

Megiddo Message

*W*hile one very early morning
I was walking on the shore
Where the breakers splash retreatment
from the fury of their roar,
I was halted in my musing
by some footprints on the beach—
Mute but circumstantial witness,
with a lesson they could teach.

*S*omeone earlier had been there;
and the surf had not effaced
Tracks their feet had left in strolling,
marking clearly where they paced.
Yes, 'twas futile to make issue
with these marks upon the shore—
I was not the first to go there,
someone else had gone before!

*A*ll creation is a witness:...

(Continued inside)



ootprints

How Much Is It Worth?

In His parable of the Pounds, also the parable of the Talents, Jesus represents Himself as a rich nobleman who is about to depart on a long journey. Since this is before the days of banks, or brokerage houses, or savings and loan associations, this nobleman must find someone to care for his money while he is away. Calling his servants, he entrusts each one with the care of a portion of his estate, along with this commission, "Occupy till I come."

The nobleman leaves. Now each servant has a decision to make: What will he do with the share of his master's property that is in his hand?

There are several possibilities. He can spend it on himself and take his chances—his lord said he would be gone a *long* time—(how will his lord ever know what happened to it?). Or he can take his lord's money, wrap it up carefully, and bury it—keep it very, very safe—against the day of his lord's return. Or, using the trust as capital, he can invest it, put it to work making more capital, so that on the day of reckoning he can return it to its owner with profit.

This parable illustrates both the opportunity and the responsibility of each of Christ's followers. Like the servants in the parable, each of us is holding in our hands some amount of treasure that belongs to our Lord. Call it talents or pounds, He has entrusted it to our care. This trust includes, for each of us, our abilities, our energies, our bits of knowledge, our mental and physical strength, *our very life itself*. The use we make of this trust is entirely *our* responsibility.

What is the commission from our Lord? "*Occupy till I come.*"

"Occupy." Invest the money, put it to work, let it grow to the fullest of its potential. Let it increase, develop, multiply.

What are we doing, you and I, with our trust? Just what is the value of this trust we

hold from our Lord—what of its potential? Have we thought about it? Have we measured its worth *and what it can become in our hand?*

At present it may seem so ordinary, but it is not. It is the gift of life and all that we have.

Our time for holding this trust is limited. Our occupancy here is only temporary... "*till I come.*" But let us not sell short the magnitude of the opportunity because it is brief. *Eternal potential is bound up in this trust*, out of all proportion to its appearance. We might compare it to the energy stored in a single atom, or the power in a bolt of lightning.

Only one talent.

Only one pound.

Only one little life—but what potential! What opportunity! For in this talent, this pound, this life is everything we need to secure for ourselves wealth unmeasured, blessings unnumbered, and life unlimited. And all by making the right use of this little trust from our Lord!

Think of it! We can take this trust—this life of ours—and spend it on ourselves, seeking all the selfish pleasure and joy we can glean—and prove untrue to our great Benefactor. Or we can try—in vain—to preserve it, to keep it safe against the day of our Lord's return. Or we can "occupy," use our time as capital, invest it in the activities He endorses, making more and more of our opportunities in His cause, so that we have something to show for the use we have made of God's property.

The decision is ours. If we are true to our Lord, if we use our "talent" to build the priceless character of holiness He regards, if we use it to multiply deeds of patience, kindness, humility, holiness, and every virtue that He loves, then, on the day of His return, what a large package we will have to present to Him!

(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 who live 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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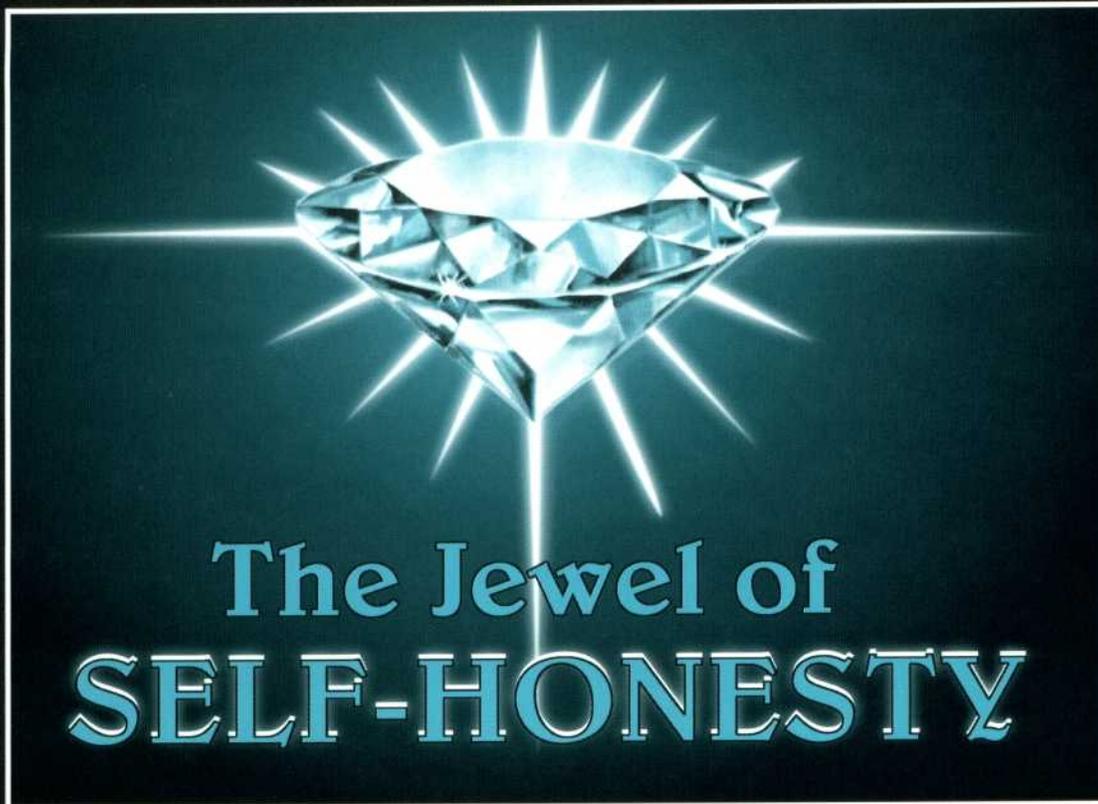
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Failures in self-honesty," says a noted psychotherapist, "are at the root of almost every emotional and mental disturbance."

Every American applauds the honesty that storekeeper Abraham Lincoln practiced when he trudged miles to return a customer's change. But this honesty toward others cannot compare in importance to being honest with ourselves.

Self-honesty is not easy to achieve, nor is it something we acquire overnight. It is something we must work for, something that requires deep desire and an incessant probing of our inner thoughts and motives.

We tend to equate self-honesty with self-condemnation. But genuine self-honesty includes an appraisal of bad *and* good. We need to recognize our inner weaknesses in order to correct them; we need also to recognize our possibilities that we may develop them.

If we are truly Christians, we are Christ's representatives upon earth. We are not promised a smooth, easy road to travel, but "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The ultimate test

of character comes with trouble and reverses.

At other times, we find ourselves in trouble because the trouble is in us. The tendency is to blame someone else. But it does no good to pull the bedcovers over our heads and hope the trouble will go away, because it won't. However, if the trouble is in us, so is the solution.

Self-honesty is rare, as we are forcefully reminded by the Prophet in Jer. 17:9, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*"

God has always demanded a difference in the conduct, the conversation, the thoughts, the life, and the aspirations of His people as contrasted with the people around them.

To please God, the Christian's pleasures and recreations must meet the test of I Cor. 10:31, "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*"

If we would avoid sharing this world's destiny, we must avoid being conformed to it.

Unbelievers quickly detect the inconsistency of those who profess to belong to God but whose conduct, conversation, and ideals belie their profession.

Self-knowledge Is Vital

A mature self-knowledge can be very revealing and also rewarding. Let us ask ourselves:

Am I harboring jealous, angry or envious thoughts?

Am I carrying old grudges, resentments and ill-will?

Does the pathway of my life seem too narrow and restricted?

Do I take questionable liberties with the freedoms granted me?

Do I disregard established principles with the excuse that God is not so particular?

Would I be willing to share my inmost thoughts and desires with every godly one?

Do I take God into all my plans, however small they may be?

If we give these questions our candid consideration, we may be surprised at the results.

The strain of modern life makes inner reserves of faith and courage, stability and endurance critically necessary.

The secret of inner serenity is magnanimity. Such nobleness of soul enables one to bear trouble calmly, to disdain meanness and revenge, to sacrifice for worthy ends, and to live consistently above all that is low and ungenerous.

Said a minister, "It's amazing how much good can be done in this world if one does not care who gets the credit." But the trouble is, most often we *do* care. To be willing to turn over all credit to God is a virtue that must be cultivated, for it goes against the natural grain of our ego. There are few human hungers stronger than the hunger for approval and recognition. But let us remember, the greatest reward will be given for the task done willingly and well — for God.

It is not easy to take a good, searching look at ourselves and accept what we find there. But to the earnest Christian, self-honesty is more than a formula for temporal success or advantage—it is the way to eternal life.

"If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have

By genuine self-honesty we see our inner weaknesses and correct them.

rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

So wrote St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 6:3-4). When this Apostle could not visit the people to whom he had preached and who were so dear to him, he wrote letters when there was need. And as there seemed to be much need, he became a great letter writer. In these letters he discusses many important matters engaging and disturbing the minds of the infant churches.

One of the chief appeals of these Epistles is in the way they disclose Paul's feelings and sentiments and the character of his own heart. He opens his soul to his converts with a beautiful and trustful simplicity. But does he spare himself? Indeed not; he is perfectly frank to blame himself, when there is cause. With shame he remembers the days when his fanaticism drove him to deeds of torture and blood, while he verily thought he was doing God service. He says: "*I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God*" (I Cor. 15:9). Again he says: "*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*" (I Tim. 1:12-13).

How tender Paul is in the little Epistle to Philemon, when pleading for the servant Onesimus: "*Now I want to ask a favor of you. I could demand it of you in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do, but I love you and prefer just to ask you—I, Paul, an old man*

now, here in jail for the sake of Jesus Christ. My plea is that you show kindness to my child Onesimus, whom I won to the Lord while here in my chains. Onesimus (whose name means "Useful") hasn't been of much use to you in the past, but now he is going to be of real use to both of us. I am sending him back to you, and with him comes my own heart. I really wanted to keep him here with me while I am in these chains for preaching the Good News, and you would have been helping me through him, but I didn't want to do it without your consent. I didn't want you to be kind because you had to but because you wanted to. Perhaps you could think of it this way: that he ran away from you for a little while so that now he can be yours forever, no longer only a slave, but something much better—a beloved brother" (Phile. 1:8-16, TLB).

Did anyone ever rejoice more than Paul? His Epistle to the Philippians runs to a high note of exultation; and yet it was written in a Roman jail. And a Roman jail bore no resemblance to our modern prisons, with their spacious and airy recreation rooms and attractive grounds. A Roman jail was a filthy and pest-ridden hole in the ground, totally unfit for a human being. While he was there, he wrote to his beloved Philippians. Near the close of the Epistle, he is so abounding in the joy of his position that he breaks forth exultantly, "*Rejoice in the Lord alway*" (Phil. 4:4). Then, as if thinking of it for a moment and realizing that nothing better than that could be said, he repeats it: "*Again I say, Rejoice.*" What an example!

How are we to reconcile Paul's law of rejoicing with Christ's law of self-denial? Jesus so emphasized the principle of self-renouncement that it became one of His characteristic sayings, the inmost principle of His message. He said in Luke 9:23-24, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*"

The term self-denial is misleading to some. God never asks us to deny ourselves of one good thing; only of those things which are detrimental. As human beings, each of us is something like a building under construction. The foundation of our being is the animal life. These are all the appetites and desires, the animal instincts and propensities which form the substratum of our natural existence. On this foundation of animal instincts and passions is reared the structure of the intellectual faculties, and this structure constitutes our being—rational and self-determining. And—*“thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,”*—this is not all. Above these faculties, and developed from them, we may add the qualities which make one a spiritual being, and which differentiate between the Christian and every other man of this world. On this highest level are the conscience educated by the Word of God, moral insight, and reverence. When fully developed, the result is *“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”* And we are assured that *“against such there is no law.”* For *“they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Gal 5:22–24). This, then, constitutes the human being; the animal foundation; the intellectual superstructure; and, above all, the spiritual faculties as the crown and finishing touch.

