

Megiddo Message

A S THE DAYS OF A TREE
ARE THE DAYS OF
MY PEOPLE . . .

—ISAIAH 65:22

Vol. 84, No. 3
March, 1997

Holiness Does Not Rub Off

It's an old story. Put two apples together, a rotten one and a good one. Leave them alone for awhile, and what do you have?

Companionship can be either a great curse or a great blessing. Christian companionship is one of heaven's choicest blessings. But its power for good is nil unless we as individuals set our hearts in the right direction. The holy, godly character is in every sense nontransferable.

This fact is stated several times in Scripture in several different ways. The prophet Ezekiel put it in plain words: *"Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God"* (Ezek. 14:14). Again, *"As I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered"* (v. 16). Four times in this one chapter the point is repeated. The most righteous could save only *"their own souls by their righteousness."*

The ancient prophet Haggai made the same point when trying to stir the priesthood to greater loyalty. Building around an illustration familiar to them, he asked a simple question: If a person carries consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, oil or other food, does it become consecrated? The priests answered, *"No"* (Haggai 2:12). A thing could not be made holy simply by being touched against something that was already holy. Things were holy only when properly made holy.

Can we miss the lesson? We may rub shoulders daily with one whose holiness and character are outstanding. But simply being very near to one who is holy will do nothing to make us holy unless we follow their example. Mere contact or companionship with the holy does not make us holy. Being close to Jesus did not purify the heart of Judas; nor did being with the great apostle Paul make Demas a saint.

Jesus made the same point in Luke 13: *"Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'*

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'" (vs. 25-27). In other words, simply being near to Jesus, or being in His presence, or even being classified as

His followers, is not enough, because holiness does not rub off!

Jesus taught it again in His illustration of the two men in one bed; the two women grinding together at the mill; the two men working together in the field. In each case, *"the one shall be taken, and the other left"* (Luke 17:34-36). One shall be removed from the field of service, the other be allowed to remain forever. The holiness of the second did nothing to cover the unholiness of the first.

The illustration is seen frequently between father and son. The prophet Samuel, for example, was a notable example of a holy father; but his holiness did not rub off onto his sons. The same was true among the sons of Aaron. We know very little about them except that Nadab and Abihu *"offered strange fire before the Lord"*—an outright act of disobedience—and lost their lives. The holiness of their father Aaron or their uncle Moses or their brother Eleazer seemed to have had no effect upon them.

But this is only one half of Haggai's lesson. While holiness will *not* rub off, UN-holiness will. *"If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these,"* he asked his priests, *"shall it be unclean?..."* (Hag. 2:13) and the answer was Yes, *"it shall be unclean."* This is why God calls us to a life of separation from all that will defile. We are to *"be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."* *"I have severed you,"* says God, *"from other people, that ye should be mine."* Also, *"evil communications corrupt good manners,"* hence the command, *"come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"; "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"; and "keep [yourself] unspotted from the world"* (2 Cor. 6:14; Lev. 20:26; 1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 5:11; James 1:27). These are all Divine directives intended to reduce the amount of unholiness that all too easily rubs off from lesser associations and makes the inner man unclean.

It is so easy to make the clean unclean. Just take an oily, greasy rag and touch it to a clean, white linen towel; the clean towel will never cleanse the dirty rag, but if they touch, the clean towel will be soiled.

It is a lesson we can apply every day. Our Christian friends can help us, but they cannot make us holy. Holiness comes from the heart.

But oh, beware of the unclean, for uncleanness *does* rub off! □

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 (2 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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Megiddo Message

March 1997
Volume 84, No. 3

A religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church, L. T. Nichols, *Founder*; Newton H. Payne, *President and Editor*; Ruth E. Sisson, *Executive Editor*.

The Megiddo Message is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc., Serials Acquisitions, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

The Megiddo Message (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July/August issue) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 716-235-4150. Periodicals Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year (eleven issues) \$5.00. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. URL: <http://www.megiddo.com>. E-mail address: megiddo@servtech.com.

Unsolicited manuscripts for publication are not accepted.

Bible Quotations: Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows: NEB—New English Bible; NIV—New International Version; NASB—New American Standard Bible; RSV—Revised Standard Version; TLB—The Living Bible; JB—The Jerusalem Bible; Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English; Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation; TCNT—Twentieth Century New Testament; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version; NKJV—New King James Version; Knox—The Holy Bible authorized by the Hierarchy of England, Wales, and of Scotland, tr. by Monsignor Knox.

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The Book We Can Depend On

I

N THE BEGINNING, GOD...."

With these words the divinely inspired author introduces the greatest Book ever compiled. It is the Book upon which we rely as our only source of knowledge about God and the future, His plan and our salvation. And it all begins with God.

Belief in God is the beginning point of all faith. It is the beginning which the author of the book of Hebrews recommended: "He that cometh to God must believe," first of all, that "he is" (Heb. 11:6). Also the Psalmist: "The first thing in knowledge is reverence for the Eternal" (Ps. 111:10, Moffatt). It is He, the Almighty, to whom we exclaim, in the words of the poet:

*O Thou Eternal One! whose presence bright
All space doth occupy, all motion guide,
Unchanged through Time's all-devastating flight,
Thou only God! there is no God beside!
Being above all beings! Mighty One!
Whom none can comprehend, and none explore,
Who fill'st existence with Thyself alone;
Embracing all, supporting, ruling o'er,
Being whom we call God, whom we adore!*

*Thou in the endless ages past and gone
Didst form and shape the earth; O Lord in Thee
Eternity had its foundation; all
Sprang forth from Thee—of light, joy, harmony—
Sole origin; all life, all beauty, Thine.
Thy hand created all, and doth create;
Thy splendor fills all space with rays Divine.
Thou wert, and art, and shalt be, Glorious! Great!
Life-giving, life-sustaining Potentate!*

Many today find it difficult to believe that such a God exists, but who can honestly look at the countless marvels disclosed by microscope and telescope and believe that it all just happened by chance? "Every house is builded by some man" (Heb. 3:4) is the simple observation anyone can confirm. If a house requires a builder, how much more the vast structures of the universe—and life itself! How can we imagine such perfect design, without a designer? The marvelous cycles of nature all around us, the beauties of earth and sea and sky, the life that throbs within our own being—all bear immutable testimony to the existence of the Everlasting Creator.

