, we must demonstrate spiritual power and strength of character even in a day when anything goes. We must hold to our convictions when it is more popular to compromise. We must show purity in the midst of pollution. We must be able to exercise faith in a day filled with fear and anxiety. We must exhibit true holiness under test and stress. This does not mean a simpsy, spineless, milksop attitude. Holiness will stand up for right and will say "No" to wrong and wrongdoers. It will work in the great crises of life and in the little inconveniences as well.

Holiness is head and heart and hands under the control of God.

#### ❖ Holiness and US

Sometime after the completion of their first missionary journey, Paul made a proposal to Barnabas. He proposed that they revisit the churches they had founded to see how they were getting on. Were their members continuing steadfast in the faith? Were they growing in grace? Were they going forward in the Lord, or standing still? Were they prospering, or falling away? "Let us go again," he said, "and visit our brethren, and see how they do."

This is a wise and useful proposal for us as well. Let us lay it to heart and apply

If we would be  
saints granted an  
entrance to the  
world to come, we  
must be saints  
here and now.

Holiness is a  
life to be lived,  
not an experience  
to look back  
upon.

"You must be  
holy," says the  
Lord God, "for  
I am holy."

it to ourselves. Let us search our ways and find out how matters stand between ourselves and our God. Let us "see how we do." Are *you* holy? Am *I*?

We live in an age of peculiar spiritual danger. All around us the parable of the sower is continually illustrated, vividly and painfully. The wayside hearers, the stony-ground hearers, the thorny-ground hearers abound on every side. What of us? Have we that good and honest heart where the seeds of holiness can grow and bear fruit?

Real Christian holiness is never attained or maintained without a fight or struggle. The great Apostle who said "I fight...I labour...I keep under my body and bring it into subjection" (I Cor. 9:26-27)—what would he think if he could see the complacent, unconcerned, non-exerting attitude we too often display toward holiness?

Holiness is not a thing which begins and ends in noisy profession; it will be seen much more than heard. Genuine Scriptural holiness will compel one to do his duty at home and adorn the doctrine of Christ even in the little trials of daily life. It will make a man more humble, kind, gentle, unselfish, good-tempered, considerate of others, loving, meek and forgiving.

How is it with us in this matter of holiness? How do we do?

We as professing Christians need to champion anew the essence of holiness in our lives, in these times. Christ, our perfect Example, lived a holy life. He gave Himself totally to performing the purpose and will of His heavenly Father. He purified His heart of every trace of unholiness. And everyone who shares the hope of becoming someday like Him must purify "himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (I John 3:3). We cannot do less, and follow in His footsteps.

Holiness is the only sound, sure evidence that we are true children of God. Children naturally bear likenesses to their parents. So with children of God. The Lord says, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham....If God were your Father, ye would love me" (John 8:39, 42). If men have no likeness to the Father in heaven, it is vain to talk of being His sons. If we know nothing of holiness we may flatter ourselves as we please, but we are dead; we are lost. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they," and they only, "are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

We should show by our everyday lives the family we belong to. We must let men see by our conduct that we are

## Holiness Is...

by J. C. Ryle

Where will our place be [in the future] if we are strangers to holiness now?

Suppose for a moment that you were allowed to enter God's new world without holiness. What would you do? What possible enjoyment could you feel there? To which of the saints would you join yourself? Their pleasures are not your pleasures, their tastes not your tastes, their character not your character. How could you possibly be happy if you had not been holy during your life?

Now perhaps you love the company of the light and the careless,

the worldly-minded and the covetous, the reveller and the pleasure-seeker, the ungodly and the profane. There will be none such in the Kingdom.

Now perhaps you think the saints of God too strict and particular and serious. You rather avoid them. You have no delight in their society. There will be no other company in the Kingdom.

Now perhaps you think praying, and Scripture-reading, and hymn-singing, dull and melancholy, and stupid work—a thing to be tolerated now and then but not enjoyed. You reckon a day of worship a burden

and a weariness; you could not possibly spend more than a small part of a day in worshipping God. But remember, the Kingdom will be a never-ending day of worship. How could an unholy man or woman find pleasure in this?

Think you that such an one would delight to meet David, and Paul and John, after a life spent in doing the very things they spoke against? Could you rejoice to meet Jesus face to face after cleaving to the sins to which He died, after loving His enemies and despising His friends? Could you stand before Him with confidence, and join in

indeed the children of the Holy One, or our sonship is but an empty name. "Say not," says one, "that thou hast royal blood in thy veins, and art the son of God, except thou canst prove thy pedigree by being holy."

Is it not true that we need frequently to check on ourselves? How is our standard of personal holiness today? What are we demanding of ourselves in holy accomplishment? Where is our patience? How is our zeal? our love? Where is the power of our religion? Where is that radiance which used to distinguish the saints of old? Has our silver become dross, our wine mixed with water, our salt without savor? Are we more than half-asleep? The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us open our eyes more widely than we have before. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

Oh, where is the spirit of Him who was crucified unto the world and the world to Him?

How can we read, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," without feeling a strong desire to be more single-eyed, more heavenly-minded, more wholehearted, more and

more like the God to whom we profess to belong? We need more of the pilgrim spirit, a more decided separation from the world, more interest in the world to come, a closer walk with God.

Does the goal of "perfect holiness" seem beyond us? It is not. The God who created us knows our capabilities, and He will never ask what we cannot give. He asks only that we do that which will bring us the most creative dimensions of fulfillment and meaning and satisfaction in this life, and will give us eternal life in the future.

Should we not be willing—even anxious—to obey a God who offers so much, to perfect that which is lacking in *our* holiness in the fear of God? This is the only route to becoming a partaker of the Divine nature. It is the only way to escape the bondage of mortality and secure for ourselves a share in that life which will go on, and on, and on, and on through the countless cycles of eternity. For such a reward, is the standard of holiness too high?

Are you holy? Am I? Ponder carefully the answer you speak to your heart, that in the great Day to come you may be found "holy and unblameable and unrepentable in his sight." □

Holiness is  
head and heart  
and hands under  
the control of  
God.

the cry, "This is our God; we have waited for him,...we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation?" (Isa. 25:9). Think you not rather that the tongue of an unholy man would cleave to the roof of his mouth with shame, and his only desire would be to be cast out! He would feel a stranger in a land he knew not, a black sheep amidst Christ's holy flock. The song of angels and all the company of the saints would be a language he could not understand. The very air would seem an air he could not breathe.

I know not what others may think, but to me it does seem clear that the heavenly Kingdom would be a miserable place to an unholy man. It cannot be otherwise. People may say, in a vague way, that

they hope to live on forever; but they do not consider what they say. There must be a certain meetness for the 'inheritance of the saints in light.' Our hearts must be in tune. To reach the holiday of glory, we must pass through the training school of grace. We must become heavenly-minded, and have heavenly tastes, in the life that is now, or else we shall never find ourselves accepted in the life to come.

Let me ask everyone who may read these pages, Are you holy? Listen, I pray you, to the question I put to you this day. Do you know anything of the holiness of which I have been speaking?

I do not ask whether you attend church regularly, or whether you

have the name of Christian. I ask something more than all this: Are you holy, or are you not?

I do not ask whether you approve of holiness in others, whether you like to read about the lives of holy people and to talk of holy things, and to have on your table holy books, whether you mean to be holy and hope you will be holy some day. I ask something further: Are you yourself holy this very day, or are you not?

And why do I ask so straitly, and press the question so strongly? I do it because the Scripture says, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is written; it is the word of God, not of man: Without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). □

# A \$200 billion scandal

## "You Can't Read the Obvious...!"

"You are good at reading the weather signs of the skies...  
but you can't read the obvious signs of the times!"