Self-denial is losing in the lower ranges of life for the sake of gaining in the higher ranges. It is subordinating the physical for the sake of the intellectual and spiritual; it is refusing the lower for the worth and joy of the higher. It is, to repeat Christ’s own words, losing one’s life that he may find it. It is giving up something inferior that he may find what is of inestimably greater value. Even apart from religion, it is a course that should be pursued to attain success. We see this law verified every day. The great writers call our attention to it. One expressed it thus: *“Everything cries out to us that we must renounce.”* And another voiced the general experience when he said, *“All fine acquirement implies a fore-*

Self-denial is refusing the lower for the worth and joy of the higher.

going exercise of self-control.”

That is self-denial. The mind and affections must be so bent upon the attainment of the higher that the lower is subordinated; not with regret but with joy. That was what Jesus did. The matchless Epistle to the Hebrews says of Him that He, *“for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb. 12:2). He refused the lower for the higher.

Paul denied himself. It is not to be supposed he enjoyed being estranged from his own countrymen, being shipwrecked, beaten on the bare back by a brutal Roman soldier until the blood ran, and then thrust into a vile prison or confined in the public stocks, stoned and left for dead, accounted as the offscouring of all creation, and hunted as a pestilent disturber of public order. But he endured it, and even came to glory in his tribulations, because he was satisfied that he was losing the present only to gain fullness of life—eternal life. The things that were gain to him he counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. He was losing, and yet

Self-honesty is more than a formula for temporal success—it is the way to eternal life.

he was not, for nothing is really a loss that is renounced for something a thousandfold better.

We abstain from certain foods that injure us, because health is better than indulgence of appetite. Or we break some unwholesome or dominating habit because we place a higher value upon freedom than upon any gratification the habit may give us. We lose the enslaving habit, but we gain mental and moral liberty; and so the apparent loss is not loss at all, but gain. Self-denial is not the loss of anything essential to one’s real self, to true manhood and womanhood, or to genuine joy.

Not content to dwell in the lower, the animal nature, nor yet in the mere intellectual, he who would master self will mount to the highest rooms, as it were, where the windows are opened out toward the stars and the clear heaven of beauty and truth, and there he will find that perfect peace which passes understanding.

And what is the instrument by which the separation between the lower and the higher nature is accomplished? It is *“the word of God,”* which *“is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb. 4:12). This powerful *“sword of the spirit”* will enable us to cut away and destroy the lower or animal propensities to make room for the higher life of the inner man.

In concluding the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul admonishes us that *“in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God”* (Gal. 6:15–16). He had accomplished the work, and he says: *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”* This Word of God had become indelibly inscribed in his forehead so that it could not be effaced. Therefore he could say with confidence: *“Let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body”* (Gal. 6:17, Moffatt). □

Don't Be Difficult!

"That's the last straw!" I thought, as I heard two of our children antagonizing each other for what seemed like the thousandth time, and for no apparent reason! They just seemed to delight in irking one another. How could I make them understand how *selfish* they were being? Why... why, they were being just plain *difficult!*

There it was—that word *difficult*. I'd heard it before somewhere. As the children's play resumed in a congenial manner, my mind went back to a certain Sunday, and I could hear our pastor saying gently what danger there was of *husband* and *wife* being "difficult" with one another in the home.

I sat down, chagrined. How right he was! How many times had I said or done something, knowing full well it would irk my husband, even sometimes doing it deliberately? Or, being irked myself, responded with anger? How many times had I declared "cold war" over some petty thing my husband was completely unaware of? and then, being asked about it, refused to tell why without making a cat-and-mouse game of it. Now *that*, I decided, was being just plain difficult, if anything was! And, I forced myself

to admit, it was just plain *childish!* And, yes, *very* unchristian.

Then it hit home, and with full force. How could I expect to teach my children to get along without providing the right example myself? "O God," I prayed, "help me never to be difficult again!"

And so it is our desire to eliminate "being difficult" from our home. There are so many ways of squelching it. We can all try to be easier to live with by putting other family members first. We don't have to have our own

way all the time. We don't have to display a superior attitude, thinking so much of our own opinion that we barely listen to the rest of the family. And we absolutely *have* to cut down on fault-finding!

It's going to be a big task for all of us, I know. But success means a happier (and more peaceful) home life, and some real additions to our Christian character growth!

Won't you join us, and weed out the "difficulty" in *your* home?

Please—don't be difficult! □

Self-Denial Week

This year, the week of February 5 will be the annual observance of Self-Denial Week for the Megiddo Church congregation and all who wish to observe it with us.

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

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

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

A Privilege and A Condition

When Jesus gave His disciples the right of petition and taught them to pray, He put into their hands a signed, blank check on the unlimited Bank of Almighty God. With His infinite wisdom He established the conditions: *IF...*

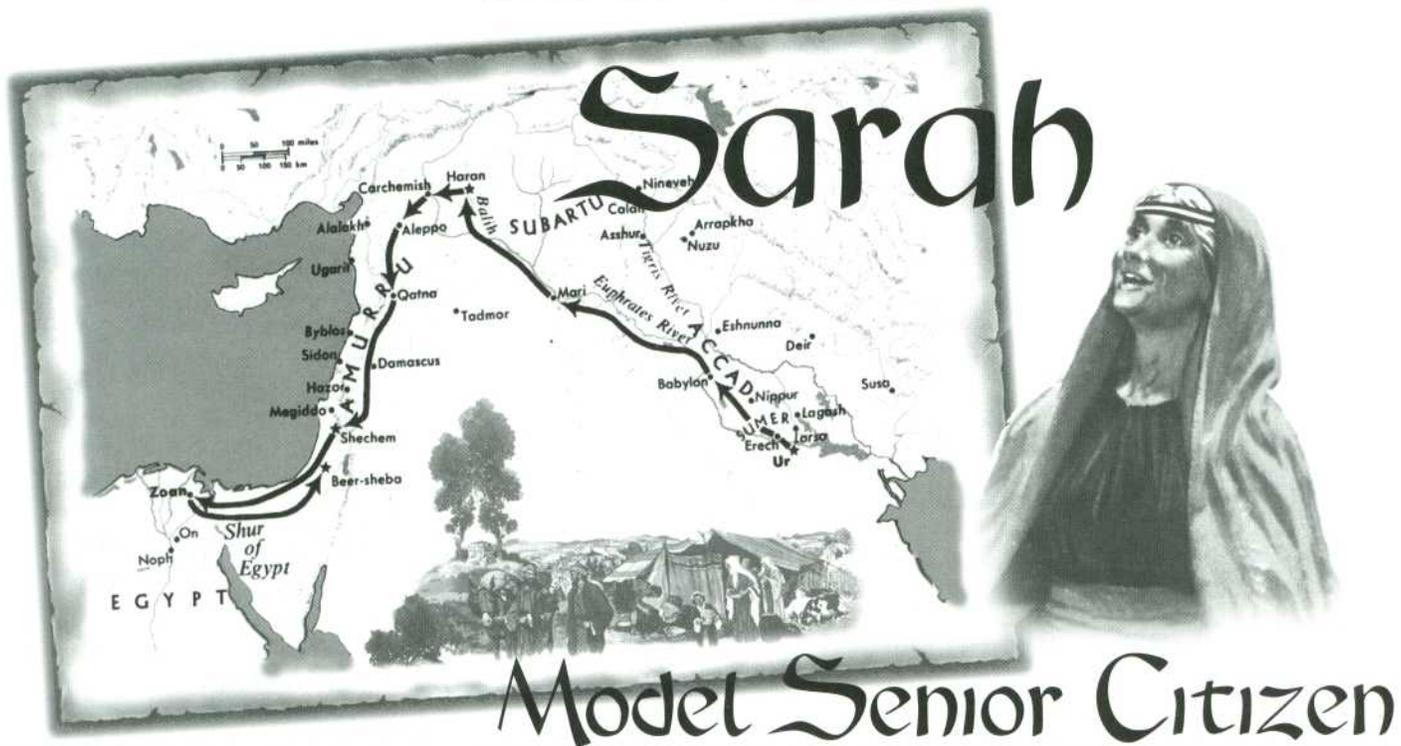
"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

If we live in Him and His words guide our every thought and act, we will be a different person in every way and our petitions will be unselfish; they will be for the good of ourselves and others, and for the glory of God.



Sarah

Model Senior Citizen

no one likes to think of aging. Images of gray hair, wrinkles, brittle bones, and illness do not delight us.

But how about some other words, like developing, perfecting, advancing? These suggest larger horizons, hope, improvement—a positive and inviting picture.

Developing, perfecting, advancing—these describe Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Almost everything that we know about Sarah was from the time of her life when she was a senior citizen. And if we may judge, Sarah did a masterful job of tackling life and coping with change through advancing years.

Since aging is a problem that affects all of us soon or late, let us see what we can learn from Sarah.

On the Way...

When we first hear of her, Sarah had already surmounted a major life crisis. Doubtless her parents were people of distinction in the city of Ur, and when she and Abraham married and set up housekeeping there, it is most likely that they thought they would be there the rest of their lives. Ur was at that time a distinguished metropolitan center for culture and commerce, and whoever was fortunate

enough to be able to live there would find little reason to leave. Besides, moving in those days was just about unheard of. For this was 2,000 years before Christ, and there were no smooth highways or moving vans as we know them today.

Why did Abraham and Sarah leave Ur? Was it Sarah's idea? Not at all. It was a command from the Lord to Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

When that command came, Sarah knew that pleading with her husband to stay in Ur would be wasted breath. For him, the Word of the Lord was first, last, and foremost. Immediately they began preparations to leave—and there was something to leave, for Ur offered the finest civilization of the time—comforts unknown in the rural areas. We can easily picture them with a pleasant home, many servants, possibly even the sophistication of running water and central heat—not to mention Sarah's family and friends. Leaving Ur was not easy.

But they left, along with Abram's aged father Terah, and his young nephew Lot. We read that they "went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there" (Gen. 11:31). It is very possible that Terah, being elderly, did not feel able to travel further. So the family decided to settle temporarily in Haran.

But Haran was not Canaan, so after Terah died, Abram and Sarah, with Lot, traveled on. The command of the Lord had to be obeyed fully.

When they left Haran, the Bible tells us that Abram was 75 years old. This means that Sarah was 65—already a senior citizen by our definitions. Again, it was not an easy move. Leaving Ur was one step, leaving family, friends and familiar surroundings to trek 500 miles across a hot, arid desert. But leaving Haran was yet another step, for Haran, though not like Ur, was a comfortable community.

Canaan, the land God had directed them to reach, was largely wilderness. Sarah could not help wondering: Would she be living in a tent the rest of her life? For a younger woman, camping out might have sounded exciting, but at 65...?

Many people today in their 60's and 70's find that they have to sell their homes and move into smaller living quarters. Some seem never to recover from the loss. One resident of a retirement home told how she prepared herself for the transition. She determined that this was the right move for her, and that she would make the most of it. On a day-to-day basis she made up her mind to stay on top of her situation by setting new goals. This lady had two advantages over Sarah—she knew where she was going, and she made the decision herself. Sarah did neither. Imagine trying to cope with that!

Apparently Sarah was adaptable, and willing to accept the change. She deserves credit for this, because—as most of us know—flexibility is not an automatic characteristic. We have to develop it; Sarah had to develop it.

Adaptable...

Sarah showed her strength by being willing to set aside her will for another's. How could she do it? Because her real security was in God, not in the place she lived, and not even in her husband. Peter tells us that Sarah was among the pious women of old who "set their hopes on God" (I Pet. 3:5, Goodspeed). With her hope in God, she could be content *whatever* the circumstances. And when one had to live in tents, that was saying something!