Even beyond all this, He is "a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Herein lies our hope, our only hope of real, enduring life—in the reward He offers. Here is our prospect of deliverance from the limitations of mortality. Here is salvation and the key to eternity!

But how can we be sure? God is not here in person to talk to us. He does not come down and tell us what He offers and what we must do to obtain it. What, then, is the source of our confidence and faith in Him? It is the written Word He has provided us, the Bible. Everything pertaining to our eternal salvation, everything we stake our hope on, is contained in that one Book: the Bible.

This means that we have invested our whole life in what we believe to be the words of the God of heaven, delivered to us through His spokesmen and preserved for us by almost countless unknown men and women who were unwitting instruments in His hand. This we believe.

But we are living in an age of extreme doubt and skepticism, when many people question the authority of the Bible. So it is vital that we check this foundation of all true faith. We need to have at our instant command the evidence if we would maintain the unshakable, rock-like conviction that our hope is sure, and if we would keep our burning zeal for the things which lie beyond the present at white-heat intensity.

The apostle Peter, writing in his mature years, apparently sensed the acute need to constantly reinforce one's faith and stir one another up again and again in the Divine hope. I am thinking of his statements in the first chapter of his Second Epistle. The people Peter was addressing knew the Gospel well. Probably many of them were well along in the way to life. Yet Peter felt a need to remind them that they should keep "these things" always in remembrance. They should remember them and take heed to them right now. They should also be preparing themselves against the day when he could no longer be present to remind them and they would have to remind themselves (2 Pet. 1:10-15).

Read again his stirring words: "Therefore, brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election firm,

for, in doing so, you will never stumble. For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you" (vs. 10-11, NAS). Is it not worth the effort, to look forward to an entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord "richly provided"?

"Therefore, I will always remind you of these things," Peter continues, "even though you already know them and are established in the truth you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this 'tent,' to stir you up by a reminder, since I know that I will soon have to put it aside, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. I shall also make every effort to enable you always to remember these things after my departure" (2 Pet. 1:10-15, NAS).

If Peter and his brethren, living still within the memory of Christ's ministry, and in the era when the Holy Spirit was still present to assist them, needed to keep their faith continually stirred, what of us who are separated from that time by some nineteen silent centuries?

All of God's people in all ages have had to walk by faith, but in various ages God has provided various means of confirming faith.

To Abraham God sent an angel to deliver His message. To Joseph He gave visions, Moses had angelic guidance, also a priesthood under the leadership of his brother Aaron, who maintained direct contact with the will of God through the Urim and Thummim. In another age God sent His prophets, whom He inspired to write and speak His message, and reveal His laws and judgments. When God sent His Son, He gave Him special power by which He could perform miracles to convince those who heard Him. He also sent angels to guard and sustain Him through many an hour of trial. After Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent back a form of this superior power, called the Holy Spirit, to be used by His apostles and those to whom they gave it, so that the Word of God might be proclaimed and believed. This was the wonderful age Peter and the apostles knew.

Then came a time when angels no longer brought messages, no

visions revealed with certainty the will of God, no Urim and Thummim dispensed Divine counsel, no prophets revealed the future or delivered warnings of approaching judgments; nor were there apostles to bring conviction by the signs and wonders they performed. But this age had a new heritage—the written words of the patriarchs, prophets, Jesus and His apostles. Suddenly all guidance for men had to come from one source: the written Word.

Men have always questioned the words and workings of God. Even when they saw, some doubted. Now with no open manifestations and nothing but the written Word for authority, could anyone be persuaded to depend on it? Or would everyone imagine that it was a fraud that strangers and philosophers had compiled to deceive the pious?

No! The Scriptures were the veritable Word of God. Many of the people who read them during the early centuries *knew*. They knew because the men who had written parts of them and who had been active in the narrative were part of their own glorious lineage! Many of these people enjoyed an unbroken tradition of faith in their families. Generation to generation had relayed and relived the exciting drama of the early days. Again and again these people had heard of the zeal and earnestness of the great men—their forebears—who had known Jesus and His apostles just as we know each other. There were thrilling accounts of their struggles, their courageous witnessing, their almost unbelievable endurance in the face of persecution and trial. How could anyone possibly disbelieve their living testimonies! There was no question in their minds. The words of the apostles were words of truth!

But slowly the rising powers of darkness overpowered the faith and courage of these believers as the distance between them and the first disciples widened with the passing of centuries. And finally the last believer perished. The apostasy had begun.

But the written Word did not perish. Though it had no living

*Everything we
stake our hope
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the Bible.*

witnesses, it was preserved—miraculously—in the hands of its worst enemies. It was preserved for those who would live and believe on the other side of the dark night of the apostasy. It was preserved in spite of the decrees of kings and rulers that every copy should be burned.

The people for whom it was preserved would have no angels to confirm their faith; they would not have visions, or prophets, or apostles who could perform miracles among them. They would not have even the unbroken tradition handed down from generation to generation to build faith in the things that were said and done. But for these people—of which we are a part—God arranged that there should be evidence, evidence by which to know beyond all doubt that the written Word is indeed all that it claims to be, the veritable Word of God, the message of "holy men of God" who spoke as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

How We Can KNOW

Someone has said that building religious faith is like erecting any structure in this world—the first thing you need is plenty of concrete. So let us see what we have that qualifies as spiritual concrete.