— Jesus (Matthew 16:2-3, TLB)

If God were to give us one vivid sign in the heavens, one ringing trumpet blast, one earthshaking lightning bolt, everyone would be trembling, breathless, wondering what was coming next. Our minds would be fixed on God, and our nerves tense with anticipation. We would watch, wait, wonder—and in the meantime, in a concerted effort toward holiness we would leave no tiny area of our lives unchecked. Our one dominant thought would be, What does God think of me? Am I worth sparing? Am I ready for the great change that is coming? Am I doing everything I can to be at my best? Am I ready to take part in all that is going to happen on this planet in the days that are just ahead?

But God is not so dramatic—not yet. At the moment, He is using a host of small signs, little blinker lights as it were, to alert us. Together they show a dramatic fulfilling of His prophetic Word. Together they show us that the great Day of the Lord is near, *very* near. Together they spell "God working," "God planning," "God preparing," right here in our world, in our future. And Jesus' reproving words to the Pharisees come ringing in our ears:

"You are good at reading the weather signs of the skies—red sky tonight means fair weather tomorrow; red sky in the morning means foul weather all day—but you can't read the obvious signs of the times!" (Matt. 16:2-3, TLB). Hear those words: "You can't read the obvious signs of the times!"

Can we?

What are some of the signs surrounding us?

### A New Wave of Violence

We read the forecast of the apostle Paul of a time of "peril" at the end of the age, when "men will be...abusive, inhuman, implacable, fierce, brutal, treacherous, reckless" (II Tim. 3:1-4, various translations). Many of these terms indicate violent behaviors. And on a daily basis we hear reports of violence that is being abetted by unscrupulous TV planners who glamorize crime and also by a booming illegal drug business.

We are told of an estimated 34 million crimes a year in our nation of 260 million people. We are told that more than 80 percent of us can expect to be a victim of crime at least once in our lifetimes. Crunching the numbers, *The U.S. News* estimates that America's bill

for crime runs at \$674 billion a year in direct and indirect costs.

Then we read statistics like the following: that arrests for violent crimes by youths under 18 have jumped 91 percent in 21 years. We read that teen violence has exploded, that murder arrests of youths under 18 have jumped 92 percent in just 8 years, while the teen population has remained steady or declined. The 1994 *Information Almanac* lists death by violence as the number one killer of American youth today. *The New York Times* estimates that there is now one handgun for every two U.S. citizens. Can't we hear Paul's word for it: "treacherous...fierce...implacable...perilous"?

### Inhuman, Without Natural Affection

We hear of child abuse, wife abuse, children torturing other children; of carjackings, drive-bys, child-snatchings and kidnappings. Again, can't we hear Paul's word for it: "without natural affection,...inhuman"?

### Fear —of Violence

Jesus predicted, along with the unrest and perplexity of the time of the end, that "men's hearts"



would be "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:25-26). At the moment one source of the fear He forecast may be the threat of violent crime, which, according to a current report, "has reached a magnitude never before experienced. Never before have Americans felt so cheated of their liberty to move freely without fear. They feel they must turn their homes into fortresses and their children and older relatives into prisoners to keep them safe. The crime wave has changed the way we walk down a street, the way we drive, the way we shop, the way we think about other people, the pride we once had in our cities. As New York Governor Mario Cuomo recently said, 'The mugger has become the midnight mayor of the metropolis'" (*U.S. News*, January 17, 1994).

Says another report, "Crime and fear of crime disrupt our lives and haunt our nights."

Says yet another, "Concern about crime has shattered the Nation's sense of well-being like a police siren stabbing the night: two out of five now say it is the number one problem." People are

frightened by the "deluge of violence news now gripping the Nation.... Fear is never far away" (*U.S. News*, December 27, 1993).

Can't we hear Jesus' description of it: "Men's hearts failing them for fear..."?

#### Political Corruption

Nor are violence and fear of it the only signs of the times. There is also the problem of corruption in government. Says a current issue of *Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 18, 1994), "One of the most dramatic themes of our era is a worldwide confrontation with corruption. Governments have fallen in the midst of money scandals in Italy, Japan and France.... In South America governments are consumed in pitched wars with gangs of drug lords....The tentacles of global corruption seem to reach nearly everywhere." Can't we hear Paul calling them "covetous...traitors, heady, high-minded"?

#### Cultural and Moral Deterioration

Another problem is what Charles Colson calls "our culture's crumbling moral consensus." *Bennett's Index of Leading Cultural Indica-*

*tors* reports that "since 1960, there has been a 560% increase in violent crime. There has also been more than a 400% increase in illegitimate births, a quadrupling in divorces, a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes, more than a 200% increase in the teenage suicide rate, and a drop of 75 points in the average SAT scores of high school students. Today 30% of all births and 68% of black births are illegitimate.... We lead the industrialized world in murder, rape and violent crime." And who would attempt to count the Wall Street scandals, the religious frauds, the fallen sports heroes, to say nothing of the growth of pornography, obscene literature, and petty crimes such as shoplifting?

Promiscuity is so prevalent among the young that many school teachers consider it the norm, and the result is an impression that "everybody is doing it." *Time Magazine* reports that "by the time they reach age 20, three-quarters of young Americans have had sex; one fourth of teens contract some venereal disease each year," and some leading social scientists argue that there is nothing wrong with it.

Paul talked about this, too. He described them as "lovers of pleasure," "steeped in all sorts of depravity, rottenness, greed and malice,...without brains, honor, love or pity" (II Tim. 3:3-4; Rom. 1:29-31, JB). And Jesus made the striking comparison: "As it was in the days of Noah,...likewise also as it was in the days of Lot,...even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30).

### Efforts Toward Peace

Still another sign posted to read is the continued effort toward peace. President Clinton is working toward peace, the pope is working toward peace, as are many other agencies and organizations. And there is increasing optimism in many places, in Ireland, and in the Middle East. Even Syria's leader Assad has made a statement that we may yet have "peace and stability in our times." He said, "In honor we fought, in honor we negotiate, and in honor we shall make peace." Whether or not he follows through with his promise, it is a dramatic change from his former tone, and another fulfillment of the prophetic Word.

Shall we close our eyes and say with the scoffers that all things continue as they have always been from the beginning of the creation? Shall we be like the fabled ostrich, and bury our heads in the sand, hoping the problems will go away? Worst of all, shall we miss the *good news* God is publishing for us to read in all this; news of the near return of His Son to earth, news of the great deliverance that is just ahead, news of the approaching end of all suffering, all misery and squalor, injustice and evil?

Shall we be so blind as to fail to read these vivid signs of the times

*Shall we close our eyes and say with the scoffers that all things continue as they have always been?*

as greater and yet greater fulfillments of God's prophecies, and a shouting message that we are at the time of the end?

The fulfillment is undeniable by any unbiased mind. It may seem ordinary, subtle, and undramatic. But such has often been God's way of working. Consider the time of Jeremiah. For many years, everyone was told that the end was coming. If God had made one ear-blasting announcement from heaven, all Israel might have listened, at least for the moment. But God spoke through His prophets. Again and again He sent men with His messages, and the people refused to listen. Again He sent more prophets, and still they were unheeding. Then the fulfillment began, so gradually that many still did not see it as the predicted event. There were distant rumbles of approaching trouble, nearer and yet nearer. Nebuchadnezzar arrived with his armies. Finally he went away, and everyone was relieved. That was over! Then, a few years later, there was another rumble: Nebuchadnezzar came again. And again he went away. But finally—true to the Word of the Lord—the end *came*, as finally and frightfully and fully as ever it could.