To be adaptable, we must check our values. We must not be tied to *things*. This was a lesson Sarah learned very, very well as they relocated from place to place, again and again. We can also imagine that there were many lessons to be learned in working with the servants. In spite of her patient instructing, common tasks which any wealthy mistress would normally want to be done "my way" were often done *another way*—and Sarah learned to take it graciously and gratefully. After all, she herself was a servant of the Most High God, was she not?

Learning to accept change brings contentment. Inflexibility and resistance breed unhappiness.

Some people, too, cannot stop thinking about what they leave behind at the different stages of life. Was Sarah that way? No, Sarah was forward-looking. She didn't let her mind dwell on the "good old days" back in Ur, or even in Haran. Nor did she complain about having to give up family and friends. The writer to the Hebrews gives us this instructive insight into the character of those among whom she stands:

"All these persons died in faith. They were not yet in possession of the things promised, but had seen them far ahead and hailed them, and confessed themselves no more than strangers or passing travellers on earth. Those who use such language show plainly that they are looking for a country of their own. If their hearts had been in the country they had left, they could have found opportunity to return. Instead, we find them longing for a better country—I mean, the heavenly one. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. 11:13-16, NEB). Sarah accepted her life and her situation as God's appointment for her, because her hope was in God and in the glorious future He had promised.

Steady Faith...in God

Even so, Sarah's life was not without complications. At one point she faced a multiple crisis: a famine in Canaan, a hasty escape to Egypt, a temporary residence in Pharaoh's house (Gen. 12:10-20). Could she at this point even recall what a quiet, settled home life was like? Still, she retained her solid, godly dignity, her hope fixed in God.

Doubtless Sarah's husband was a strong buttress to faith, and his example of reverence a pattern to copy. But Sarah did not depend on her husband for faith. *She made his faith her own*. She applied her own mind to believing the Word of the Lord, and obeying it implicitly. And so through the ups and downs of life she had her own faith to steady her. We know, because Sarah is commended as a woman of great faith. Well she knew that the very best of this world can disappoint or defeat us. That is why it is so important for each of us to secure our own faith in God. We cannot succeed by another's

virtue. We will not be approved for another's goodness, however close they may be to us.

If Sarah's horizon had begun and ended with her husband's faith, her life could have been shattered at any point. But with her faith anchored in Abraham's *God*, she could keep going.

Second, Sarah refused to panic. Peter addresses the women of his time, inviting them to be Sarah's daughters-in-the-faith. The one condition: "Let nothing terrify you" (I Pet. 3:6, TCNT). "Permit nothing to make you afraid" (Mondale). Women are naturally more fearful than men. And fear, always a menace, is often intensified in old age. As we lose

As long as God permits us the use of our minds, we can meditate, we can pray, we can learn, we can grow.

some of our strength and confidence (real or imagined), we become more subject to fear. The Psalmist had both the problem and the solution: "Do not reject me now I am old, nor desert me now my strength is failing" (Ps. 71:9, JB). What was his source of strength? "Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for: thou art my hope, even from my youth" (v. 5).

We have only short sketches from widely separated intervals in Sarah's life. But the next sketch is another crisis, while waiting for God to work. God had promised Abram and Sarah a son, yet year after year went by, and they were both getting older, and still there was no child. Finally, at Sarah's suggestion, Abraham had a child by Hagar her maid, for said Sarah, "It may be that I may obtain children by her" (Gen. 16:2). Apparently they had no direct word from the Lord, and Sarah felt this might be His plan.

The child of Abraham and Hagar did figure into the plan of God, and Sarah accepted God's will. But the situation that resulted was not a pleasant one, and we can be sure it provided Sarah with many opportunities to grow. How easily she might have become sorrowful and fretful—even hateful. For Hagar was not loving, not even respectful.

*Let the bright
anticipation of future
glory make every task
a joy, and every
sacrifice a delight.*

The problem of Hagar was a sore trial, and did not improve with time. So one day Sarah advised Abraham to cast out Hagar and her son from the house (Genesis 21). Abraham did not want to, but God supported Sarah's decision and Abraham cooperated. The apostle Paul picks up this incident in Galatians 4 (vs. 22-30) and uses it as the subject of an allegory of God's two covenants, one from Mt. Sinai (the Mosaic law) and one from "Jerusalem which is above" (the law of Christ); the first bringing bondage and the second, freedom. "What does the scripture say? 'Cast out the slave woman....'"

Happy Motherhood...at 90.

Thirteen years went by after the birth of Ishmael, and Sarah, now 90 years of age, must surely have given up hope. But one day, without warning, God's angel appeared, repeating the promise: "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him....My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year" (Gen. 17:19, 21).

At last Sarah's time had come! In her 90th year, Sarah was to become

indeed the mother of the faithful! It was almost more than she could believe. But Hebrews 11:11 tells us, "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past age, since she considered him faithful who had promised." Here Sarah is given the credit for her faith.

What an experience it must have been, and what faith and patience she needed to rear a child at an advanced age. (Can you imagine a 90-year-old chasing a toddler?)

But we can be sure Sarah was determined to keep growing. She was the servant of God, and willing to cooperate with Him at every age and stage of her life.

We can all learn from Sarah, noble Sarah, godly Sarah. At every age, there is still more that we can learn, and more that we can do in the service of God. How do we know what service God may yet have reserved for us? If Sarah could be serving God in her old age, why not we?

And can we not imagine that as she lived with Abraham and saw his great faith and devotion to God she grew in spiritual sensitivity and discernment? For surely she shared her husband's profound reverence for God, more and more as the years went by.

Advancing age is no reason to stop growing. The Psalmist wrote of the righteous, that they shall "flourish like the palm tree and grow like the



cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bring forth fruit in old age, they are ever full of sap and green" (Ps. 92:12-14, RSV). As long as God permits us the use of our minds, we can meditate, we can pray, we can learn, we can grow. We can—and we must.

Sarah, dynamic senior citizen, her life filled with change, uncertainty, challenge—and triumph! She didn't shrivel up and wait to die but lived fully, even to the advanced age of 127.

And as we read the name of Sarah in that heavenly hall of fame, let us repaint in our minds a bright picture of her faith. Of all such we read, "Observe how they closed a well-spent life, and copy their faith" (Heb. 13:7, Berkeley).

We cannot expect to reach the age of 127 but we can make the most of every day God grants us. And if everything in our lives is not to our liking, we probably do not yet have it as difficult as Sarah had it with Hagar. Still we can dedicate every breath, every heartbeat, every waking moment to God. Then we shall be able to share the assurance from God which was voiced by the prophet Isaiah: "In your old age I shall be still the same, when your hair is gray I shall still support you" (Isa. 46:4, JB).

Sarah knew the price of sacrifice and suffering, even in advancing years. But as far as we know, she never lost her radiant faith, the kind of faith that generates solid hope and confidence in God.

What shall be the final outcome of such a life? Again Isaiah provides the answer: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.... for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 40:31; 11:9).

Abraham and Sarah saw the great Day of the Lord afar off. For us it is very near. Even if it be our lot to suffer the limitations of age, let the bright anticipation of future glory make every task a joy, and every sacrifice a delight. For we share Sarah's hope! □

No Time to Retire

Our twentieth century style of living has come to associate a certain age with retirement. The harsh demands of the productive workplace are more easily handled by younger minds and bodies.

But from our Christian obligation God offers no retirement plan. There is no point in life when we can say that our duty is done, that now we can relax and be free of care and responsibility. Our work for Christ is a calling from which there is no retirement. Jesus said it simply: *"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matt. 24:13).

Far from offering retirement plans, God has even been known to give out some hefty, late-life assignments.

Our minds turn to Abraham and Sarah. We also have known a few centenarians, but they weren't raising a family. But when the Lord gave the task, we can be sure that He gave also the strength to see it through.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were another couple, *"well stricken in years,"* when the Lord gave them a very large and very special assignment: Elisabeth was to have a child. Zacharias could hardly believe it—a child at *their* age? But Zacharias and Elisabeth were just the parents God wanted for John, the forerunner of Jesus. Again, God gave the task and the strength.

Moses was another who received a tremendous assignment at an age when many people are content with a rocking chair. At the age of 80,

God called him to lead a rebellious and hard-headed horde of Israelites out of Egypt. The mere thought overwhelmed him at first. But he became God's willing servant, and God provided the strength. Even when Moses died, forty years later at the age of 120, we read that *"his eye was undimmed, his vigor unimpaired"* (Deut. 34:7, JB). The original Hebrew must suggest that he did not have the normal signs of aging. Other translations read that *"the skin of his cheeks was not wrinkled,"* or *"his teeth were unmoved,"* or *"his freshness had not fled."* God equipped him for the task.

Samuel enjoyed a long and useful life in God's service, right through into old age. Even after the nation rejected him and demanded a king, God still had work for him to do—to anoint the new king, then to act as his spiritual advisor—as far as Saul would be advised. This must have been a disheartening task for the aged man of God, but all he could do was his best.

No doubt the apostle John thought his career was about over when he was banished to lonely Patmos. Little did he know the spectacular assignment Christ had yet for him. And when the light of the vision had faded, John had still to complete the writing, make copies of it (without the aid of modern duplicators), send the copies to the various Churches—and await their enthusiastic response.

Apparently God does not plan a relaxed, leisurely retirement for His seniors. As long as we have life and

strength, there is work to be done. Jesus, in His letter to the Church at Smyrna, wrote, *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10). There was no plan for a time of leisure, especially in that age of active persecution. The command was to be faithful—all the way to the end.

The apostle Paul, even with his outstanding record, was concerned about finishing well. When parting from his brethren at Ephesus, he expressed the concern closest to his heart: *"that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus"* (Act 20:24).

We are not to rest on past victories but to serve God "all our days." "All" leaves no time for fretting, regretting or disillusionment.

He knew also that after he left, *"grievous wolves"* would *"enter in among [them], not sparing the flock. Also of [their] own selves [would] men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (vs. 29–30). For this reason he wanted to do all he could to have them built up, strong in the faith.

The apostle Peter was another who labored intensely for his brethren right to the end of his life. In his Second Epistle he wrote, "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as

Pack this day full of good thoughts, right deeds and pure motives, and leave tomorrow with God.

our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (II Pet. 1:13-15). Besides finishing well him-

self, he was laboring for his brethren.

For Senior Success

As Christians we have a constant duty at all stages of life, our senior years not excepted. A speaker at a large gathering of retirees some months ago offered some outstanding thoughts on practical Christian living for seniors.

"Having just passed my 76th birthday," said the speaker, "I must think more honestly about living my retirement years. The process of growing old is so gradual. When did it happen?"

What can we do to improve the quality of our senior years?

First: Accept your age.

No one likes to grow old, but complaining will not change the facts. Neither will denying them. And do we like to talk about our age? Let's face it: No one wants to hear it. David's words are sufficient: "My

times are in thine hand"—his and ours.

If we live from day to day, thanking God for every hour, praising Him for every blessing in mercy granted, we will have no time or thought for complaints.

Second: Travel light.

We can help ourselves by getting rid of excess baggage, such as brooding over failures, disappointments, worries, losses, bitter feelings, and personal resentments. All such are outside the laws of human happiness, and are definitely outside the Law of God. We can never enter the Kingdom by dragging along old hurts. We all know people who do it—we may have done it ourselves. But where is the benefit to anyone?

Third: Live today, not tomorrow.