How do we know absolutely that the Bible is what we believe it to be, the Word of God Almighty?

First, the Bible proves itself by its own unity. This is an old argument, but a solid one.

*Every house is
built by someone,
but the builder of
all things is God"*
— Hebrews 3:4, RSV

The Bible is more than just a book; it is a library. Sixty-six books by forty different authors comprise this library. And consider that these authors were not contemporary or even near contemporary. They lived at different places on three different continents and wrote over a period of some fifteen or sixteen hundred years. There is great variety in both the style and the character of the various writers. Some of the books are historical. Others are poetical. Some contain laws; others, lyrics. Some are prophetic, others are symbolic. Yet through them all runs *one* theme, *one* Gospel, *one* plan of salvation. How can this be? There is only one answer: *"the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Pet. 1:21).

Second, *the Bible contains numerous eyewitness accounts.* In fact, most of the authors of the New Testament wrote either as eyewitnesses of the events they described, or they recorded eyewitness accounts of the events.

This is the **testimony of Peter:** *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty"* (2 Pet. 1:16). Peter alludes to his experience many years previous when he, along with James and John, had been privileged to see a glorious vision of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8). We saw, Peter is able to say, and we

heard. We know what we are talking about. There is no mistake. It is all true!

What could be more truly concrete!

Years earlier Peter had given this **eyewitness testimony:**

"And we are witnesses of all things which he (Jesus) did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10:39-42).

This is the **eyewitness testimony of John:**

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:1-3).

This is the **testimony of the physician Luke:**

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word: it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:1-3).

Again by the physician Luke:

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus [as cited above, the Gospel of Luke], of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs,

being seen of them forty days" (Acts 1:1-3).

This is the **testimony of Paul:**

"He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

All through the New Testament the authors emphasize their firsthand knowledge of the facts. As Paul said in an earnest appeal to King Agrippa, *"For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner"* (Acts 26:26). No, it *"was not done in a corner."* It was all in the open, for all to see and believe. Paul said not only, *"Look, we saw this and heard that,"* but also *"You know this and you saw that—you yourself should believe."* One must be careful when he says to his opponent, *"You know this,"* because if the opponent happens not to know, the defender is sure to get a sharp backlash. But the apostles *did* know, and they knew others knew also, and they used this approach more than once. As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know"* (Acts 2:22)—this was a brave statement. But it was true; they *did* know.

Third, *the Bible we read is the same book composed by those early authors.* No other book of antiquity has so much documentary evidence to confirm its existence and authority. The evidence for our New Testament is far greater than the evidence for many writings by classical authors, which no one ever thinks of questioning. Someone has said that if the Bible were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would be regarded as beyond all doubt. It is a

curious fact that "historians" have often been much more ready to trust the New Testament than have the theologians.

No Lack of Evidence

God has made it possible for us to be absolutely sure of the Book in which we trust.

Our Bible has been translated from manuscripts which are copies of the original writings of God's spokesmen. No originals survive.

But there is no shortage of copies of these manuscripts among the archives, as compared with the existing manuscripts of other works of the same period. For example: Caesar wrote the *Gallic Wars* shortly before the birth of Christ; today there are nine or ten good manuscripts of it in existence, the oldest of which was copied some 900 years after Caesar's day. Of 142 books by the Roman historian Livy, only 35 survive, and there are about twenty manuscripts, only one of which is as old as the fourth century. A history by Herodotus, a Greek writer of the fifth century B. C., is known to us through eight manuscripts, the earliest belonging to the tenth century A.D. Yet scholars do not question the works of these men.

Now compare this with the evidence for the New Testament. Bible scholars tell us there are some 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, and at least 1,000 for the other early versions. Add over 4,000 Greek manuscripts and we have 13,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament! And many of these copies are from very early dates. Two of the best date from the fourth century, and both are complete New Testaments. Fragments of certain books survive from the third and fourth centuries. A few papyrus fragments of the Gospel of John date from about 150 A.D.

Further evidence for the New Testament is found in the writings of other first century authors. These men, who are called the Church Fathers, wrote between 90 A.D. and 160 A.D., and they quoted heavily from the various books of the New

Testament—so heavily, in fact, that it is said that if the manuscripts of the New Testament books had been entirely lost, they could have been completely reconstructed from the quotations in these early Christian writings alone! The various books of the New Testament began to be combined very early. There is evidence that the four Gospels were together by 115 A.D., as Ignatius at that time quoted from the fourfold gospel known as "The Gospel." About 170 A.D., we are told, another church writer turned the fourfold Gospel into a continuous narrative and called it "A Harmony of the Gospels." The fact that the New Testament books were used and quoted so early is proof positive that they were already in existence at that time. God was providing for the needs of His people.

Further evidence for the Bible as the Word of God is its preservation. No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. Men have tried to burn it, ban it, and outlaw it, but still it lives. It lives because it is of God; it lives because God wills that it should live.

And it lives as God wills it. The Bible has been copied, and copied, and re-copied, almost times without number. Yet late copies, when compared with early versions, show amazingly little variation. We are told that errors affect no more than one one-thousandth part of the Biblical text. God had a watchful care over His Word and its message.

Robert Ingersol said one time, "In twenty-five years the Bible will be a forgotten book"—but who can cite even the name of a single book Ingersol wrote? *He* is the forgotten one; the Bible lives!

The Bible's Own Self-Testimony

One of the greatest evidences for the Bible is contained within itself: ***It claims to be the Word of God.***

How can we know its claim is true? The best way is to delve into it and see for ourselves. This is the Lord's own invitation: "*Come now, and let us reason together*" (Isa. 1:18). And, "*O taste and see that the*

Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Ps. 34:8).

The Bible is filled with evidence of its verity, if one is willing to "taste and see." Someone has compared it to a telescope. Look *at* it, and you see just that. Look *into* it and *through* it, and you are able to see worlds beyond.