And so it will come in our day. The Lord has spoken: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill in Zion" (Ps. 2:6). God has spoken, *and He will do it*. And He has not left us to wonder or guess when it will be. Present-day signs speak loudly that this is the time of the end, a time of godlessness, a time of lawlessness, a time of violence, a time of mad pleasure seeking and lust and wanton sensuality and vice. It is a time clearly marked out by Divine prophecy. But it is a time limited in duration. It is a time marked out for us to get ready. For the last day, though not revealed, has been set, and it will arrive.

However we may choose to count, we can look back upon close to 6,000 years since God called Adam. And since we are clearly told that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day (I Pet. 3:8), the "six days" of creation (representing 6000 years in actual time) must be almost spent. We know there are errors in the calculating of time, but the year 1994 cannot be turned back. And neither can we extend the ever-present limit of our limited lifetime. However we look upon it, our preparation days are few.

Oh, let not the words of Jesus apply to us: "You can't read the obvious!" If they do, the problem is not our lack of vision, but our lack of comprehension.

God forbid that we may be so preoccupied with everyday life that we miss the message that is fairly screaming in our ears.

God forbid that we may be so engrossed in the things at hand, and looking for a dramatic sign from heaven, that we miss what He is saying in everyday events.

"Can't you read the obvious signs of the times?" Let us read and run. *It is for our life!* □

# O Thou Everlasting!

*Everlasting Mercy... Everlasting Strength... Everlasting Kindness...  
Everlasting Righteousness... Everlasting Love*

*Thou Mighty God, who rules above,  
What words can we, poor earth-borns, frame  
To honor Thee, and show our love  
And reverence due to Thy great name?  
Hear us, as now we bow to Thee  
And own Thy power, Thy majesty.*

*For oh, the depths, the riches, both  
Of wisdom, knowledge of our God;  
Unsearchable Thy judgments are,  
Thy ways past finding out, O Lord!  
Thy greatness, none can comprehend,  
Thy mighty works none understand.*

*From everlasting Thou art God,  
To everlasting still the same.  
Let man his baughty head abase,  
And all Thy works declare Thy fame;  
Yea, come and kneel beneath His throne,  
For He, our God, is God alone.*

When God wanted to employ a word that comprehended the whole of eternity as well as the fullness of infinity, He found no better term than *everlasting*. In it is included the very existence of God Himself. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:1-2). What need have we of a stronger word? Everlasting—we might call it the biggest word in the Bible. It is immediately connected with Divine things, and is so closely interwoven in Divine phraseology that when we hear it, see it, or think of the word, our minds turn instinctively to heavenly things, things of futurity, things of God.

Since God Himself is from everlasting to everlasting, it follows that He has everlasting characteristics, and the teachings of the Book bear out this assumption. First, His *mercy* is everlasting, as we learn from Ps. 103:17-18: "The mercy of the Lord is from ever-

lasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." But this mercy is conditional. "To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

Can we not well afford to fulfill the conditions in order to obtain this enduring mercy? Here is one of the grandest promises in the Bible. And how absolutely necessary is that mercy! Without it no one could be saved. This is the sentiment of Lam. 3:22-23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Where would we stand if those everlasting mercies were not renewed to us every day?

Another characteristic of this everlasting God is His everlasting *strength*. The prophet Isaiah tells us (26:3-4): "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Without this everlasting strength extended to and shared with us, we would never be able to lay hold upon His everlasting mercy. God's strength is so unfailing that He never tires, never grows weary. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding" (Isa. 40:28). Almost incomprehensible to mortals, but everlastingly true nevertheless. And this same everlasting, untiring strength may be ours if we obey His every commandment, if we "wait on the Lord." "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings [power] as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (v.31).

We have a wonderful promise in Deut. 33:27: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Yes, His arms, His power, is as everlasting as are His mercy and His strength. We have all seen the comfort a child takes in being enfolded in a parent's arms, and while it is but a figure of speech it makes it understandable to us and gives us a feeling of

*(Continued on page 18)*

# Can We Trust the Bible?

*Either God inspired the Bible or He did not; either the Bible is infallible and without error because God designed and inspired it, or it is subject to error because it is the work of men. There can be no middle ground, no half-and-half position. For how can God be partly right and partly wrong, and still be God?*

► *Dare we claim that the Bible is without error?  
YES!*

## Introduction

**P**icture yourself standing on the bank of a wide river. You want to cross it, and a bridge has been constructed for this purpose. But alas! the bridge is missing a span. Many hours of work and large sums of money have been invested in this bridge, but it is utterly useless—because of a single missing span.

This is what the Bible would be to us if we could not depend on its teachings. If it contained errors, absurdities, and conflicting views; if we could not put our absolute confidence in its words, what could it tell us about the meaning of life, about the future, about the destiny of our earth, or about life after death? Whatever the Bible commands or commends, if it cannot be depended upon as one hundred percent the Word of God, infallible and without error, what is it more than any other human book?

Here is the purpose of the Doctrine of Inerrancy. But the problem is this: that the Bible comes to us through human instruments. Almost everyone would be ready to believe the Bible if we could see it being produced by God in some mighty and dramatic way, if we could see an angel writing it today, or could hear the booming voice of God dictating it. But because it was written long ago, and because God used human pens and spoke through human mouthpieces, we are slow to believe that the result is not just another book by human philosophers, on a par with other literature, and subject to all the differences of opinion and human misjudgments and error to which any other book is subject.

### How Much Margin for Error?

Even the idea of a book *absolutely without error* bothers us. What have we ever known or seen that was absolutely perfect, or absolutely pure, or free from all error? Every manufactured product has a margin for error, be it ever so small. If it is a machine, it often has a rating for "Mean Time Between Failure" (MTBF). If it is a measurement, there must always be some allowance for error.

What we forget is that we are not talking about a book that was authored by human writers. Because men are fallible and *may* err does not mean that those who were writing for God *had to err*; or that *they did err*. If God is able to design and create the universe, can we not grant that He has the ability to give correct knowledge to His instruments, so that what they compose is free from error? If He is not able to do this, how can He be said to possess all wisdom?

And if God did oversee and direct the production of the Bible, how can we possibly think that He directed the writing of error?

Almost everyone admits that there is something "special" about the Bible. But if we cannot believe that it is without error, how can we believe that it is of God?

A bit of dialogue points up the widespread confusion:

"You believe the Bible?"

"Yes."

"You believe the Bible to be the Word of God?"

"Yes."

"You believe the Bible is without error?"

"No."

"Then you think that God inspires error?"

"Oh, no."

Some actually believe that by claiming the Bible to be without error we are putting at risk our entire structure of faith, that if one error may be discovered some time in the future our whole faith will suffer.

What they forget is that in talking about the Bible we are not dealing with human fallibility, even though the Bible was written by human pens. It is a product designed and produced under God's direction, and we have no reason not to accept it for what it is. The Bible *claims to be* the written Word of God. The Bible *claims to be* without error. And the Bible *claims to be* dependable. If these claims can be substantiated; if by any means we can know whether the Bible is what it *claims to be*, then we need not fear in our stand for its integrity. The Bible will stand the test.

In studying the Bible, we have two alternatives. Either God inspired the Bible or He did not; therefore either the Bible is infallible and without error because God designed and inspired it, or it is subject to error because it is the work of men. Either the Bible is the Word of God and one hundred percent dependable, or it is not. There can be no middle ground, no half-and-half position. For how can God be partly right and partly wrong, and still be God? And how can God direct or inspire *any* error?