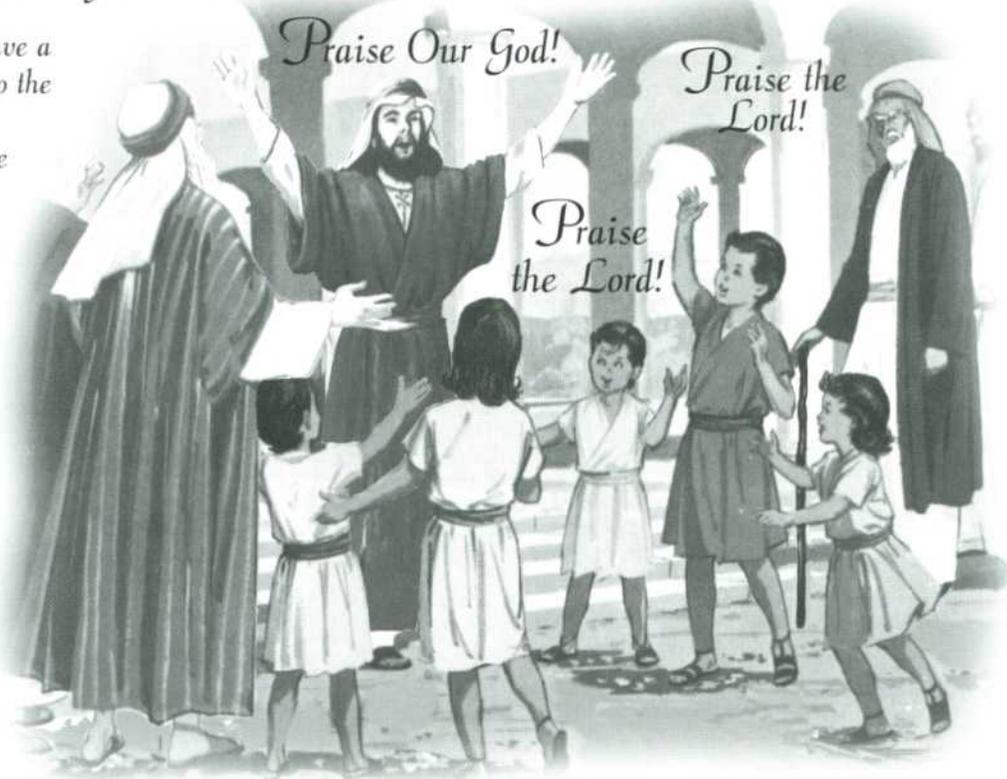
God in His kindness and wisdom has veiled the future from all of us. And we can be thankful. Fears of tomorrow can crush our ability to live

"One generation shall praise thy works to another."

Think what this means. We have a responsibility: to tell God's praises to the next generation. We must live in holiness and victory, and not become sour or disgruntled senior citizens.

The Bible says that the praises of God should be passed from one generation to the next. That means that the praises start with me. Shall I fail in my duty and break the link in the chain of praise?

God is depending on us to do our part to keep His praise ringing. Praise Him for His goodness, His righteousness and His truth. Praise Him for life, and strength, and hope. Let His praises ring!



effectively today. So why allow them to? The important thing is to *pack* this day full of good thoughts, right deeds and pure motives, and leave tomorrow with God.

Fourth: Don't forget God's Law of love.

Our greatest value to others—and to ourselves—lies in practicing what we believe. Read I Corinthians 13 and Romans 12 regularly, and never forget that *"Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient. Love never disappears"* (I Cor. 13:4-8, Moffatt).

Fifth: Be mature.

We tell the children to "Grow up!" but there may be times when we need to take the advice to ourselves. As we get older we find more and more that we cannot have our own way. We find we cannot get others to do things the way we would like them done—and we probably can't suit ourselves either! But why sulk about it? Why become blue and disagreeable? Why not rather take an unselfish view of our lives, be mature, and see our problems as our school lessons, training us in the skills of the higher life—preparing us to be angels!

Life is too short to be petty. These are great times to be alive. And they call for great living. And great living is possible only when we face our little problems with great courage and great faith.

Sixth: Develop your own resources.

Everyone likes *lifters* better than *leaners*. As we grow older it's only natural (and comfortable) to do a little more leaning. There will be times we have to lean. But as long as we are able, how about putting our heads to work figuring out some new ways to lift? Why not keep thinking and doing for ourselves—and others—in every way we can? Why not keep developing our own interests, creating our own projects,

making our own circle of usefulness. We can't expect others to suddenly start planning our lives for us—nor would we want them to. As long as we are able, we are made to think for ourselves.

Being resourceful means helping—not hindering—those around us. It also means being considerate. Our families and friends are busy people. They cannot do for us as much or as often as they—or we—would like. But why be sullen about it? Why complain? Why not rather be creative, making the most of our opportunities? We have to accept more and more limitations, but we do not have to stop thinking, and we must not stop growing—spiritually! Said the Psalmist about the elderly, as he compared them to trees: *"They shall bear fruit even in old age: vigorous and sturdy shall they be"* (Ps. 92:14, NAB).

Seventh: Do not allow a virtue to become a vice.

Jesus was critical of those whose goodness had become a ritual, stale, brittle and severe. In fact, Jesus' life was a campaign against tradition.

Jesus' faith was alive, robust, and sensitive. His righteousness had no scent of self about it. Neither should ours.

Isn't it true that sometimes we become more self-centered as we grow older? We can counter this tendency by picking up the spirit of the apostle Paul, which he wrote in his letter to the Philippians: *"If we have any common share in the spirit, if you have any tender heartedness and sympathy, fill up my cup of joy by living in harmony, by fostering the same disposition of love, your hearts beating in unison, your minds set on one purpose. Stop acting from motives of selfish strife or petty ambition, but in humility practice treating one another as your superiors. Stop looking after your own interests only but practice looking out for the interests of others too. Keep on fostering the same disposition that Christ Jesus had"* (Phil. 2:1-5, Williams). Whatever our immediate situation, we can think above it to the great God we serve and the place we are called to fill in His plan.

As we grow older, let us intensify our love, keep dreaming great dreams, looking ahead, keeping life fresh and vibrant, our minds set on our one purpose.

Eighth: Get ready to live!

Most elderly people are preparing to die—and it is not strange when they become victims of advancing years. But for the Christian, every day is a new opportunity to get ready for *real life!* This life is only the introduc-

Today is the first day of the rest of your life, so look up! Whatever days or years you have left, live to the fullest!

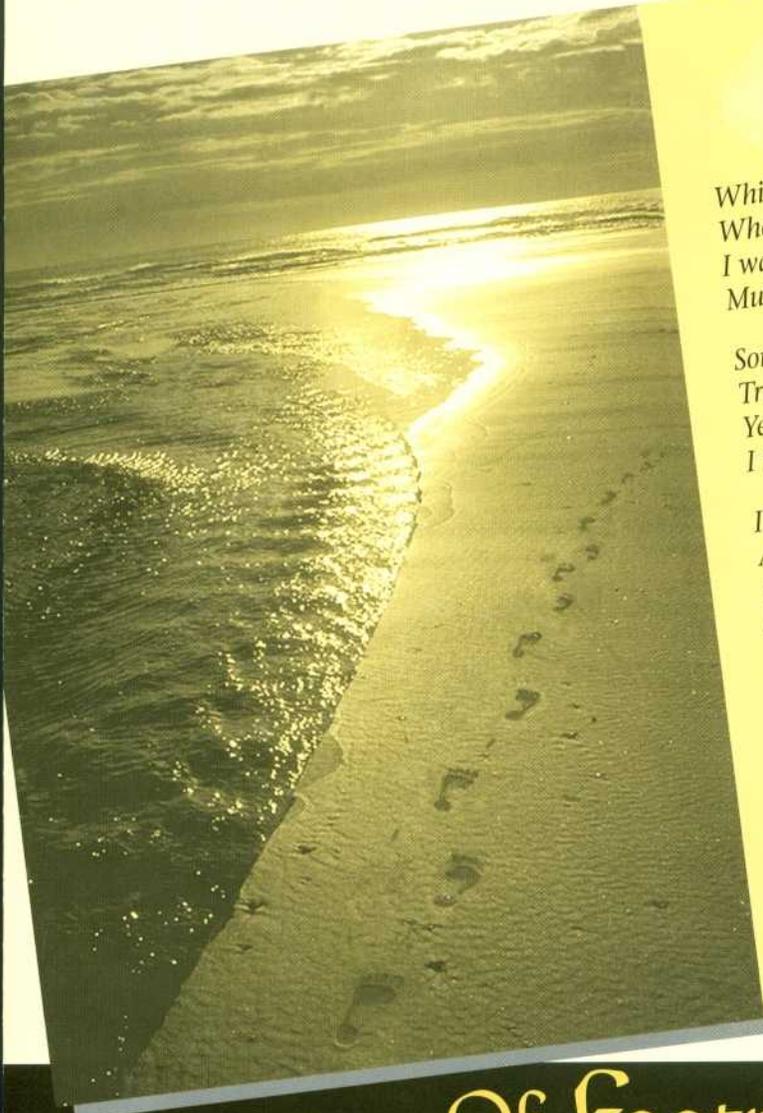
tion. And every added day is a fresh assurance from God of our ability to use the time granted us—or why would He give it?

Our challenge is to find every growing point that God has placed in this day and use it!

We have been privileged to live in the most thrilling century in the history of the world. No people has ever had so many temporal blessings as we. And no people has ever lived so near to the climax of the ages. No one has ever been closer to the coming of the Kingdom of God than we are this very moment.

Let us keep looking for ways to improve our standing before God. And at the same time, let us keep helping others, be useful and encouraging. Younger people need our support, our faith, and our example of Christ-like living—not just our criticisms or long comparisons with the way "we used to do it." (If we recall, we had our problems, too!).

What can equal the joy of knowing that we are pleasing God—so that He will grant us a place in His eternal Kingdom! □



Footprints

While one very early morning I was walking on the shore,
Where the breakers splash retreatment from the fury of their roar,
I was halted in my musing by some footprints on the beach—
Mute but circumstantial witness, with a lesson they could teach.

Someone earlier had been there; and the surf had not effaced
Tracks their feet had left in strolling, marking clearly where they paced;
Yes, 'twas futile to make issue with these marks upon the shore;
I was not the first to be there, someone else had gone before!

I could close my eyes and argue, but the footprints would remain!
All my wordage would be futile, and my efforts only vain;
You could call me stupid, foolish, and I'd have to judge you right,
Since the message of the footprints could be seen by day or night.

All creation is a witness: We are not the product of
Our inventiveness and genius. Earth about, and stars above
Testify of Someone greater, who preceded us and planned
The phenomena of nature. These attest—and faith demand!

Here is truth for all who reason, an analogy for those
Who are open to conviction and who do not faith oppose:
Someone trod here leaving footprints which the ravages of time
Have been futile at obscuring, giving evidence sublime.

Of Footprints and Faith

Footprints in the sand. Simple, visible evidence that someone passed this way before us.

A profound question? Not at all. Then why should it be so difficult to conclude when we look at the marvelous creation around us that there is a great Creator, Someone who was here before us?

Of course there is always the possibility that the footprints on the beach could have had another cause. One might imagine that the rippling ocean tide swirled upon the shore with just the right force, in just the right way, for just the right length of time, and moved the sands of a small area forming a slight depression at regular intervals, alternating in two parallel rows mile after mile along the beach. Ridiculous? Anyone who had ever seen tide and seashore would say immediately that the wash of the water could obliterate tracks in the sand. But it could never make them.

*Let the footprints upon
the shore speak to us of the
certainty of the work of God.*

But believing that the ocean's tide could make the appearance of footprints in the sand is far easier than to believe that the visible creation—the cosmic universe with all its galaxies, nebulae, stars and planets—to say nothing of all the millions of species of life on earth—could all come about by blind and undirected chance, or by some mass explosion many hundreds of billions of years ago. Is not even such a suggestion a clear insult to the unfathomable abilities of an Omnipotent Creator? If simple footprints upon the beach show evidence of someone walking there, do not the wonders throughout creation show evidence of Someone behind creation?

No one can rationally account for the origin of visible creation without a creator—any more than we can believe that footprints on the seashore were produced by something other than someone walking over the sand. But do we have to see the person walking on the

beach to believe that he or she was responsible for making those footprints? No more do we have to see the Creator to know that He is responsible for the existence of the vast creation.

Think, too, of the ability of the human mind to know, think, reason, plan and carry out its plans. It can invent and produce instruments by which we are able to acquire knowledge of our environment, knowledge of the vast universe, knowledge of the most minute particle. We have even discovered the existence of elements previously unknown (we did not make them!), and have learned how to combine elements to produce new and useful products.