The Greatest Book I Ever Read

*The greatest Book I ever read,
It fills my ev'ry need;
The Bible is my Daily Bread,
My Counsel and my Creed.
It is the Rock on which I stand,
My sword to conquer fear;
My shield against temptation
And a Shepherd always near.*

*It is my comfort in distress,
It makes my burden less;
'Tis Love that floods with happiness,
My sermon and my pray'r;
The lovely music of a Psalm,
The healing wisdom that gives calm;
And He who rode the street of Palms,
I meet, I meet Him there.*

*The greatest Book I ever read,
It fills my ev'ry need;
The Bible is my Daily Bread,
My Counsel and my Creed;
The Light by which my feet are led
To where all doubtings cease,
The greatest Book I ever read,
The Bible brings me peace.*

—LIOT L. SNYDER



So let us look *into* and *through* the Bible. And what do we see?

The Bible claims to be the Word of God Himself, or the words of men speaking for Him, in many passages. Such phrases as "*Thus saith the Lord*," or "*the Lord spake, saying*," or "*The word of the Lord came*" occur, we are told, over thirty-eight hundred times in the Old Testament alone!

The Bible speaks its commands with weight, certainty and authority. Consider this passage from the Psalms: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlight-



Don't Judge It Until You've Tasted It!

The story is told of an infidel who stood up and lectured to a large audience on the great worth of philosophy, as opposed to the worthlessness of the Bible. "It is just a collection of ancient myths," he said. "There's much of it I wouldn't waste my time reading."

At this point a young man in the audience rose to his feet and proceeded to the front of the room. From his pocket he drew a penknife and an orange. While everyone looked on in silence he peeled the orange and ate it, section by section.

When he had finished it, he turned to the lecturer and asked, "Was it sweet?"

The lecturer was angered by what he thought was a silly question. "How do you expect me to know?" he retorted. "I never even tasted it."

To which the young man replied, "Then how can you judge the Bible when you haven't tasted it?"



ening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:7-9). These words are so familiar—but have we comprehended their meaning? Do we allow the Word of God this full authority to speak to us?

The apostle Paul spoke of the Scriptures as "holy," and able to

make us "wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). He also spoke of his own teaching as being not the "words of men" but in truth "the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (2 Thess. 2:13).

Historical Evidence

Secular history and the findings of archaeology today offer an abundant confirmation of the truthfulness of the Bible.

So much evidence exists to confirm Bible history that a noted modern Bible scholar considers it "very risky to accuse the Bible of error" in its telling of history. The various Biblical accounts mention many incidental details of history and geography which compare perfectly with secular records of history for the same periods of time. For example, the names of over forty different kings of various times in the Old Testament have been found in contemporary documents and inscriptions outside the Bible, and in all cases they are consistent with the times and places associated with them in the Bible.

Archaeology is continually confirming the Bible. At one time the Higher Critics, as they were called (men attempting to disprove the Bible), claimed positively that Moses could not have authored the Pentateuch, despite Jesus' statement that he did (John 5:46). But then archaeologists uncovered a document containing detailed laws of Hammurabi—who was pre-Moses and even pre-Abraham (2,000 B.C.). This work preceded Moses' writings by at least three centuries—and Moses was supposed to have been a primitive without so much as an alphabet!

Very recently archaeologists working in Syria have unearthed 15,000 tablets which date from about 2300 B.C., or between two and five centuries before the time of Abraham.

For years the critics argued that the Hittites, referred to in the Bible, were a misnomer, because no such people ever existed; there was no secular mention of them. Well, they were wrong again. Then

excavations began on a certain city in Turkey which proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire, and hundreds of references to more than 1200 years of Hittite civilization have since been uncovered.

Says a noted archaeologist, commenting on the relation of their work to the teachings of Scriptures, "In all my archaeological investigation I have never found one artifact of antiquity that contradicts any statement of the Word of God."

Evidence from Fulfilled Prophecy

Evidence from fulfilled prophecies is another confirmation which God has provided especially for us, and it is one of the greatest. The Bible is filled with prophecies. In fact, about twenty-five percent of the Bible is prophecy of one type or another. Some of these prophecies were made fifteen hundred years before their fulfillment, some a thousand years before, some several hundred, some only a few years or even weeks or hours. But *any* prophecy is beyond human possibility. Only God can declare "*the things that are to come hereafter*" (Isa. 41:23) with any certainty of fulfillment. Prophecies written and later fulfilled are absolute proof that the Bible is the Word of the God of heaven. And literally hundreds of prophecies have precise fulfillments.

Many of the Bible's predictions concern the fortunes and misfortunes of the Israelite nation. To Abraham the Lord revealed that his descendants would sojourn in the land of Egypt, that they would be mistreated, and finally be delivered (Acts 7:6; Gen. 15:13-14). All this is long since history; every word of the prophecy was literally fulfilled.

Other prophecies concerning Israel included the prophecy of their captivity, and their return from captivity, also their eventual dispersion among all nations. All these prophecies met their accurate and literal fulfillment.

Other Bible prophecies included some against large and powerful cities, occasionally including very specific detail of fate or future prosperity. Both Babylon and Nineveh, powerful cities at the time, were

condemned to desolation, and both predictions met precise fulfillment. Other predictions concerned Tyre and Sidon, Capernaum and Chorazin. All the fulfillments have been strikingly accurate—a sure testimony to the God behind the prophet.

Still other prophecies in the Bible involved the whole world picture. The prophet Daniel, by Divine foresight, told of the rise and fall of four great world kingdoms when only the first was in existence. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome were each to rise and fall in succession, and each nation in the prophecy was distinguished by detail beyond human fathoming—the prophecies were of God (see Daniel, chapters 2, 7 and 8). The fulfillment of these prophecies of four world kingdoms gives us faith that the fifth kingdom—the kingdom of Christ—yet unfulfilled, shall likewise become reality.