The amazing fact is that generations before us accepted the Bible without question. In fact, it was scarcely challenged until the seventeenth century. The early Christians believed the writings of the Apostles and treasured them. Jesus and His Apostles quoted the writings of the Old Testament as Scripture, without question. Shall we reject the Word which has come to us as the means of our salvation? Shall we say that we know more about its writ-

**Inerrant:** as applied to Scripture, the belief that the Scriptures are free from error, exempt from any liability to mistake. To profess inerrancy is to profess the utter truthfulness of Scripture.

**Infallible:** as applied to the Bible, the belief that all that it teaches is of unimpeachable, absolute authority, and cannot be contravened, contradicted, or gainsaid, and is incapable of proving false, erroneous or mistaken. The Scriptures possess an indefectible authority, as our Lord Himself said, "It cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

► *If God oversaw and directed the production of the Bible, how can we possibly think that He directed the writing of error?*

ings than did those who were a thousand or two thousand years closer than we are to the source of those writings?

*We stand firmly upon a Bible which we believe to be without error; contradiction or absurdity in all it teaches, in the original languages in which it was written.* If God has revealed Himself and His message at all, He has revealed it totally. And the Bible is the Book in which He has revealed it.

*We believe the Bible is all that it claims to be, and that this can be clearly shown by a sincere study of its teachings.* By the testimony of His own inspired writer, "The word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth" (Ps. 33:4).

### **The Bible Only? Three Views**

Along with the subject of inerrancy we need to consider also the level or degree of authority which the Bible holds over us. How absolute do we regard it?

Major differences exist among those who accept the Bible either in whole or in part. The greatest differences arise not so much from differing attitudes toward Scripture as toward the place which Scripture holds among other factors, namely: experience, additional revelation, tradition, culture and human judgment. Many Bible students severely dilute the authority of Scripture by accepting these other factors as authority on a par with Scripture. Indeed, factors other than Scripture seem often to be given the greater authority.

Positions range from those who give the Bible full authority to those who regard it as wholly human in origin:

1) *Those who believe that the Bible has Divine authority over us because it is the Word of God and our only source of knowledge about God today.* This view gives the Bible absolute authority as the Word of God, who spoke through human lips and wrote with human pens. This was the view-

point held by Jesus and His Apostles as they quoted the Old Testament. And it was the viewpoint held by the leaders of the early Church. In fact, this was the viewpoint held by the entire Church until about the eighteenth century, when higher criticism began and theologians started to challenge and deny the Scriptures to make room for their own critical approach. Of the support for the Old Testament shown by Jesus and His Apostles, B. B. Warfield says, "There are scores, hundreds of such passages [of the Old Testament in the New]; and they come bursting upon us in one solid mass. Explain them away? We should have to explain away the whole New Testament."

2) *Those who believe that the Bible has only limited authority over us because its writings are subject to human interpretation.* In such a view, the Bible becomes purely subjective, depending on the ideas and moods of its human interpreters. Never does it stand in judgment over us. Only what "I myself" experience is final.

3) *Those who believe that the Bible is a thoroughly human book, on a par with all human experience and knowledge, hence is fallible and actually contains errors; but which becomes authority over us as it is reaffirmed in our minds by God's Holy Spirit.* To those holding this view, the Bible becomes both relative and absolute at the same time. They believe that the Bible, being a human book, may be freely criticized. On the other hand, they also believe that when it pleases God to speak through the Bible, or some portion of it, then revelation takes place and the authority of the Bible over us becomes active and absolute.

Can we think for a moment that God gave us His Word, and then has arranged that we should sit in judgment over it, to determine what parts of it are true and what are false? Shall we think that the Bible has authority only as we human creatures give it authority? What presumption! Does

God depend upon *us* to make effective His Word?

Both the second and third positions have another problem in that they depend on the presence of Holy Spirit power today, a provision which the Bible does not support. This leaves us with only one tenable position: that the Bible claims full authority over us as the Word of God.

Let us take Jesus for our example. What was His attitude toward Scripture? When He was tempted in the wilderness, and the tempter quoted Scripture to Him, what was Jesus' reply? Did He immediately challenge the tempter because he had quoted words which had little or no authority? No, He simply quoted another Old Testament Scripture, affirming the authority of both passages: "Again it is written, 'Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (Matt. 4:7; cf. Luke 4:12).

### **What About Inerrancy?**

Common views of inerrancy today are the following:

1) *Limited inerrancy.* This view of inerrancy holds that portions of the Bible pertaining to "faith and salvation" are without error. By this position they hope that the Bible will survive the scrutiny of critics who attest that the Bible is "teeming with contradictions, errors and imperfections." It is briefly an attempt to redefine inerrancy so that it is unaffected by certain types of errors. It suggests that in unimportant matters the Holy Spirit left the inspired writers to their own devices, including their faulty memories, and so limited inerrancy claims accuracy only for the portions for which inspiration would be required. Proponents of the theory do not think that the sacred writer needed to be safeguarded from error when mentioning something in passing or something quite incidental to his primary purpose.

2) *Total inerrancy.* This view states that every word and letter of the Bible is without error.

One problem arises immediately from the position of limited inerrancy. It makes each person a self-appointed judge to decide what part of Scripture is "inerrant" by asking each to decide what pertains to the Scriptures macro-purpose of "salvation truth," that which is designed to "lead men to Jesus Christ and to salvation." By such a definition almost any portion of Scripture may be classified as "errant" or "inerrant," depending upon the opinion of the person judging it. The result: What solid foundation of faith do we have?

Jesus and His Apostles received all Scripture as God's written Word in an attitude of total trust. They accepted not only what we might be pleased to call the primary intent of a passage but also the secondary details as well. They took all declarations from Scripture as reliable and true, without question or discussion. We cannot follow the example of Jesus and sift Scripture teaching according to some general principle of what we consider conveys saving truth and what does not.

A Bible scholar Clark H. Pinnock comments: "Surely it is wiser and truer to recognize that the Bible is a seamless garment. We are not to pluck out a thread and discard the cloth....Its truth is all intertwined in a most complex unity. He discredits its authority who limits its reliability....Limited inerrancy is a halfway house on the way to unlimited errancy. It is a position, a slope not a platform. Like the term marriage, inerrancy is absolute and cannot easily be limited without ceasing to be a useful term."

### **Our Position**

What shall we take as our position on the subject of inerrancy?

If we believe the Bible and its authors, we must believe that it is correct in all that it says, whether the author was writing that moment by inspiration or not, whether he was relating a revelation from God or

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test.*

whether he was speaking from his own experience and general knowledge. Otherwise, how can we know that the Bible is a true guide for life, or an appropriate guidebook to follow?

Therefore we are bound to acknowledge the second view: total inerrancy. We need, however, to state our position as follows:

*We believe the Bible is without error or contradiction when properly understood and in the form in which it was originally written.*

The form in which it was originally written, often called the autographa or original manuscripts of the Bible, is the only form of the Bible which we may safely say to be absolutely without error, because any human handling of the text (copying, translation, printing) may — as we all know — result in errors. What book or magazine was ever published absolutely free from any human error? And shall we make God accountable for our human blunders? □

*(To be continued)*

## *O Thou Everlasting!*

*(Continued from page 13)*

security to know the arms of a Heavenly Parent are beneath us and we need not fall.

We learn, too, that the *righteousness* of God is everlasting. How different from the righteousness of man! The Psalmist tells us (119:142), "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth." His righteousness, like His wisdom, was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was—to this day and to eternity the only true standard of righteousness. Beside it the best of man's righteousness is as filthy rags—too variable, too much conditioned by time and place. This standard of righteousness stands as a great, unshakable rock in the midst of a troubled, turbid sea of mutation. Let us thank God daily for this "strong tower" of refuge and safety.