But one fact remains: that we have not built, made, produced, or created anything wholly our own. We have only used materials which were here when we arrived, and which will remain after we are gone.

The Supreme Intelligence

Would we think for a moment that we could invent, make or build any products superior to ourselves in ability or intelligence? What an insult! But if we disallow the creative work of God, what else do we have? What do we know of that is superior to ourselves in intelligence or mental power? The answer is: Nothing. If no being can produce anything equal to or greater than itself, are we not forced to acknowledge that a supreme Creator produced us?—or else we must believe that something less than ourselves produced us! The only rational answer is to acknowledge our great Creator, to submit humbly to His authority, and recognize our trifling worth beside His supreme intelligence.

The notion of some people is that faith means believing something where the evidence is lacking. Faith is thought of in terms of blind acceptance.

Such is not the faith of the Bible. Bible faith stands upon knowledge (revealed facts). And more knowledge produces more faith. God does not ask us to believe something which is not supported by solid and visible fact. History is the assembled

testimony of witnesses who believed, and who nerve us to a like faith founded on evidence.

Unbelief is the voluntary closing of one's mind to evidence, not the absence of evidence. But evidence alone is not faith. It must be thought through, accepted and believed to produce faith.

Why the gross monster of unbelief today? The problem with many is that their god is not the living God who created the heavens and the earth. Their god is a traditional idea with which they are—or their parents were—comfortable. "My idol" of many moderns is the idea of god produced by their own minds, with which they are pleasantly at ease, and he is far, far from the disturbing God revealed in the Bible, who goads constantly to a loftier life and judges every one according to his works (Jer. 17:10; Rev. 22:14).

But we should not be shocked by the presence of unbelievers. Moses faced hordes of them. The Prophets confronted them. Jesus contended with them. Unbelief dies hard, even in the presence of unremitting evidence. If one can no longer say, "My idol did it," then the next response is likely to be, "I just don't know how it happened."

Think of the Israelites in the wilderness, witnessing miracles daily. Yet it is written of them that they "entered not in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19; 4:6). Or think of those who listened to Jesus during His three years of ministry. Yet when the believers assembled on the Day of Pentecost they numbered only 120.

The Apostle Paul was realistic about the problem of unbelief. It was the prime reason why the Jews were rejected as a nation, why their branch was broken off and the Gentiles were grafted in (Rom. 11:20-23).

We marvel that they were so stub-

born, so blind, so hard-hearted. Yet, if we look honestly at our own hearts, do we not see unbelief as our troubler again and again? What keeps us from a wholehearted allegiance to God? What keeps us from an overpowering enthusiasm to obtain the crown of eternal life? What hinders us from acknowledging our littleness and bowing in humility before the God of creation, willing to give up anything which He forbids, to do anything which He requires, if only we can obtain His mercy and favor?

Oh, the treachery of unbelief!

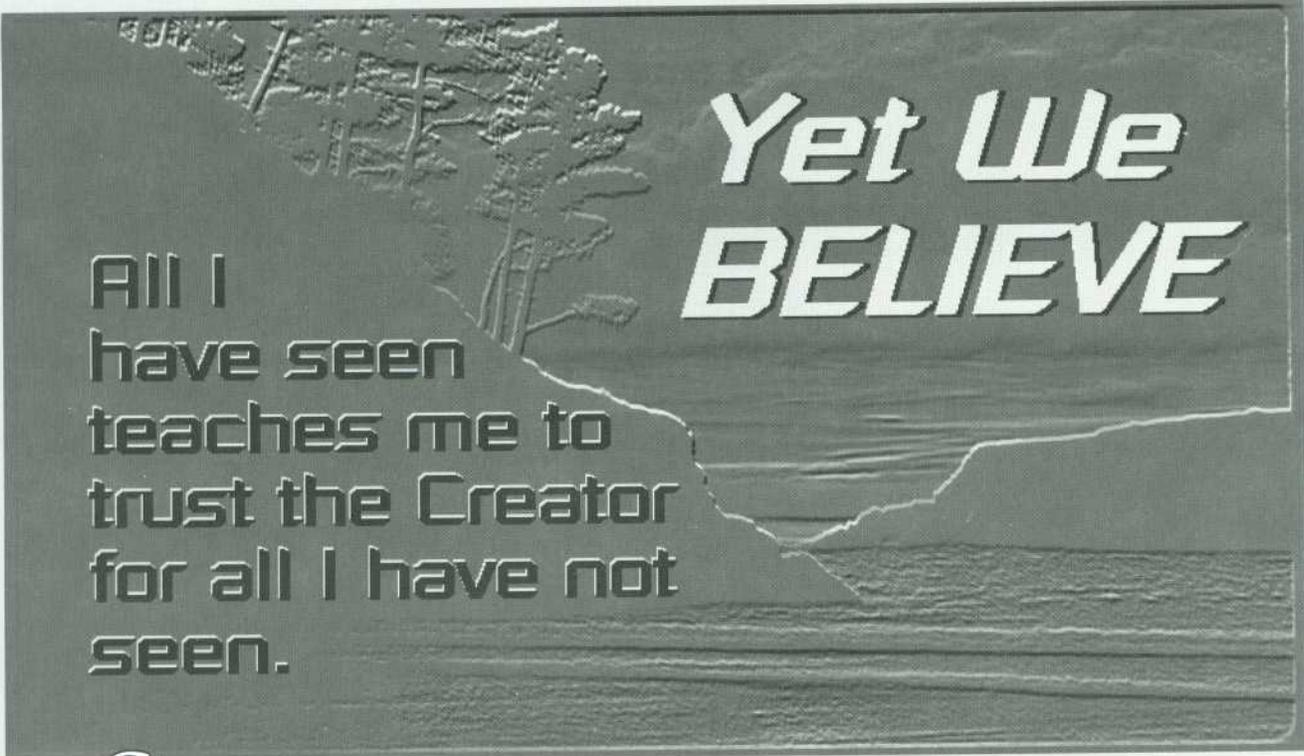
Let the footprints upon the shore speak to us of the certainty of the work of the God who placed us in the midst of all this marvelous creation. Just as the footprints tell us that someone has gone before us, let them speak to us in unmistakable terms that God is working, that He is supreme, and that in due time "the Lord will show his holy power to all the nations. Then everyone on earth will see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10, NCV).

When the time is right His promises will be fulfilled, whether we have chosen to believe or not. Our unbelief shall not delay the workings of Omnipotence. "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Num. 23:19, NIV).

Whether or not we believe matters not at all to the God of heaven; but it matters very very much to us. Why should we let ourselves be consumed by a monster of our own making? Poor little creatures of dust, what can we do against the Controller of the universe, against the matchless power and magnificent Intelligence that designed and created us? We can cooperate and prosper immeasurably—or we can break ourselves by opposing Him.

How much better to trust, to submit, to cooperate with the power that rules above us. How much better to approach Him with longing, loving, humble hearts, anxious to submit to His law, appreciate His beneficence, and be drawn into the sphere of His concern—where we can receive the blessings of His Fatherhood, world without end! □

Whether or not we believe matters not at all to the God of heaven; but it matters very very much to us.



All I
have seen
teaches me to
trust the Creator
for all I have not
seen.

Yet We
BELIEVE

Seeing is believing, at least most of the time.
But it is possible to believe *without* seeing.

In everyday life, we believe many things we do not see. We read in the newspaper about an event that took place on the other side of the world. We have not seen it, yet, unless we know something to the contrary, we believe the report.

Most of us have never seen the city of Tokyo, yet we believe that it exists.

We cannot physically see the cold germ which makes us wheeze and sneeze, but we would not feel any better to disbelieve that it is real.

We did not see George Washington, or Thomas Jefferson, or Abraham Lincoln, yet we believe that they were the founders of our country.

What does all this say to us? That factors *other than seeing* cause us to believe.

In everyday matters we are willing to trust the witness of other people, our own previous experience, the word of specialists in a field, or general information that has not been disputed. Other times, when something seems contrary to what we had previously thought, we demand more evidence, bonafide proven evidence.

We lay great stress on evidence, so great that almost never do we feel we have enough of it. In the courts of our nation, those who serve on juries quickly discover that decisions are never as simple as they seem from the outside. Invariably they wish for just one more piece of evidence to make it all clear. But if it were all that clear, the case probably would not have been brought to a jury.

Evidence demands evaluation and decision, and decisions are difficult. But they are our one means of dealing with missing bits and pieces of evidence which everyone wishes they had but no one has. They are a solution to the "if only" problems we confront over and over again, where we think that *if only* we had this or that additional fact, all would be clear.

This problem is even more critical in matters of religious faith. *If only* I could talk to an angel.... *If only* I could hear one word from heaven.... *If only* I could see one plank from Noah's ark—just one.... *If only* I could see one miracle, just one...or...I don't ask a lot, just a small "something"—anything to save me the trouble and trauma of walking entirely by faith.

The trouble is, God didn't plan it that way. Long ago God planned that we in this age would walk by faith. All miraculous evidence would be withdrawn and only three, "faith, hope, charity, these three" remain (Cor. 13:13).

But faith has been needed in every age. The author of the book of Hebrews recognized it. He even went so far as to say that *"without faith it is impossible to please [God]"* (Heb. 11:6). And how did he define faith? He said, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things that are seen?," No, *"Faith is ... the evidence of things not seen."* Faith is built not on what we see but on what we do *not* see. He then goes through a whole roster of heroic souls who ventured, made decisions, took heroic stands, and lived and died for God—not because the evidence was all in but *because their faith was all out*. If all had been perfectly clear, it wouldn't have been faith then, and it wouldn't be faith now. When they put all the pieces together that they could see, there were some missing. *Yet they believed.*

Here is the lesson for us. It is possible—it is essential—that we learn to accept the right kind of knowledge and *believe, fully and really and wholeheartedly believe.*

As children of the twentieth century, we are obsessed with seeing and touching and feeling, as if only eyes and fingers and feelings could undergird truth. The story of Thomas has a lesson to teach us though he demanded to see the print of the nails and touch the spear wound, what he actually needed was to be overwhelmed with the presence of his Master, and then his response was immediate: *"My lord and my God!"*

What was Jesus' chiding reply? *"Because you have seen me, you have believed...blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,"* (John 20:28-29).

That special little company: the "yet" believers—are we among them? We have not seen the things we would like most to see. Of course we would like the presence of our Master, but that would be asking what God has denied. If we could even see a brother or sister brought back from the sleep of death, we would be satisfied. Or if we could experience a miracle—if only a small one, like five loaves and three fishes feeding a few thousand. We would like to see fire descend from heaven and burn up an altar our hands had made. Or if nothing more, we would like to hear the voice of God in a vision of the night, or have an angel touch us on the shoulder.

None of these experiences have been ours. *Yet we believe.*

It is an honorary company to belong to, these "yet" believers. Why? Because Jesus promised, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Whatever it includes, we want that blessing!

Why do we believe? Because we trust the Word of God, the wisdom of God, the love of God, the power of God. We believe, not because of all we have seen but because we are convinced of the reality of the God who is behind all that we see. We believe, not because we can touch or feel or see all that we would like to but because all that we do touch or feel or see is in harmony with what we expect, knowing what we read in the Word of God and in the plan that God is working out on our planet.

We believe because we see the hand of God working in our lives, in our Church, in our nation, in our world. We believe because God has spoken, and God will be true to His Word. We believe because history, science, and the Word of God all join to support the facts of our faith, to undergird our confidence in God, and tell us that just as God has been true in the past, just as His prophecies in the past have all been fulfilled as foretold, so the remainder will be fulfilled.

What is faith? It is being able to say, I have not seen all that I would like to see; I do not know all that I would like to know. *Yet I believe.* □



Abib Greetings!