Many prophecies of Scripture center around Jesus Christ, His birth, His lineage, His ministry, His death, His resurrection and ascension. Even details, such as the place of His birth, the exact line of His descent from Abraham through the tribe of Judah, and His parentage; also His betrayal, trial, shame, death and burial, and His triumphant resurrection—all were foretold, and with marvelous accuracy.

We must never discount the value of Divine prophecy. Picture yourself trying to tell what will happen to a certain child that is to be born in the year 2476, and tell just what that child will do, where he will live, how he will die, etc., etc. Such utterances must surely be Divine if they are to have any reality about them! Only God can foreknow the future.

More Evidence

There is still more evidence for the authority of the Bible in this fact: *The Bible expresses God's thoughts, not man's.*

A Bible scholar puts it this way: "The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would."

There are many statements in

the Bible which could not conceivably be the words of uninspired men. What man would ever write that "*all nations*" before God are "*as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity*"? (Isa. 40:17).

What man would ever write: "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*"? (Prov. 14:12).

What man would ever say, "*The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*"? (1 Cor. 3:19); or, "*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*"? (1 Cor. 1:27).

What man would ever delight in that which humbled him, crossed his nature, and smothered his individuality? Who of his own volition would write: "*Happy is the man whom God correcteth*"? (Job 5:17).

Who, other than a man of God, could testify that the thoughts of God are as far superior to the thoughts of men as "*the heavens are higher than the earth*" (Isa. 55:8-9). If the Bible were the work of men, such an idea would never be expressed, man's nature being what it is.

Furthermore, the Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters. Read biographies of other men, and see how they try to cover up or overlook the dark side of people. Often a great literary genius is painted as a near-saint. The Bible does not do it that way. It tells it like it is. Sin is sin, whether found in the greatest king or the humblest commoner. And it is condemned when it is found.

No, there is no question. The Bible is indeed the Word of God. And it contains the thoughts of God, not of men.

The Bible is the living Word of the living God, supernatural in origin, eternal in duration, inexpressible in value; infinite in scope, Divine in authorship, human in penmanship, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, personal in application.

Let us never forget that last—it is personal in application. Good knowledge, like good advice, is

*The Bible is
not such a book
a man would
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or could write if
he would.*

powerless by itself to make anyone good. The best soap will not make a man clean unless it is applied. The best food will not strengthen us until we eat it. Likewise the best knowledge will not assure us of life and happiness and eternal benefit unless we apply it. God has not directed the writing and preserving of His Word through all the vicissitudes of time for us to read and dismiss. It is not like a pleasant melody, to be heard and forgotten. The Bible contains knowledge to be searched for as a man would search for hidden treasure, or as he would seek for choicest silver. The price of its wisdom is above rubies—it is above anything this world can offer. "*She [wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her*" (Prov 3:18).

What happens to the men and women who, in spite of all the evidence, reject the Word of God? They live their little lives and soon are gone.

What happens to those who believe it and let it live in their lives? They grow—and grow—and grow! They grow taller and cleaner and stronger in every Christian grace. And if they continue to live by its transforming power, they develop into characters so noble and pure as to attract the attention of the Almighty One Himself! They become His jewels, His special treasure, His choicest gems, and ultimately His own sons and daughters.

This we know, because the Bible is a book we can *depend* on. □

WHEN ALL SPEAK WELL OF YOU...

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!"—Jesus (Luke 6:26)

The Bible is full of disturbing statements. One appears in Luke's version of our Lord's sermon on the mount. It is Luke 6:26, *"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!"* This saying contradicts the aim and cherished hopes of most of us. Everybody wants to be well spoken of. It is an instinct in us.

More than that, the saying contradicts the way most of us were taught to think. *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,"* is an oft quoted Scripture (Prov. 22:1). To gain the respect and good wishes of others has been an important part of life.

So deeply ingrained is this desire to be well spoken of that we look askance at the person who flaunts public opinion, as though there is something a bit abnormal about it. What is he or she trying to prove by such nonconformist behavior?

Not only is it normal to want to be well spoken of but it is even necessary to the cause of human existence. The person in public office, the minister in the pulpit, the merchant in business, the teacher in the classroom, all depend on the good opinion of others. One's public image can never be separated from one's effectiveness in his work.

So important is a good name that the law protects one from being falsely accused.

Some of the most widely known cases of law in recent decades have concerned attacks upon one's good name. This is why gossip is such a vicious and dastardly sin. We forget that we can unintentionally injure by slander just as seriously as by bodily harm.

Now what has all this to do with Jesus' statement: *"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you?"*

Put simply, these words mean that if we are pleasing everybody, we had better watch out, because we aren't pleasing God. They mean that unless you are like the chameleon, adjusting your color to suit whatever background surrounds you, it is impossible to have everyone speaking well of you. They mean that the moment you are hearing all praise and getting no abuse, you ought to start worrying and ask yourself, *"Am I so compromising my principles as to be standing for nothing?"*

To want all to speak well of us is a dangerous desire. It can make us a coward when we ought to speak out. It feeds our insecurity, and leaves us destitute when we fail. Or it unduly inflates our ego

when some inconsequential plum drops in our lap.

The person who stands for something will inevitably be criticized. Why? Because first of all we do not like those who are different; their being different is a threat to us because it suggests that we might be wrong. And second, standing for something often distinguishes between superiority and mediocrity. Mediocrity cannot endure excellence. He who puts his head above the crowd is bound to have potshots taken at him.