Another of His glorious characteristics is His everlasting *kindness*. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. 54:8). Even the wrath, the hiding of His face, is a part of this Divine kindness (Ps. 141:5); and how comforting the thought that even though our sins have been so egregious as to hide His face from us (Isa. 59:1-2), yet we may, by turning from our iniquities at once and for all, have the past blotted out and claim His everlasting kindness, everlasting mercy, everlasting love, for behind this mercy and kindness is an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3), a love so deep, so wide, so universal, that the disciple whose life was most attuned to it laid down the simple and sublime dictum, "God is love" (I John 4:8).

But despite its depth and breadth and fulness, this love which the Creator bestows is, like every other good thing, strictly conditional, based upon His everlasting *covenant* (Isa. 55:3), which is, "Obey and live, disobey and die." The keeping of this covenant requires lifelong vigilance; but the rewards, like all other things connected with the Creator, are everlasting. Well is He termed the Eternal! "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever" (Eccl. 3:14). "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end" (Isa. 45:17). Salvation—a word of many meanings. To the ancient pagans it meant good luck, deliverance from immediate dangers, accomplishment of the purposes in hand. But this everlasting salvation of Jehovah is infinitely more. He will define it fully. Participation in an everlasting *Kingdom*, for one thing (Dan. 2:44; 7:27); an everlasting *name*, better than of sons and daughters (Isa. 56:5); everlasting *consolation* (II Thess. 2:16) for the crosses we bear and the small sacrifices we make in this short probation; the Lord God for our everlasting light (Isa. 60:20); everlasting joy upon our heads (Isa. 35:10; 51:11); and everlasting life, health, strength, vigor and usefulness (Luke 18:30; Isa. 33:24; Rev. 21:4).

Surely such glorious promises to frail mortal man, hemmed in on every side by the limitations of time, living his little life under the constant pressure of approaching dissolution, should inspire us to cry with the sweet singer of Israel, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24). □



We in the United States are grateful to live under a government which makes a concerted effort to maintain law and order in our streets. We are also grateful for a judicial system supporting law and order, and also the rights of the individual who is accused. Ideally, the checks and balances of the present system should assure everyone in our land the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

But unfortunately, even the best arrangement of this world is not perfect, and the judicial system is at times confronted with problems that it is inadequate to solve. The best that human minds can design and human hands can execute falls short of meeting every need. And there are always issues in dispute. One of these is the issue of capital punishment.

We have received the following from a subscriber:

*"A subject has been asked of me: Capital Punishment. So I am calling upon your Scripture expertise for help. Do you have any advice or recommendations according to Scripture on this subject?"*

*"So much of today's deeds and/or misdeeds of law and order and/or human rights are based on mankind's laws, without consideration of God's view,*

*that it sometimes adds great confusion to any study of God's Word. So many people want to compromise.*

*"Regarding capital punishment, I find my human nature reacting to the matter. For example, when I hear what the 'sentenced to death' person was convicted of, I want to see him or her receive similar treatment. And then I stop short—what would God do? What would be His judgment? and I have second thoughts. I must set my thoughts (or judgments) aside and approach the subject in a Christian manner. Any help here will certainly be appreciated."*

We want to look at the subject of capital punishment from three aspects:

- 1) what Scripture says about the death penalty;
- 2) the death penalty in the hands of human governments;
- 3) our attitude as Christian believers toward the executing of the death penalty.

#### **What Scripture Says about the Death Penalty**

Scripture does indeed have a great deal to say about the death penalty.

The very earliest law explicitly defined in Scripture, the law given by God to Moses on Mount

Sinai, together with the rest of the Mosaic system, provided for a firm control of justice, and it was a law with a death penalty. The apostle Paul called it a "ministration of death" (II Cor. 3:7). The law listed 18 crimes for which the offender could be put to death, and provided direction as to how the law was to be executed.

However, the law, severe as it might seem, was designed not to be harsh or unreasonable. A number of conditions had to be met before the death penalty could be invoked:

1. *Proportionality (forcing a restraint of retaliation).* Punishment was to be limited to the dimensions of the offense, never in excess of it. Here was a severe restriction on any instinct to retaliate. "Whenever hurt is done, you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, bruise for bruise, wound for wound" (Ex. 21:23-25, NEB).

2. *Intent (an allowance for unintended harm).* The Old Testament provided that capital punishment could not be imposed when the offender acted unintentionally. Numbers 35:22-24 exempts from the death penalty those who killed accidentally. Cities of refuge were designated to which a person who had caused another's death unintentionally could flee.

3. *Due Process (accused had a right to trial).* Several provisions of the Old Testament law assured that executions would take place only after appropriate judicial procedures. The victim's family was prohibited from retaliating until the case could be heard and the accused had a chance to present his side.

4. *Individual Responsibility.* Deuteronomy 24:16 says that one cannot be held responsible for

only with great restraint, and only where the crime could be proven by judicial procedure. This restraint upon the penalty is a principle of the law of God. To cite the words of the Lord, spoken through His prophet Ezekiel, "I would rather that a wicked man should mend his ways and live. Give up your evil ways, give them up; O Israelites, why should you die?" (Ezek. 33:11, NEB). God told Israel plainly that He

Scriptural command, before an accused murderer could be executed, two eyewitnesses had to confirm his guilt (Deut. 17:6; Num. 35:30). As a practical matter, this meant that murder cases required a higher standard of proof than other criminal cases, since in the others the victim could be the witness. Furthermore, those two eyewitnesses were required to participate in the execution to underscore the seriousness of their charge and to encourage truthful testimony. These requirements were established to avoid convicting an innocent person. It was a life-and-death issue.

There is no question whether Scripture upholds the death penalty. It is God's means for the eliminating of evil. He gives life, and He has the power and right to take it away. And He has the infinite knowledge to know who is worthy to live, and who is not; who will repent and reform, and who will not.

When God wants to remove evil, what does He do? He hunts out the offenders and deals with them directly. If there is hope of their reforming, He may allow some form of chastisement, as with the nation of Israel, whom He allowed to be taken into the hands of their enemies to chasten them, to teach them obedience and faith. If God knows that one will repent and reform, He often allows circumstances to discipline and punish, to teach one the good and the right way. But if there is no hope of reformation (which He in His infinite wisdom can determine, seeing He knows the end from the beginning—Isa. 46:9-10), then He may choose to remove the offenders from the scene of action.

When God sent the flood upon the world of the ungodly in Noah's time, it was punishment

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*There is no question whether Scripture upholds the death penalty. When God wants to remove evil, He hunts out the offenders and deals with them directly.*

the crimes of his parents or children. Only the individual himself is accountable for his actions. This reflects two aspects of justice: that one *is* accountable for his own actions; and that one *is not* accountable for the actions of another.

5. *Fairness (equality before the law, without regard to social status).* Recognizing that wealth or status could influence the outcome of legal proceedings, the Old Testament law stipulated that the rich should have no advantage and the poor no disadvantage (Num. 35:29-31; Ex. 23:6-7). The principle was that there should be equal justice regardless of economic or social status. All were equal before the law. And all were responsible to act according to the law.

6. *Reluctance to execute.* The death penalty was to be used

was punishing the Canaanites because the Canaanites were so wicked—it was their own offense against righteousness that was the cause of His order to remove them (Deuteronomy 9:4).