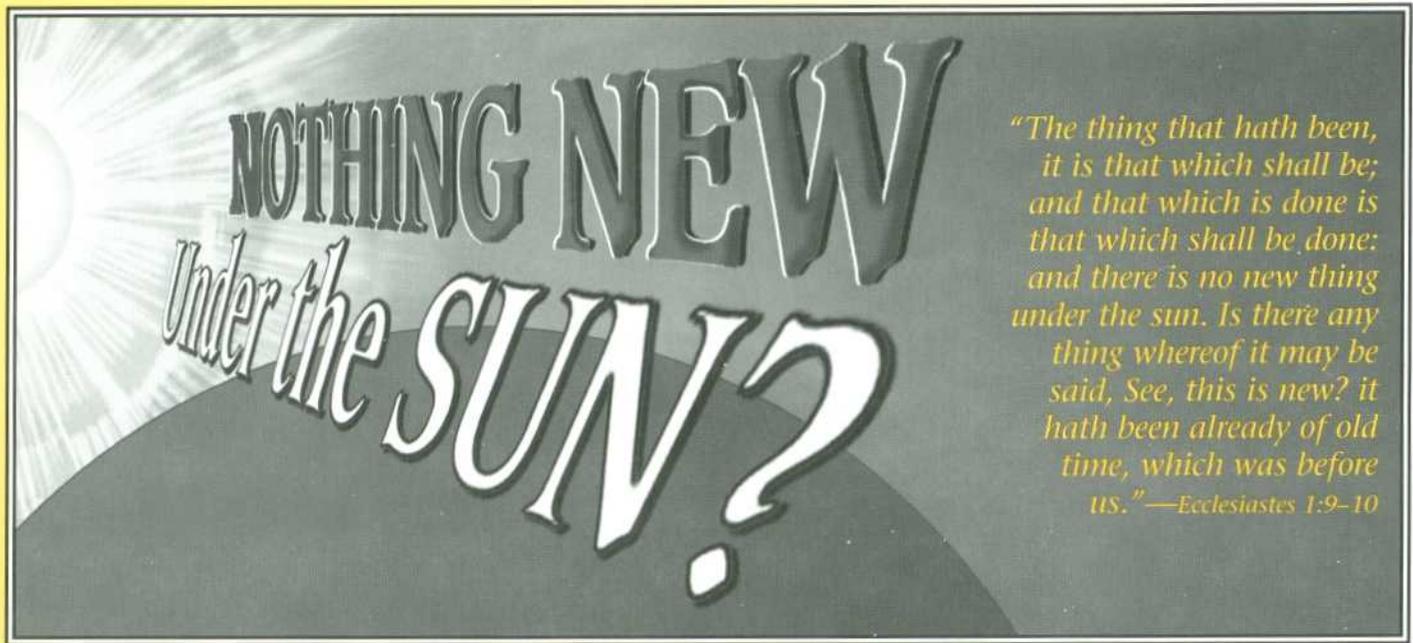


The New Year is coming, the sacred New Year as God commanded Moses to measure time.

According to Biblical records, the ancient Hebrews began their sacred year with the new moon of Abib, or Nisan (see Ex. 12:2, 13:4). Abib is the first new moon following the spring equinox. This year the equinox occurs on March 17, and next the new moon falls on March 31 (AM). For this reason, we are observing the beginning of the month Abib on Friday evening, March 31, continuing through Saturday, April 1, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32).

The Megiddo Church observes the day with double significance—as the beginning of the sacred New Year and also as the anniversary of the birth of Christ. Members and friends set aside the day to reconsecrate themselves to God for the new year, and also to honor Christ, our coming King and Ruler. The heavenly Father chose to honor Christ at the time of His birth by sending angels to the shepherds shouldn't we do our part?

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Wednesday evening, April 12) we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of April 15 (Abib 15) will be the anniversary of Christ's triumph, and resurrection. Pentecost occurs on June 3. □



"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us."—Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

As the preacher-philosopher begins to write his brief memoirs, he seems to contemplate Infinity, and finds, as others before him, that it is too much for him. To think of eternal things can be spiritually stimulating and upbuilding; to attempt to comprehend eternity of time or infinity of space is to court frustration, if not mental breakdown. Some things are too high for our finite minds. We accept these concepts because we cannot help it; both reason and the Word of God make limits to time or space unthinkable: and there we should let it rest until our mental capacity is enlarged.

On our small yet wonderfully made planet we behold, as did Solomon of old, the varied drama of life in its endless cycles, the same wheel of Nature which held him in awe and wonder: the rhythm of the days, of the seasons, of the tides, of the movements of the heavens, of the generations, of the rise and fall of nations and civilizations, of birth and growth, of decay and death and rebirth.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

"The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually....

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again" (Eccl. 1:4-7).

And so on and on, age after age, around and around and around, world without end.

We need not assume, however, that we may apply this principle ad infinitum in a literal sense. All the evidence indicates that there are new things under the sun, so far as our little corner of the universe is concerned. Many things are being done every day which have never been done before on this earth. While there have been cycles of civilization

and barbarism, of prosperity and depression, of advance and retreat, yet there has been a continuous movement, under the inscrutable guidance of the Creator, toward a "far-off, divine event to which the whole creation moves." There is no evidence of lost civilizations identical with our own, with their mechanical marvels, television, traffic jams, government controls, income taxes, labor strife, international and racial tensions, nuclear weapons, etc., etc.

The larger, wider view convinces us that the inspired writer was thinking in terms of the universe. This earth is certainly not the beginning and end of God's work. Astronomers estimate that space contains at least 300 billion galaxies or universes, each composed of billions of stars or suns. The possible number of invisible planets and satellites puts the total beyond comprehensible computation. And beyond these estimates—space being unlimited—what then? It is futile for mortal man to attempt to figure it out.

These celestial bodies are not all balls of fiery gas or chaotic matter. Some—many—are the homes of God's immortal family in heaven (Eph. 3:14-15), shining by the glory of the Eternal reflected in the bodies

The inspired writer was thinking in terms of the universe. This earth is certainly not the beginning and end of God's work.

of their immortal inhabitants (Dan. 12:3). Life as we know it is possible only within very narrow limits of temperature, gravity, atmosphere, etc. Yet who are we—momentary occupants of one small planet—to talk about conditions of life beyond our sphere?

We must be careful about claiming what we do not know but only speculate. There is such a thing, Paul warns us, as “*science falsely so called*” (I Tim. 6:20). What right have we to assume that life as we know it is the only form of life possible or probable? The angels of God certainly do not possess the sort of life we have, with its pains and aches and uncertainties.

How foolish to postulate so narrow and ignoble a view of the Eternal's works, when the Bible does not teach or even hint at such a thing! “*The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting,*” said the Psalmist (103:17-18), “*...to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*” From eternity past, in the unnumbered worlds on high, there have been recipients of God's mercy, men and women who, perhaps in circumstances very like our own, kept His covenant and His commandments and so attained immortality.

Since the process of creation must also be eternal, we may believe that space is filled with myriads of planets in various stages of development, from newly-made, formless matter, up through the various phases, as the timeless forces of Nature prepare them for occupancy by intelligent beings. Some are no doubt in very much the same condition as our earth; many are enjoying what corresponds to our promised Millennium. And is it not possible that every “day” many worlds enter upon their glorified maturity, made a part of Heaven by annexation, just as our home-planet will be some glad day?

In so vast a creation, it can be perfectly true that “there is no new thing.”

Like so many Scriptures, our text seems to have layer upon layer of meaning, each more deeply meaningful. After all, the really important thing is not the cycle of nature but the salvation of our souls. That accomplished, there will be plenty of time to learn about the rest. Absolute duplication of conditions or things may not be necessary to fulfill the meaning of this passage. Variety may be as infinite as creation. The God of the universe is One, and His plan of salvation is one. His laws may vary from world to world, as they have from age to age with our race, to fit changing conditions. Yet the great principle underlying and overshadowing the Plan, in every age and on every world, is eternal and immutable; and the principle is this: Obey and live; disobey and die. “*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it*” (Deut. 12:32).

Whatever laws or commandments are given, in any time or place, must be obeyed if salvation is the desired goal. The reward is only “*to him that overcometh.*” There are no exceptions—“*no new thing under the sun.*”

Our assertion, of course, is not proof, but we have the Word for it. God's plan on this earth, St. Paul informs us in Eph. 3:11, is according to His eternal purpose. When we understand the principles of His plan for us, we know those same principles are universal. There is nothing new; from eternity past to eternity future, only the doers of the commandments of God shall receive His mercy. □

A Little While

*A little while on earth we dwell,
A little while, if all is well,
Then, like a vapor, we are gone;
Our journey here can not be long—
A little while, a little while.*

*A little while we have to work,
But none at all in which to shirk;
A little while to faithful prove,
And gain our blessed Saviour's love;
A little while, a little while.*

*A little while, then gone the breath;
A little while—the sleep of death.
A little while, and some shall hear
The trumpet sounding loud and clear;
A little while, a little while.*

*A little while, and shall we meet
Where faithful ones each other greet?
A little while, and angels fair
With songs shall make us welcome there.
A little while, a little while.*

*Now it is up to us to climb
The rugged steep, redeem the time
By putting every sin away,
Be slow to speak, quick to obey
Our Father's every blest command.*

*A little while, and this shall be—
A little while, and we shall see
Our Saviour come to claim His bride,
His chosen, who to sin have died,
And they with Him shall e'er abide.*

*A little while, 'twill not be long
Till righteous ones shall join the song
Of angels welcoming the King,
Till joyous anthems loudly ring.
A little while, a little while.*

*A little while—He is not late,
But, if He seems to tarry, wait
And work, if you the prize would win,
For He is sure to be here in
A little while, a little while.*

The Canon of Scripture— *When and How?*

► *In the early Church certain writings were accepted as authentic; others were rejected by those who knew firsthand who was the author of the book and how it came to be.*

Which Books for the Canon?

Skeptics often challenge the Bible's authority because its books were assembled by human hands. How did one person know more than any other which books should be admitted to the Holy Scriptures and which excluded, and what were the criteria which influenced the decision? The question is important because it affects the foundation upon which we stand and the words that we accept as having Divine authority over our lives.

First, what is the canon of Scripture? The word "canon" (Greek, *kanon*) means a straight staff, a measuring rod. Figuratively, it refers to that which is artistically, scientifically, or ethically a guide or a model. As applied to Scripture it usually refers to the list of books which are, in a unique sense, acknowledged as the rule of belief and practice.

The earliest use of *canon* as applied to the books of Scripture was at the Council of Laodicea (363), which stated, "No psalms of private authorship can be read in the church, nor uncanonical books, but only the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments" (*The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 2:388).

In the very early years, the church endorsed certain writings as authentic; others it rejected. A writing was either in or out of favor, i.e., in or out of the canon, just as it was accepted or rejected by those who knew firsthand who was the author of the book and how it came to be.

Two Testaments

The Bible as we have it today is divided into two testaments, which we need to consider separately when thinking about the canon of Scripture. The word testament comes from the Latin *testamentum*, which means a "will," but in this context is a Latin translation of the Greek word *diatheke*. This Greek word may mean a will, but it is more widely used of a settlement or agreement. Used in Scripture, the term is usually rendered by our word "covenant," and its most distinctive usage relates to an agreement between God and human beings.

Within Scripture are basically two covenants, the ancient covenant at Sinai and the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus. Each of these gave rise to a special body of literature, and these bodies of literature came to be known in the Christian Church as "the books of the ancient covenant" and "the books of the new covenant." The first collection was composed over a period of a thousand years or more. The latter collection, in its various parts, were written within a century from the establishing of the new covenant. By the end of the second century AD the two collections were described together as the Old Covenant (or Testament) and the New Covenant (or Testament).

The Canon of the Old Testament

Who compiled the canon of the Old Testament?

The Jews being the largest group of people with whom God was working, it is not

strange that the task of writing and compiling should have been theirs. Very early it was the pattern among the Hebrew people to preserve their sacred writings in sacred places. At the command of God, the Law was put in the side of the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26), with later additions by Joshua (Josh. 24:26). Samuel laid the Law of the kingdom "before the Lord" (I Sam. 10:25). Hilkiah the high priest under Josiah found the book of the Law "in the house of the Lord" (II Kings 22:8). We are therefore safe in believing that from the time of Moses the Law of God and related documents were carefully preserved in the sanctuary (see also Ex. 24:4, 7; Num. 33:2).