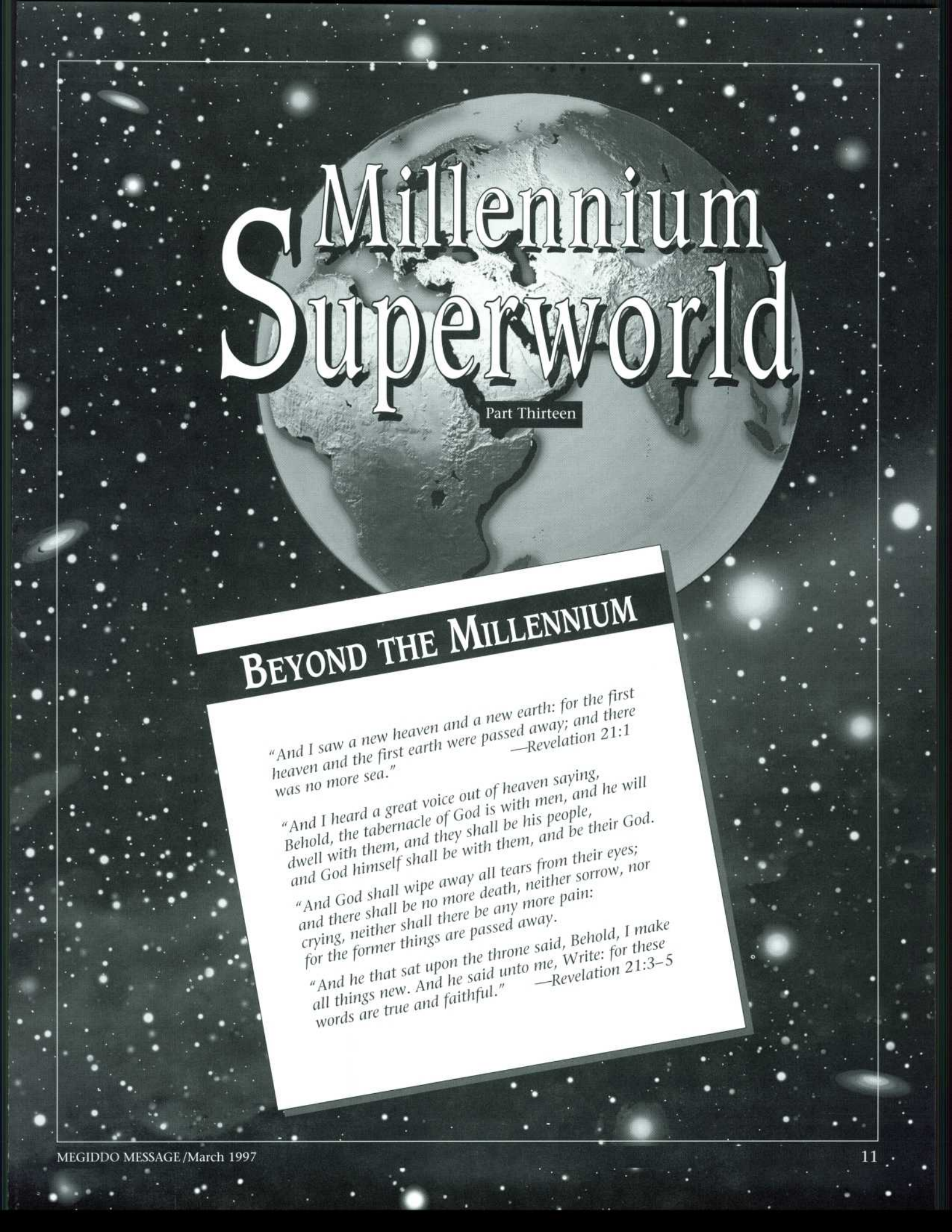
The only true security lies in being primarily concerned with doing right as God sees it. This will make one equally impervious to praise or to blame. We injure ourselves if we keep our ears open to enjoy the sweet strains of flattery and compliment, then close our ears to the discordant notes of criticism.

The one who puts his back in a position to be patted is also exposing it to be kicked.

Samuel Johnson understood this, and in one of his prayers asked to be made strong enough that neither would praise fill him with pride nor censure with discontent.

Only when we are strong enough to receive praise without being spoiled shall we become brave enough to accept blame and criticism without being undone. □

If our primary desire is to please everybody, we aren't pleasing God.



Millennium Superworld

Part Thirteen

BEYOND THE MILLENNIUM

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."
—Revelation 21:1

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."
—Revelation 21:3-5

Our Pre-millennial world today has nothing that can even bear comparing with the wonders of the age that will follow the Millennium. Our finite minds can scarcely begin to comprehend its transcendent beauty, joy, prosperity, happiness, peace, love and light. Even John the Revelator was at a loss for words to describe it.

But what he has written in the last two chapters of Revelation is surpassingly grand. He sees that bright New World, complete and perfect, filled with the glory and knowledge of the Lord. Lacking any better way to convey thoughts, he uses a series of negative statements to describe it.

"...And there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1).

The "sea" is a term for "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues," in the symbolic language of Revelation (17:15). When the "new heaven and new earth" are complete, there will be no one outside God's fellowship; all will be part of one holy, immortal family, for "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

By this we are not to think God Himself will make His abode on earth, but Christ, "Emmanuel,...God with us" (Matt. 1:23) will dwell with His own forever. The disciples enjoyed being with their Master during His ministry, but He was taken away. At this time He will be with His own forever.

"...And there shall be no more death" (Rev. 21:4).

In that day the sod will not be cut with graves. Streets will never be lined with funeral processions. There will be no obituaries published. For death shall be swallowed up of life—life that is lasting, even eternal life!

"...Neither sorrow, nor crying" (Rev. 21:4).

In this text John pictures God as doing a most tender and loving

act: "He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 21: 4). In this world, bright as the lives of some may seem, each "heart knoweth his own bitterness" (Prov. 14:10). Now a thousand sorrows and heartaches beset the children of men; then, hallelujahs of joy will ring throughout the land.

"...Neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4).

Even the healthiest will appreciate this, much more they who experience constant pain. We can scarcely comprehend a world where no one is sick or suffering.