When dealing with His people, God always preferred that they repent and turn from their evil ways, and He offered a gracious promise to forgive. At times He even went beyond the bounds of His laws to allow the repentance of one who He knew would turn. The situation of David, after his adultery with Bath-sheba and his murder of her husband Uriah, is a case in point. God opened the way for David to repent and reform because He knew that David had it in his heart to do good. David did repent, and lived, and received God's forgiveness.

7. *Certainty of guilt (testimony of eyewitnesses required).* By

by death. When God sent fire upon the wicked cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, it was punishment by death. And when Christ returns with judgment upon the nations, for all who refuse to submit it will be punishment by death.

### **The Death Penalty under Present-day Governments**

Now we come to the crux of the issue: Is it right for human governments to administer a death penalty? How does God expect His human creation to handle issues of justice and retribution to one another?

People today disagree strongly over this issue, some opposed and some supporting.

God designed the laws which He gave to Moses for the governing of the nation of Israel. The law was designed for human governments to administer, and God did not directly intervene, except upon occasion. And that law clearly specified a death penalty for certain offenses, though we have no way of knowing how often or for how long the law was enforced. At the same time the law was fair; certain conditions (mentioned above) had to be met before that penalty should be invoked.

Is the death penalty a restraint of crime and serious offenses? It is often argued that it is not. However, God must have recognized that it was, because He incorporated it in His laws, and He has used it in the past, and will use it again in the future. If a penalty does not restrain wrong, why have any penalty?

But there is a large responsibility upon those administering justice. Several dangers are ever present:

1) *The human instinct to retaliate.* The built-in problem with any human government in administering justice is the

human instinct to retaliate. This is something which God strongly abhors, and which is beyond any human government to fully restrain. Without question this instinct is necessary to the survival of the race; but all vengeance or revenge in human hands is wrong.

2) *Uncertainty in making proper judgment.* Being unable to read the heart or mind, we must depend on the truthfulness

### **Our Attitude As Christians Toward the Death Penalty**

What is our conclusion, then? Should we or should we not support our government in having—or not having—a death penalty in its system of justice?

The answer depends upon whether our government structure is of the type delineated in Scripture under which a death penalty was used. Is the evidence against the offender sufficiently

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*When God sent fire upon the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, it was punishment by death.*

of the testimony of witnesses. If there are no witnesses, we are in an even more difficult position to know the facts, hence have difficulty knowing whether he or she deserves to die for the offense. What was behind the person's conduct? We may not be able to know. And not knowing, we are not in a good position to execute judgment according to the conditions God outlined.

3) *Difficulty in judging the truthfulness of witnesses.* Great care is taken today in the administration of justice that the testimony of witnesses be true. But lacking Holy Spirit power, there is no surety. One human being is on a par with another. Israel's law was severe in its requirements for honesty from witnesses. A "false witness that speaketh lies" was among the worst of offenders (Lev. 19:7-8; Prov. 6:19).

confirmed? Are the laws of the government such as to assure that the death penalty will be properly administered? The answers to these questions may be subject to discussion and differences of opinion.

Our position as Christians frees us from the obligation to answer the above questions or to concern ourselves with whether or not our state allows or does not allow the death penalty. Why? Because we are committed to a higher government, and must answer to a higher law. This means that:

1) *We must be subject to the government under which we live.* "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the

*(Continued on page 23)*

## On Paying Vows

Every day of the year we are faced with the obligation of our sacred covenant. Every day we meet anew the responsibility of living according to its terms, making the sacrifice, offering to God the best of which we are capable.

A vow has been defined as a voluntary obligation, an act by which one consecrates or devotes himself to some deed, service, condition, or person. It presupposes that the action be noble or honest or righteous.

For the committed follower of Christ, a vow is all this and more. As professing Christians, our duty to pay what we have vowed springs directly from the contract we have entered into voluntarily. God says, "If you will...then I will..." to which we reply, "I will"; and so the vow is made. It becomes at once an obligation, a duty—and an opportunity. For in making us responsible for all we do and have and are, it opens to us the opportunity to share in all that God has and is willing to share with us.

Our vow is an obligation of dependence; it is also an obligation of gratitude. It puts us in a position to be inheritors of His resources, and His resources are infinite. But all depends upon our fulfilling our part of the contract. We cannot expect Him to do on His part if we do not do on our part.

The Bible gives at least three basic principles that are involved in the fulfillment of vows:

Vows may be positive, negative, or both. They may be on any level of relationship. On the human level, we make vows to ourselves, our parents, our teachers, to one another. On the highest level we make vows to God.

We make vows in various places and under various circumstances. In our mountaintop experiences, like Peter and John on the Mount of Transfiguration; or

in the valley of testing and trial, we make our vows. In both we find the test for our integrity, fortitude, and resolution. Even in our low moments we must work out our resolve and make our troubles and depressions steppingstones to the very best that is in us.

Fulfilling our vows means many things, and all are associated with personal integrity. The vows we make in either the low or the high moments of our lives must lead us to keener insights, new frontiers of achievement, and growth that will develop in us the rich purity, deep faith, and high commitment He is seeking. Our vows to God express all our highest ideals and moral values. Indeed, they comprehend the whole of life. There is nothing we can do or say that is not affected by what we have vowed.

The Hebrews did not speak of religion *and* ethics, as so many students of religion do today. If they did not have the deeds to exemplify their religious experience, their religion was not true religion but idolatry. Religion and ethics were inseparable. This was the way with all God's prophets. For them, to know was to do; knowing brought the responsibility of doing.

Second, vows also involve the will. The choices are ours, but once the vow is made, the consequences are inevitable.

Lastly, vows must be fulfilled at the moment of opportunity. They are compulsory. "Defer not to pay it." Once we have vowed, there is no escaping the obligation. There is no deferring without penalty. There is not even any option for procrastinating. Procrastination only invites default.

We have a moral obligation to do what we have promised—the right thing, at the right time, with the right motive and attitude. The Bible is explicit with examples of those who failed

because of the lack of one of these in fulfilling their vows to God.

The dignity of discipline cannot be overrated. Our moral fiber can be flabby, or it can be as firm as steel.

Let us be firm and steadfast in the paying of our vows. In the words of the poet:

*Be strong.  
We are not here to play,  
to dream, to drift;  
We have hard work to do,  
and loads to lift.  
Shun not the battle; face it.  
'Tis God's gift.  
Be strong.*

When we fall back on paying our vows to God, the casualty shows first in our own character, then in the lives of those around us as they are influenced by us. How high the obligation we carry in paying our vows to God—for "no man liveth unto himself."

As daily we offer ourselves to God, as daily we make payments on our sacred pledge to God, our vow to live wholly and solely for Him and righteousness, to abide by all the demands of the law of liberty, to seek and find all our love and joy in Him, let our hearts overflow with gratitude and praise. Our vow is our opportuni-

ty to claim our share of the inheritance of the faithful. It is a somber matter, but it is also the matter that can bring us the highest joy.

Vows fulfilled bring hope and happiness even now, but the greatest benefits are future when the saints shall come to Zion with "everlasting joy" upon their heads (Isa. 35:10). With such a happy prospect before us, should we not eagerly say with the Psalmist, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (Ps. 116:14)?

And really, who can afford *not* to! □

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT: YES OR NO?

(Continued from page 21)

power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:1-2). We may agree or not agree with the actions of our government, but we have no right to protest.

This was Paul's attitude in addressing his brethren, to be subject to the law, and to behave themselves in such a way that they would be free from the toils of the law.