Among the Jews it was commonly believed for some 1500 years that Ezra was responsible for a large part of the Old Testament canon. Whether or not the legend is true, it would not have been strange for a devoted scholar such as Ezra, living after the Captivity, to have seen the need to preserve the Sacred writings and have taken appropriate steps to gather the books which he knew to be of Divine authority.

Nehemiah may also have been instrumental in gathering the books of the Old Testament. In the second book of Maccabees, dated about 125–124 BC., is the following comment: "And the same things also were reported in the records, namely, the memoirs of Nehemiah, and how he, founding a library, gathered together the books concerning the Kings and Prophets, and those of David, and epistles of kings concerning holy gifts." (The reference to the "epistles of kings concerning holy gifts" may refer to a collection of documents about international matters, such as would be of value to a statesman like Nehemiah.) The next verse in the writing reads: "And in like manner also Judas gathered together all those books that had been scattered by reason of the war we had, and they are with us."

The books of the Hebrew Scriptures, traditionally twenty-four in number, are arranged in three sections. The first is the Torah, comprising the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The second is the Prophets, which is further subdivided into the four former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and the four lat-

ter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the book of the twelve prophets). Concerning the acceptance of the various books of the prophets and the Writings, we are told the following: "The Prophets were the spiritual exhorters and guides of the people, and therefore were held in high esteem by the faithful, whose natural desire to have a collection of their writings there is every reason to believe was early gratified. It is quite evident from the prophetic parallels that the Prophets were acquainted with one another's writings.

"David and Solomon began the arrangement of the temple praise service in a collection of Psalms, and later collections and individual psalms were added. The time of Nehemiah was very productive. The first collection of the Proverbs of Solomon (Prov. 10:1–22:16) was so highly valued that Hezekiah ordered a second to be prepared (Prov. 25:1). Canticles was accepted because its author was the Wise Man. Its age and contents recommended the book of Job. Lamentations appealed directly to every patriotic Jew during the exile, and was accepted as sacred. Ruth, by age, and especially by its genealogy of David, was put in the third Canon, and formed an introduction to the Psalter. These early writings were followed gradually by others, Ezra-Nehemiah, I and II Chronicles, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and finally Daniel. After this time, and down to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, 70 AD, the nation was so affected by Greek customs, and divided by the growing rival parties, the Pharisees and Sadducees, that its religious development was too much hindered for any work to receive universal recognition, and hence Canonicity. Thus the three divisions of the Old Testament Canon—the law, Prophets, and the Writings—dated from the second century BC." (*The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia*, 2:388–391).

A rather different three-fold division of the same books is mentioned by Josephus, the Jewish historian (Josephus lived approximately 33–100 AD). Josephus bears strong testimony for the canon, expressing what was then the national opinion. He writes: "We have twenty-two books containing the records of all the past times, and two justly believed to be inspired. Five of them are

► **B**y the end of the second century AD the two collections were described together as the Old Covenant (or Testament) and the New.

► *It is probable that the eventual "closing" of the canon simply gave status to the books that were already being used by the worshipping community.*

Moses'. These contain his law and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. From Moses to Artaxerxes the prophets made the record in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. The history written since that date, though accurate, is not so much esteemed, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets. No one dares add to, take from, or alter them: but all Jews esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and are willing to die for them."

Josephus also wrote in his treatise *Against Apion*, sometime during the nineties of the first century AD, "We have not myriads of books, disagreeing and conflicting with one another, but only twenty-two contain the record of all time, and justly accredited."

In the New Testament, Jesus referred to the Hebrew Scriptures as "the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12). Paul claimed that God's way of righteousness was attested to by "the law and the prophets" (Rom. 3:21). Sometimes the whole Hebrew Bible or a part of it is referred to as "the law" (See John 10:34; I Cor. 14:21; Rom. 3:10-19).

When in debate with Jewish theologians Jesus and the Apostles appealed to "the Scriptures," they appealed to an authority which was equally acknowledged by their opponents. This near unanimity might suggest that some widely acknowledged authority had decided the matter. It is not easy, however, to identify what authority that might have been among such a diverse group. But as later with the New Testament, so with the Old Testament it is probable that the eventual "closing" of the canon simply gave status to the books that were already being used by the worshipping community.

From Hebrew to Greek

The Greek translation of the Scriptures became available sometime between 250 and 150 BC. At first the Law was read only in Hebrew, and someone was appointed to give the oral translation in Greek. But as time went on a written Greek version was needed, so that the law could be read directly.

Almost from the time that Alexander the Great founded Alexandria in Egypt

(331 BC), there was a Jewish element in its Greek speaking populace, and this element continued to increase in the generations that followed. Though the largest number of Greek-speaking Jews were concentrated in Alexandria, there was a significant number in the major cities throughout the area of Alexander's conquest. Before long the Jews of Alexandria gave up using the language their ancestors had spoken in Palestine, and spoke only Greek. If the Scriptures had not been translated into Greek, these people would have been cut off from their Scriptures.

A Jewish legend tells how seventy, or rather seventy-two elders of Israel were brought to Alexandria for the purpose of translating the Old Testament Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek. It is because of this legend that the term "Septuagint" (from the Latin *Septuaginta*, meaning "seventy") came to be attached to the version. As time went by, the original legend of the seventy was further embellished. A document called the *Letters of Aristeas*, tells how the elders completed the translation of the Septuagint in just seventy-two days, achieving an agreed version as the result of regular conference and comparison. Later embellishments tell how the seventy-two translators were isolated from one another in separate cells for the whole time and produced seventy-two identical versions!

By whatever means the task was accomplished, we know that it was done, and the use of the new Greek Scriptures spread quickly from Alexandria to other Jewish communities throughout the Greek-speaking world. This Greek version was generally known as the "Septuagint."

It is evident from the writings of Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC-AD 50) that he knew the Scriptures in the Greek version only. He was a well recognized representative of Alexandrian Judaism. While Philo did not give us a formal statement on the limits of the canon, such as we have in Josephus, the books which he acknowledged as Holy Scripture are quite certainly the same books included in the traditional Hebrew Bible. He indicates that special veneration is paid to "the laws, inspired oracles given through the prophets, hymns and the other books by which knowledge and piety may be

increased and brought to perfection." (It is interesting that he shows no signs of accepting the authority of any of the books which we know as the Apocrypha. The subject of the Apocrypha will be discussed in a later section.)

The Canon of the New Testament

It is generally believed that by the end of the first century all the present books of the New Testament had been accepted as inspired.

Marcion is the first person known to have published a collection of what we call New Testament books. Marcion was born about AD 100 at Sinope, a seaport on the Black Sea. His father was a leader in the Church of that city, and Marcion was brought up in the apostolic faith. Of all the apostles, the one who appealed to him most strongly was Paul, to whom he became passionately devoted. But Marcion went to the extreme of concluding that Paul was the only apostle who preserved the teaching of Jesus in its purity. Though Marcion was radical in his views and wholly disowned the Old Testament, he provided his followers with an edition of the Holy Scriptures to which he prefaced a series of antitheses, in which he explained his singular ideas. Unable to persuade the Catholic Church of his views, he withdrew and established his own church. His edition of the New Testament lacks substantial portions of several books, but he provided the Church with its precedent for establishing a canon of New Testament books.

The question remains open whether Marcion was actually the first to publish a canon of Scripture or whether he was protesting what was already in existence. Tertullian (in the third century) says of Marcion that he "used the knife to excise from the Scriptures whatever did not conform with his opinion." This statement would suggest that a generally accepted canon existed prior to Marcion.

In 1945, in Upper Egypt some documents were discovered which are now called the Nag Hammadi documents, fifty-two in all, collected together in thirteen leather-bound codices (codices are book-like in form, not scroll-like). They include some treatises by Valentinus, who was formerly thought to have opposed the Christian faith. One or two of the documents may have been originals by Valentinus himself. The books date from the period between 135 and

150 AD, and allude clearly to "Matthew and Luke (possibly Acts) the Gospel and first letter of John, the Pauline letters, except the Pastorals, Hebrews and Revelation." They not only allude to them but cite them in terms which presuppose that they have authority. Here is evidence that the New Testament canon was already established during the early part of the second century.

Ptolemy, the principal disciple of Valentinus, probably his successor as leader of the Valentinian School, acknowledged the supreme authority of the New Testament writings. He wrote that these writings were "supremely authoritative because they contained the apostolic tradition which came from the Savior Jesus." Ptolemy is the first person known to us by name who criticized Marcionism.

What books were judged authoritative? In general, books by Jesus' apostles and those closely associated with them. The Gospel collection preserved the words of Jesus, and the early Church knew no higher authority. Paul's collection was authoritative because the epistles were widely known to be his own, and he himself was appointed personally by Jesus. The bringing together of these two collections into something approximating the New Testament as we know it was facilitated by another document which linked the one to the other. This document was the Acts of the Apostles, which had been severed from its natural companion, the Gospel of Luke when that Gospel was incorporated into the four-fold collection. Acts therefore had to play a part of its own, and an important part it proved to be.

Whoever was responsible, we know that very early in the first century the Church began to preserve and compile the writings which became the New Testament.

By the year 140 AD, "the four Gospels and thirteen Epistles of Paul were right alongside the Old Testament writings, and in one part or another of the Church, other writings such as Acts, Revelation, Hebrews, I Peter, James, and the epistles of John were held in like honor" (Schaff Herzog, 2:396).

A Closed Canon

About when were the words of the Scripture said to be sealed, or closed? In
(Continued on page 26)

By the end of the first century all the present books of the New Testament had been accepted as inspired.

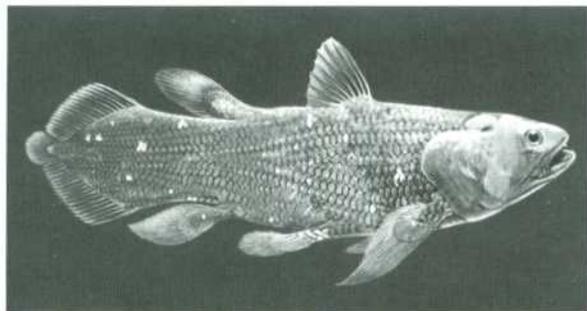


Living Fossils

Did You Know...?

- ✓ ... that the earliest fossils of turtles date from the time of the dinosaurs, but they have changed little over the centuries.
- ✓ ... that coelacanth fossils have been found in both freshwater and saltwater deposits.
- ✓ ... that turtles live longer than most animals. They often live 50 years in captivity. One is known to have lived more than 100 years.
- ✓ ... that coelacanths do not walk on their lobed fins as scientists had concluded from studying the fossils.
- ✓ ... that fossils of horseshoe crabs are identical to those found on beaches today, and their habits are as unchanged over the years as their bodies.

LIKE CARBON COPIES



The live coelacanth...



... and its 140-million-year-old virtually matching fossil

Scientists who study the origin of life on Planet Earth have written volumes in an effort to explain how the millions of living creatures we know today have over millions of years evolved from a single animal not as large as the period at the end of this sentence. According to one theory, the properties necessary to life were formed spontaneously in the warm water of the sea some four billion or more years ago. As to how something so complex as life developed from nonlife, "there is no clear-cut answer," says one writer. Nevertheless, it is accepted that life began when a tiny one-celled animal started to grow and multiply.

In 1953, research scientists succeeded in duplicating "the building blocks of proteins—the basic constituents of living matter" in the laboratory. It was assumed that "after this first step toward explaining the appearance of living things had been taken,...the others would have followed easily," and many scientists joined the race to synthesize living matter in the laboratory. To date no one has succeeded. Says one writer, "The problem of how the first living organism was formed has still to be solved." We believe that it rests with the knowledge of the Creator. God had no need to put a patent on the secret of life, because only He can produce it.