In this life all ties of friendship must eventually be broken. But in that Eternal age, friends will dwell together and enjoy each other's company forever.

Three short words assure us that this blessed state is a definite promise: "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (21:~5).

"...There shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:25).

Now we appreciate a night of rest in which to renew our strength. But someday it will get dark for the last time. Why? Because immortal beings will be there, and immortal beings radiate light, their radiance will mean the end of night; it will be light all the time.

What about the sun and the moon? The sun and moon will continue to shine, the Bible tells us, but they will not be needed for light. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Isa. 60:19).

A prophet of God centuries ago spoke of the "wise" as sources of light: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). The light of the immortals will make light for the mortal nations during the Millennium, for we read: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the

moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it" (Rev. 21:23-24). When all who live are equal to the angels, shining and immortal, the earth will indeed be filled with light, light that will never dim.

"And the gates of it [the Holy City] shall not be shut at all by day" (Rev. 21:25).

If the gates are not shut at all during the day, and there shall be no night, the gates will be always open!

Open gates: here is a symbol of perfect safety, perfect freedom, warm hospitality and free interchange of friendships.

"Open gates" suggest that while this beautiful earth will be the permanent abode of the saints, yet the dwellers in that city will not be confined. The whole universe will be open to them! They will be permitted to come and go freely in all parts of God's vast domain. And everyone who passes through these heavenly gates will be an angel of light. What privileges when earth becomes a part of heaven! (And what a change from the locked doors and security guards that we must have today!)

"I saw no temple therein" (Rev. 21:22).

In this new world, there is no one place especially sacred or holy, for the whole earth is hallowed. What need of a temple when all the earth is paradise?

There will be a spiritual temple, however, of which every glorified being will be a part. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God" (Rev. 3:12). Each will have a permanent place in that eternal realm, a place of strength, honor and beauty. Each will be an integral and eternal part of the glorious whole.

When Jesus walked with His disciples on earth, wherever He went there was a temple, whether in the mountains, in the wilderness, in

the midst of the street or by the concourse; on the heights, in the upper room, along the way to Emmaus, or on the shores of Galilee—wherever He was there was a temple. So it will be someday for all people on earth.

"There shall be no more curse"
(Rev. 22:3).

This suggests the absence of retribution for sin—because there will be no sin. Beyond the Millennium sin cannot go. Sin will be gone forever; God will be all in all.

There will be nothing to harass, nothing to torment, persecute or frustrate. There will be no hindering circumstances to resist and no inner feelings to restrain. There will be no weariness or weakness. With perfect freedom, life can be developed to its fullest potential.

In the present life we expect difficulties; we need them to develop virtue and character. But if we are granted a place in the Holy City, all this warfare will be over. Life will be one joyous experience.

The Fountain of Life—Drink!

Another beautiful promise is found in Revelation 21:6, *"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."*

A fountain is a source or spring-head of water. This fountain is the spring-head of the water of life—it sends forth vital refreshment that imparts life. To have the privilege of partaking of such a fountain suggests the disclosing of the knowledge of the source of life itself. Everyone who drinks of this fountain will have within him real life—and the secret of how to perpetuate it.

Jesus made a similar promise, stating that every faithful one would himself become a fountain of the water of life. *"He who believes in Me, just as the Scripture says, streams of water shall flow from his innermost being"* (John 7:38, Berkeley). Jesus was quoting the prophet Isaiah, who wrote, *"The Lord shall guide you continually and shall satisfy your soul in dry places; your strength shall be renewed, and you shall be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never dis-*

appoint" (Isa. 58:11, Berkeley).

Life is of God; and when God fully satisfies the soul of His faithful child, streams of living water—of life itself—*"shall flow from his innermost being"*—he himself shall become a fountain of life. Here is the ultimate in satisfaction.

Can we not see why God's people shall *"never thirst"*? They will have within them a living spring of living water!

More Water of Life

Another—greater—source of water will also be present. Says the Revelator, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"* (Rev. 22:1) — more water of life! The water will be everywhere!

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (22:2). Such luxuriant growth suggests the spiritual properties of this water.

This *"river of water of life"* is like the fountain. The life-imparting wisdom that proceeds from God, from Christ and from the newly glorified faithful shall ultimately become a source of life and spiritual blessing to everyone on earth!

The Revelator sees this symbolic river as shimmering like crystal. This suggests its pure, living quality. He observes also that this river has great transforming power: It promotes such abundant growth that the trees along it (faithful children of God—Isa. 61:3) bear fruit *continually*.

It is the time of eternal growth, eternal expansion, eternal improvement, eternal productivity. There are no limitations; no shortages, no deficiencies; there is abundance for all. No longer are the blessings of the garden of God enjoyed by only a few. At the beginning of the Millennium there were only a small number of these "trees" (144,000) to impart spiritual life for the blessing of the nations. Now there is a vast number of young trees of life. All these trees will flourish together in the paradise of God forever. And their life-giving fruit and leaves will

bless and heal far beyond the borders of this glorified planet.

The picture is enough to dazzle the human mind: a heavenly city, the New Jerusalem; fountains of life, streams of living water, trees of life, the paradise of God; no more sin, sorrow, sickness, pain or death, but praise and glory and honor and happiness and life forever, even forever and ever! Do we not feel like shouting with the *"great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God"*; and with the faithful coregents of the King, *"Amen; Alleluia"*; and with the King Himself, *"Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great"* (Rev. 19:1-5).

What transporting joy! Is it not a message to lift the gloom of these cool, closing hours of the day of salvation? We are not walking blindly into an unknown future. We have been informed. Great events lie ahead, everything of peace, joy, glory and victory.

Shall we let slip our opportunity to be part of all that the Millennium—and the Eternity that follows it—will bring to worthy earth-borns? Shall we slight opportunities to be part of such supreme glory and life?