2) *We neither oppose nor condemn our states in their attitude toward capital punishment because our civil government leaders are not accountable to the same law of God as we are.*

Because of our commitment to God, it is not our place to advise, direct, or be concerned with our government's issues or decisions. We are to leave matters of state to the state, and concern ourselves with our relationship to God. God has set up the governments of earth to free us from civil obligations, so that we can devote our minds and our lives to higher pursuits. The governments of this world are designed by God to keep law and order. Our duty is to obey God and to live by His laws, and let the officials of our government make whatever decision they deem proper, all the while recognizing that God "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25).

3) *We are commanded to not be "entangled in the affairs of this life," but rather to concern ourselves with pleasing our Captain Christ.* "No man

that warreth [for Christ] entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4). Like a soldier, we have one duty: to obey our Commanding Officer. We have chosen to serve a higher cause, to be Christ's soldiers, and how can we fulfill the duties of this full-time assignment and at the same time be concerned with the interests of our civil government? We must leave the affairs of this world to the officials of this world, trusting in God that they will do what needs to be done to so rule and govern "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:2).

4) *As Christians we are forbidden to take life, under the command of Jesus: "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword"* (Matt. 26:52). We have also the words of John the Baptist (and he was speaking to soldiers): "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely" (Luke 3:14).

We are grateful to our government for providing political security and freedom from harm, so that we can serve God undisturbed. We thank God for our present judicial system, especially in that it protects us in our religious freedom, and allows us to practice our beliefs as we see fit, so long as we do not interfere with the rights of others to do the same.

The safest position regarding the death penalty is to leave it to the governments in power, and leave all ultimate justice in the hands of God to administer, who says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19). □



# What's In the Sea?

## Did You Know...?

*... that only 29% of the earth's surface is dry land; more than 70% is covered by water. In our northern hemisphere, the ratio of water to land is about 3 to 2, but the southern hemisphere is especially watery with a ratio of approximately 4 to 1.*

*...that the world oceans average about 12,500 feet in depth, or more than two miles deep.*

*... that the continents are actually islands rising out of the sea.*

*... that there are mountain ranges under the sea that are higher and longer than the ranges on the continents.*

*... that the highest mountain peak, Mt. Everest (approximately 29,000 feet elevation) could be sunk in the Marianas Trench in the western Pacific and be covered with water a mile deep!*

*... that the Polar ice cap floats!—because it is made of frozen water, and water expands about 9% when it freezes. This fact also limits the thickness of the Polar ice cap because it is always exposed to the warmth of the sun and air.*

*... that the oceans act as a giant air conditioning unit, helping to control the climate of all land surfaces.*

*... that God has provided creatures that live in the salt seas with special equipment by which they filter the salt from the water.*

Someone has said that Planet Earth is wrongly named—it might better have been called “Planet Ocean.” The continents are really islands rising out of an enormous world ocean, which is subdivided into four major bodies of water, the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian, and the Arctic Oceans, together with numerous other smaller bodies, seas, gulfs and bays. Altogether, these waters cover about 130 million square miles of our planet, or two and one half times the amount of habitable land.

If we could view the floor of these giant oceans as we can see the land areas, we would find that they look much the same. Under the ocean are mountain ranges higher and longer than our Rocky Mountains. A depression in the floor of the Western Pacific Ocean known as the Marianas Trench is said to be large enough to contain six Grand Canyons.

Only during the last century have we learned much of the tremendous depths of the seas. In Bible times, the Hebrew people were familiar with the Red Sea, the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean. But they knew nothing of the giant oceans. Not until exploration started during the fifteenth century were people widely aware of the breadth and vastness of the oceans.

Every form of life requires water to survive. The human body is 70 percent water; blood is more than 95 percent water. Most vegetable plants are more than 90 percent water. A seed placed in the ground will not sprout and grow without moisture. Vegetables wither and die without adequate rainfall or irrigation. No life could exist on earth were it not for “the living God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and everything in them...giving [us] rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides [us] with plenty of food” (Acts 14:17, NIV).

But the seas are not a vast, lifeless expanse. A most exalted passage of Scripture describes “the seas, and all that is therein” (Neh. 9:6). And what a vast host of creatures inhabit the seas! There are more species of fish, we are told, than of all other backboned animals combined. Marine life

ranges in size all the way from the copepod, which is the size of a kernel of rice, to the blue whale, which often weighs over 100 tons.

Until the twentieth century, it was commonly believed that fish inhabited only the shallower parts of the ocean. But recent studies show some form of life in every part of the sea. Even at the bottom of the Marianas Trench (35,800 feet down), both fish and sea animals live and thrive.

The most densely populated areas of the sea are the shallow, sunlit parts, where food is readily available. Here also live the majority of the fish that are caught for use as seafood.

Sea water at depths greater than 1,000 feet is uniformly cold, averaging about 35 degrees Fahrenheit. But this is no deterrent to fish—our Great Creator has so designed them that their bodies are able to adapt to the temperature of the surrounding

## Undersea Flashlights

**D**id you ever hear of a fish that has a built-in flashlight? Found in the waters off Indonesia, following along the coast all the way to the north end of the Red Sea on the west (a distance of more than 6,000 miles), this remarkable little three-inch long fish is equipped with a small organ that emits light at night. Scientists have named the fish photoblepharon, a combination of Greek terms meaning roughly "eyelid of light." Technically, the fish has no eyelid. But just below its normal eye is the small organ that emits light. And just below that the fish has a fold of skin which it can raise (to cover) or lower (to expose) its "light."

Actually, this fish, nicknamed "flashlight fish," depends on bacteria for its source of light. In its light device (called a photophore—pronounced "foto-for") live billions of microorganisms which are light-emitting bacteria. Scientists estimate that a concentration of some 10 billion to the milliliter are packed in this special organ, the photophore. By a chemical reaction similar to that in fireflies, these bacteria consume sugar and oxygen which they draw from the fish's blood, and which they convert into a continuous supply of light.

This photophore is no chance device but a singular design. On



its inside surface is a layer of silvery crystals that intensifies the light emitted by the bacteria, much the same as a telescope's mirror concentrates starlight, so that a maximum amount of the light waves are reflected outward. The inner wall of the photophore is lined with a film of heavy black pigment to prevent the fish from being blinded by its light!

Can we observe such wonders as these, and not bow our heads in awe to our great Creator? Strange though it seems, this flashlight fish, we are told, is only one of some thousand species of luminous fish, most of them residents of the deep parts of the oceans, from a few hundred to thousands of feet. But the flashlight fish's light is among the largest and brightest of any creatures', either on land or in the sea.

What is the purpose of the fish's flashlight? Probably as an aid in attracting worms and tiny shellfish which it uses for food; proba-

bly also as a means of defense. The fish blinks its light by lowering its lid for a second, then quickly closing the lid again. Normally the flashlight fish blinks 2 or 3 times a minute. When it gets angered or excited, it can blink as many as 75 times a minute. While the flashlight effect may attract predators, it confuses them as well. When the fish feels threatened, it can cover its light, dart away, then light up again in an unexpected spot—a disconcerting maneuver researchers call "blink-and-run." Other times it turns its lights off, swims up to an intruder, then flashes. Imagine the effect when 20 or 30 fish do a blink-and-run maneuver at the same time! If you were a predator, you might look for dinner somewhere else!

This fish also has a way of swimming in a zigzag fashion, with its lights on during the zig and off during the zag. Predators are quickly confused.

Little is known about the details of how the flashlight fish live, because no one has yet succeeded in raising them in captivity. But they are another wonder of God's marvelous creation, another evidence that life on earth is not a chance situation but the result of a great and wonderful design which only Omnipotence can direct.

Truly, the hand that made us is Divine! □

water—so they are never uncomfortable!