Among the points of evidence often cited to support belief in evolution are fossils of various plants and animals now extinct, which are thought to have supplied vital links in the progression of development between the species. A certain fossil is usually identifiable with a certain period of time in the history of the earth, and identifies a specific type of life at that point. Given many millions of years, according to the theory of evolution, these forms of life changed, sea animals gradually developed the body parts needed by land animals, walked out upon the land, where the progress continued, and more and more different types of animals developed as they were ideally suited to the conditions in which they lived. This is a highly simplified explanation, but our underlying question is this: If certain fossils identify certain types of life as they were many years ago, and from that point by the process of evolution other life forms developed, should not the progress continue? And should not the earlier life forms, being less adapted to their environment, become extinct?

Theoretically this is true. In actual fact, time has given scientists numerous surprises.

For example, fossils of the common house fly and the lowly ant have been found which are nearly exact replicas of the ones that made their way into our kitchens only last summer. Fossils of seashells have been found embedded in layers of rock laid down millions of years ago, the duplicates of which can be found on almost any seashore today. Tiny coquinas, clam shells of all sizes, starfish,

conchs—all known today—have been found fossilized in rock in the most unlikely locations where they must have lived millions of years ago. What is the answer?

THE COELACANTH (*pronounced cee'-la-kanth*)

A classic example is the six-foot long coelacanth, a fish which because of its unusual lobe fins was counted as an important link in the progression from sea to land animals. Frozen in stone, fossilized remains of the coelacanth have been identified in deposits dating back nearly 400 million years. No fossil specimen ever found was thought to be less than 60 million years old, leading scientists to believe that the coelacanths became extinct around that time.

Then in 1938 a South African fishing troller brought up a very strange (and unknown) variety of fish that had been drifting along the floor of the Indian Ocean at a depth of about 600 feet. The professor who was found to identify it said that his surprise would have been little greater had he suddenly looked up to see a dinosaur walking down the street—this fish was thought to have died out with the dinosaurs!

The fossil which evolutionists had explained was the sure link in the chain from sea to land creatures, with its large limb-like fins and stocky body (its forward fins could have easily become arms and its other pair would have become legs; or possibly the four fins together could have become the four legs of the earliest land animals)—suddenly the whole explanation lacked foundation. If the fish was still in existence—which no one could deny—did some of its kind evolve into other creatures and some remain the same? For the fish that had been caught was identical to its fossil!

The search began for a second coelacanth, so that the fish's habits could be studied. A second one was not seen until 1952, but since then more than 100 have been caught in the Indian Ocean. In 1987, an underwater team was able to study its habits at a depth of more than 600 feet, where it was seen still swimming by moving its limb-like fins—hardly like a four-legged land

animal. Evolutionists who had studied the fossils had speculated that the fish probably braced its fins against the sea bottom, and used them in a sort of "walking" maneuver—just a "step" away from walking land animals. But observers of the live fish determined that the fish used its fins to swim, not walk. Commented the scientist making the observations, "I'm sorry, we never saw Old Four Legs (the nickname given to the coelacanth) walk on its fins. Alas, that does not seem to be the case."

How could this fish (also called "the fish that time forgot") have endured such an immense span of time with so little change? Only our Creator knows. Meanwhile, the evolutionists' search for the vital link creature that could emerge from the water and walk or crawl upon the land must continue. Says the leader of the team that observed the fish, "For every myth we've dispelled, I'm certain there are a dozen fascinating discoveries still to be made. We have just begun to know the coelacanth."

THE COCKROACH

Another example of a living fossil is the cockroach. According to one writer, "it was here to welcome the dinosaurs, and it was here to bid them good-bye." In spite of all our efforts to eliminate it, it survives basically unchanged. Fossils of cockroaches found in Coal Age deposits believed to have been laid down from 300 to 350 million years ago look no different than those seen today.

We have no good feeling for the creatures, but in the insect world they are really quite fastidious, spending hours washing their feet, legs and antennae. Why have they survived these millions of years unchanged? If the theory of the evolutionists is true, why have they not progressed into some other type of animal? Why do they today look identical to the fossils that are millions of years old? Clearly the evolutionists do not have all the answers. Perhaps the cockroaches' ability to survive may be due to their tolerance of extremes of cold and heat—they will even revive after being frozen.

We think of cockroaches only as pests, but they have some limited value. Of the more than 3500 known species, less than one percent inhabit homes. Most live in trees, in palm fronds, and in dead vegetation of the ground.

Because of their hardiness and rapid breeding, cockroaches have also proved valuable in cancer and heart disease research projects, also in nutrition studies. In recent years they have been included in space missions. In fact, they are the "astronaut supreme," being able to withstand more than 100 times the radiation that a human can endure. They also have high resistance to the effects of gravity. Humans black out at 12 g's (a "g" is a unit of force equal to the force exerted by gravity on a body at rest, which must be overcome when the body is moved). The cockroach has withstood 120 g's for four hours—and continued to live.

THE HORSESHOE CRAB

Another creature that has survived relatively unchanged over the centuries is the horseshoe crab. It was once called the "horse-foot crab" because it resembles the horse's hoof as much as a horseshoe. It is easily recognized by its shell and its six inch tail spine. At the time of the exploration of the United States, explorers found the Indians using the tails for the point of a fish spear. The crab itself finds the tail useful, for when it is tossed onto the beach on its back by a wave it uses its tail to turn itself over. Fossils of almost identical crabs have been found in the rock record dating back over the last 190 million years. And says the naturalist, "Probably the habits of horseshoe crabs are as unchanged as their bodies." (No evolution here.) From the coast of Nova Scotia to the shores of the Yucatan Peninsula on the Gulf of Mexico, horseshoe crabs clamber up on the beaches each spring to lay their eggs. After burying their eggs in the sand, they return to the deeper water. During the rest of the year, they roam the bottom scavenging in the deep water for mussels and marine worms on which they feed.

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THE TURTLE

Another fossilized creature found existing today is the turtle, said to be among the oldest reptile fossils known. Turtles were also thought to have been around when the last dinosaur died. The fossils of these turtles are exactly like turtles that live in the jungles of South America today (Where is the evidence for evolution here?). There are about 200 species of turtles known, ranging in size all the way from the four-inch mud turtle to the giant sea turtle that may be more than six feet in length and weigh as much as half a ton. Habitats vary. Some are land turtles; some live in water or alternate between water and land. The giant sea turtles leave the warm water of the ocean only long enough to dig a hole in the sand on the shore, lay their eggs, bury them and return to the water, just as generations before them have done.

The turtle is encased in a protective shell made of bony plates. These

plates are fused to underlying bones, leaving only the limbs, neck and tail free. All turtles can retract into their shell to some extent, but the small box turtle can retract its head, legs and tail completely and tightly close the hinged front and back halves of its shell for protection when it senses danger.

The turtle has no ears for hearing, but is exceptionally sensitive to touch and withdraws instantly at the slightest touch. The turtle also has keen eyesight, as well as an acute sense of smell and taste. The snapping turtle does not have a complete armor (it is unprotected underneath) but compensates with its powerful jaws.

Who can say that all these just happened? Why are we able to find an animal living today which is identical to its fossilized remains which are millions of years old? How does such information fit into the evolutionary picture at all? Did an animal both evolve and stay the same? The basic idea underlying evolution is the

"survival of the fittest." If the original (known by its fossil) was able to survive through 30 million generations or more unchanged, why did evolution take place at all?

May not living fossils be part of the evidence God has provided to show us that He is the Master Designer, Creator, and Sustainer of all that lives and moves?

Also, if the animals that existed many millions of years ago developed into others, should we not see intermediate stages of development? But, strangely, none exist.

How the Creator works is beyond the scope of our knowledge. We can only say, "The hand that made them is Divine." □

For the scientific data in this article we are indebted to the following sources: G. Minelli, *The Evolution of Life; Marvels and Mysteries of Our Animal World*, Readers Digest Association; *Comptons Interactive Encyclopedia*, Copyright 1993-94; D. Alderton, "Turtles of the World" (1988), from *The Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Copyright 1995; Hans Fricke, "Coelacanth: The Fish That Time Forgot," in *National Geographic Magazine*, June 1988, pp. 824-838.

The Known Bible

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the year AD 192 an unknown writer speaks of "the word of the New Covenant of the Gospel, to which nothing can be added by anyone who has chosen to live according to the Gospel itself and from which nothing can be taken away." The words imply the principle expressed in Scripture in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, where the warning was attached: "Ye shall not add to the word which I command you nor take from it" (Deut. 4:2; cf 12:32). A fuller warning is appended to the New Testament book of Revelation: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19, NIV).

According to one historian, "the Church regarded the age of revelation as closed with the death of the last sur-

living Apostle and the canon of the New Testament as completed, though discussions still went on as to the inclusion of some books."

Why "In" or "Out"

There is always one basic fact to remember about the canon of Scripture: that books were included in the canon because they were *already recognized as inspired and authoritative* by those who were acquainted with their source. Likewise books were excluded from the canon because they were already recognized as lacking inspiration and authority by those who knew their source. **A book did not lack inspiration and authority because it was omitted from the canon; it was omitted because it lacked authority.** The early establishing of the canon is significant for this reason, because those making the judgments were not many generations removed from those who knew the original authors. □

Enthusiastic!

You can do anything if you have enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the yeast that makes your hope rise to the stars.

Enthusiasm is the sparkle in your eye, the lilt of your gait,

The grip of your hand, the irresistible surge of your will and your energy.

Enthusiasts are fighters. They have fortitude. They have staying qualities.

Enthusiasm undergirds all progress.

With it there is accomplishment. Without it there are only alibis.

We must know the taste of the Bread of Life before we can serve it to others.

A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without adversity.

Faith never stands around with its hands in its pockets.

How Much Is It Worth?

(Continued from page 2)

Can we even faintly imagine the joy of making such a presentation to our Lord, and hearing His warm commendation: "Well done"—knowing that our Master will open to us the abundance of His heavenly storehouse?

Our lives are not lent to us by some impersonal stroke of fate. The Lord Himself is the giver, our life is His property, and He is looking for a return on His investment in us. He has given us something temporary, something of small value, which we can use to obtain something of great value, which will be our very own—forever.

Think of it! Our little lifetime can be used to purchase that which will be our very own—forever!

Our present holdings will be taken from us. It is only a matter of time. The value of our talent is temporal. The mammon of unrighteousness will fail. But if we have used it right, we shall hear from the lips of our Master those welcome words, "Well done" and receive from His hand the true riches, life that will never end.

How much is our talent worth? That all depends on *how we use it.* □



Are you feeling the heat of a fiery trial? Don't despair! God is using it to make you into a vessel fit for His service. Suffering is meant not only to burn out the dross, but to burn in His promises.

*Shape well their lives while they are young,
The children change so fast;
Quickly they harden in the mold,
When plastic years are past.*

One minute of keeping your mouth shut may be worth an hour's explanation.

*The best reformer is the man whose eyes
Are quick to see all beauty and all worth,
And by his own discreet, well-ordered life
Alone reprove the erring. When the gaze
Turns in on thine own soul, be most severe;
But when it falls upon a fellow man.
Let kindness control it; and refrain
From the belittling censure that springs forth
From common lips, like weeds from marshy soil.*

An egotist is a person who is me-deep in conversation.

Give God what is right, not what is left.



When you think, when you speak, when you read,
when you write,
When you walk, when you sing, when you seek for delight,
To be kept from all evil at home or abroad,
Live always as under the eye of your God.

Whatever you think, never think what you feel
You would blush in the presence of God to reveal.
Whatever you say, in a whisper or clear,
Say nothing you would not like Jesus to hear.

Whatever you read, though the page may allure,
Read nothing of which you are perfectly sure
Consternation at once would be seen in your look
If God should say solemnly,
"Show me that book."

Whatever you write, in haste, or with heed,
Write nothing you would not like God to read;
Wherever you go, never go where you fear
God's question be asked you,
"What doest thou here?"

Whatever you sing, in the midst of your glees,
Sing nothing God's listening ear can displease.
Whatever the pastime in which you engage,
For the cheering of youth or the solace of age,
Turn away from each pleasure you'd shrink from pursuing
If God should look down and say,
"What are you doing?"