In fact, God has designed fish with numerous special skills needful in their environment. For example, fish are able to swim quite effortlessly. When first hatched, they are so tiny that they are hardly visible. As they grow larger, they develop a layer of skin over their scales which is so thin that it is nearly invisible. This thin layer is designed to reduce friction from the water, allowing the fish to move easily and quickly through the water.

Fish have another built-in wonder of design. Think of the weight of the column of water above the body of a fish that is swimming at a depth of several miles. A normal animal would be crushed. But fish are equipped with a special swim bladder by which they are able to adjust to the pressure of the weight of the water above them. This swim bladder is filled with a light-weight gas. When the fish swims to a lower level, the increased pressure from the weight of the water on top of the fish squeezes the chamber; when the fish swims upward, the decrease in pressure permits the bladder to expand. The bladder chamber is filled with a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen which the fish takes out of the water by its gills. By increasing or decreasing the amount of gas in this chamber as it goes up or down, the fish is able to keep the pressure in its body equivalent to the pressure of the water at that depth, and so is not injured by the increased pressure.

Our Creator has even designed the color of fish to provide a special protective mechanism against its enemies: a dark back and a light belly. The silvery belly is difficult for an enemy to see looking

up from below the fish, while the blues and grays of the back blend with the color of the sea when the fish's enemy is looking down on it from above. This means that the fish's enemy (usually a bigger fish) must look harder for its prey, and more fish can survive. Furthermore many fish have chameleon characteristics—they take on the color of their surroundings. (One wonders how fish managed to develop this special coloration in their skin through evolution...?)

Since fish live in water, and many live in salt water, fish are equipped with eyes that are sealed, so that the delicate organ is not affected by the salt in the water. The whale, being a mammal, has eyes similar to that of human eyes. But the whale's eyes are protected from the salt by special glands that shed grease tears to keep out the brine.

The fish's gills are another marvel of creation. Special membranes in the gills allow oxygen—but not water—to pass into the blood. (How long might fish have

had to "work" to develop such a mechanism through evolution?)

Another characteristic of many fish is what we might call a truly "sixth sense," a sense of congregating and acting as a unit. By some unknown means (fish have no eardrum by which to hear), certain species of ocean fish congregate and travel in huge schools numbering thousands, even hundreds of thousands. Within these "schools" all fish face the same direction, all keep an approximately equal distance from each other, and if threatened all react as a single huge animal controlled as with a single brain, remaining parallel as they swim ahead, or turn right or left.

How is it all possible? We have only one answer: *The hand that made them is Divine!* □

#### Acknowledgements:

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## Announcing...Abib

This year the members and friends of the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of another sacred New Year on the evening of Sunday April 10, extending through Monday, April 11, Bible time being measured from "evening to evening" (Lev. 23:32). The ancient Hebrew pattern, according to the law God gave to Moses, was to begin the New Year with the month "Abib," which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 20, this year). The first new moon occurs this year on April 10.

This day has double significance as we commemorate the beginning of the sacred year and also the birth of our great coming King.

The anniversary of the Lord's Supper will be on Friday, April 22, and Resurrection service on the morning of April 25.

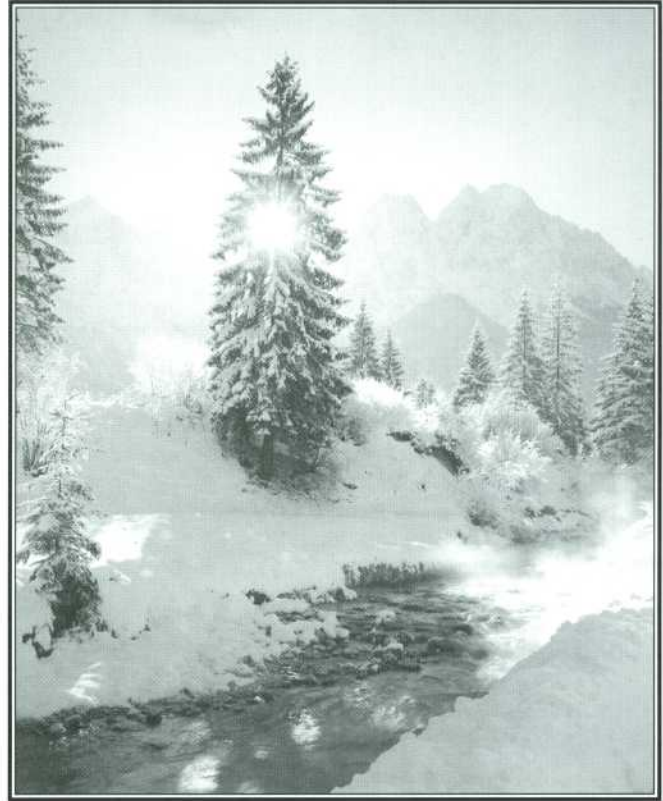
## Set Right

*What have I done with this life of mine,  
This life God gave to me?  
What have I done with His gift of speech,  
These eyes with which I see?*

*What have I heard with these ears of mine  
Of good and set it free?  
What have I done as I've gone my way,  
What have I done with me?*

*How have I succored the ones in need,  
How have I spent the years?  
How many times have I brought home smiles,  
How many times caused tears?*

*Father, forgive me when I have failed,  
Help me to set things right;  
And let me leave the record clean—  
My heart might stop tonight.*



## Very PERSONAL

*(Continued from page 2)*

Who naturally wants to have his secret thoughts disclosed to the world? But for the Christian there should be no reluctance. There is no more important step in the Christian life than the shifting of our thoughts to the topics Paul lists.

Again, we frequently sin with our lips. Words are, of course, the expression of our thoughts. That is why David, aware of the danger of ill-advised words, prayed: "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips!" (Ps. 141:3, RSV).

And no one was ever more explicit than James: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity" (James 3:5-6).

Who can seriously contemplate these warnings without realizing how easily we can—and do—sin against God and our fellow men by the things we say.

And we are no less responsible for what we do. Just read Paul's category of evil actions in Galatians 5:19-21,

and realize how far short we fall naturally of being what God wants. Paul's description may seem shocking, but this is what we are naturally. We are not filled with joy, peace and Christian love until we put forth the effort and make the change. Here again is Christianity, looking at us inside out. Very personal.

The Christian life is a day to day battle with our thoughts, words, and deeds, putting down the old nature, exalting the new. There is no need to try fooling ourselves. God searches our hearts, and He knows just what we are. Before Him we all stand or fall, just as we are. Here again we have something to think about. Very personal.

But there is another side we want to remember, and that is what God is offering. Christ-like living was never designed to be its own reward. For all that we do, God has promised to reward us a hundred, a thousand, a million fold. And that reward will be *very personal*. If I am worthy, it will be *my* joy, *my* happiness, *my* honor, *my* life! It will be more than eye has ever seen, more than ear has ever heard, and more than has ever entered into the heart to imagine or conceive (I Cor. 2:9). And it will be *my very own—forever*.

Aren't we thankful it is just that personal? □

## When God Sees Otherwise

*They would have hailed Christ King, and with acclaim  
Upon the wings of His far-reaching fame  
Have swept the land like a devouring flame;  
But God saw otherwise!*

*It seemed as if His life had gone for nought,  
Nothing to show for that long battle fought  
But a pale prisoner to the gibbet brought;  
But God saw otherwise!*

*No lasting good seemed ever like to come  
Of all His sowing—neither fruit nor bloom,  
Instead, a felon's cross, an alien tomb;  
But God saw otherwise!*

*We, too, at times, come nigh to lose our hope,  
When with life's toils it seems we cannot cope,  
And in the dark with heavy hearts we grope;  
But God sees otherwise!*