Let fortunes pass. Let earthly friendships fail. Let temporal comforts go. Cast the honors and ambitions, fame and pleasure of this old world to the moles and bats. But do not let go the opportunity of becoming an immortal being in that eternal world!

As John closes His Revelation, Jesus Himself intervenes with one final word: *"Surely I am coming soon."* Does this not emphasize the urgency of the message — especially for us in this the final hour of the day? *"Surely I am coming soon."*

Hear John's expectant answer: *"Even so come, Lord Jesus."* He is ready; he is eager; he is willing. Are we?

Let us also conclude with John's note of expectancy. *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all"*—until the King returns, and all these wonders become glorious reality! □

SAY "No!"... SAY "Yes!"

Decisions. Decisions. Decisions. Shall we say yes, or no? What would Jesus say if He were in my situation?

Like it or not, the Christian life is made up of many small decisions. There is no evading it.

Christianity is not a negative religion. It is a glorious "Yes!" The apostle Paul tells us, "The yes to all of God's promises is in Christ, and through Christ we say yes to the glory of God" (2 Cor. 1:20, NCV). Jesus made it plain that all who accept His mandates have passed from a negative state (a state leading to eternal death) to a positive one (a state leading to eternal life—John 5:24).

But at this point the new believer finds that there are many negatives that must be part of his daily life. Because he is in the world but not of it, he finds that *no* becomes a very important word and attitude in his daily-life vocabulary. If he is to follow Jesus, there are things to be given up. Said Jesus, "If any man will come after [say "yes" to] me, let him deny himself [say "no" to himself], and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

By
saying "No"
to our lower nature we
are saying "Yes" to Jesus
and eternal
life!

And this saying no to self is a continuing requirement for the believer. To deny it is to deny the faith. One cannot say yes to Christ without saying no to the things that offend Christ.

And conversely, one cannot say yes to that which Christ forbids without at the same time saying no to Christ.

And one cannot say yes to the things that lead to eternal life without saying no to the things that lead to death.

This means that we must be constantly on the alert, for another decision may be needed at any moment.

Some may say that all this is not necessary, that too much concern with the negative is Phariseism; that "do this" and "don't do

that" are not part of Christ's law of love. True, Jesus condemned the attitude of the Pharisee. But why? To use Jesus' own words, it was because "They say and do not" (Matt. 23:2-3). Or as the passage is translated in the New International Version, "Do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." They gave attention to minute details while neglecting the weightier matters of "judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23:23).

The apostle Paul made plain that there is a negative side to being a Christian when he wrote, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). Flesh, our own lower nature, says, "My way." The Spirit, the higher way of life, says, "No, CHRIST'S way."

The result: conflict. You cannot do what you would naturally do. You must say no to self.

Paul said again, "They that are Christ's have crucified [said no to] the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). As long as life lasts we will be confronted by temptations to which we must say no if we belong to Christ.

But as is true in so many aspects of life, we find a paradox here. When we say "No!" to our natural instincts we are by that very action saying "Yes!" to God's higher law of life. Says Jesus, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39, NIV). Again, "Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33, NIV).

When we are confronted with an issue which requires a yes or no decision, what criteria shall we use? The following might be useful guidelines: We must say no to 1) anything that injures the body, either our own or another's; 2) anything that contaminates the mind, either ours or another's; 3) anything that degrades or disgraces the cause of Christ. This is not an over simplification but a practical basis for living the Christian life.

Why must we say no to anything that injures the body, either our own or another's? Because our body is the temple of God,

a s

Paul wrote:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). God has given us bodies to respect and use with reasonable care. To flaunt the laws of nature is not to glorify God.

We do not know what particular sins of the flesh the apostle Paul found a temptation, but he saw the need for maintaining strong controls on himself. These are his words to his brothers at Corinth: *"Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9: 25-27, RSV).*

The trend of our nature is to indulge in things that give pleasure to the senses without much regard to their long-term effect, with concern for whether they injure the body and/or contaminate the mind. On the lower level are the evils which afflict our society today—the urge to indulge in gambling, alcoholism, drugs and lust. Among the more disciplined, the tendency may be expressed in passion, anger, sensuality and pride.

Where do these temptations come from? We have not far to look, for Jesus said, *"From within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries,"* and all the temptations that beset us (Mark 7:21-23).

Did you notice what Jesus put at the head of the list? *"Evil thoughts."* Here is, without doubt, the fiercest struggle we face. Our minds naturally incline to harbor low, selfish, evil thoughts, and we must work with intense concentration to change them. Said the apostle Paul, *"Those who live following their sinful selves think only about things that their sinful selves want. But those who live following the Spirit are thinking about the things the Spirit wants them to do. If people's thinking is controlled by their sinful selves, there is death. But if their thinking is controlled by the Spirit, there is life and peace...."* (Rom. 8:5-8, NCV).

As Christians we have the double duty: of doing right ourselves, and also of defending Christ's cause and all that belongs to it. This means saying yes to the things which favor it, even if it means incurring the opposition of friends or associates. As committed ser-

vants of Christ, we are not our own because we have been *"bought with a price,"* so cannot do as we would have done formerly. Now our interests must be Christ's interests, and our views His views. This means being at odds with those who favor the fortunes of this world. Difficult? So be it. There is no other option.

Pleasing Christ (saying "Yes!" to Christ) means putting first things first. It means facing in the right direction. It means learning the lesson, *"Were you not raised to life with Christ? Then aspire to the realm above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, and let your thoughts dwell on that higher realm, not on this earthly life"* (Col. 3:1-2, NEB).

So strong is the "No!" which we as Christian's must say to all that opposes Him that the apostle Paul referred to it as a *"death,"* a *"crucifixion"* of self. The term does not overstate the facts. Yet it is one of the most sublime attainments possible. Hear Paul exulting in his own victorious struggle, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"* (Gal. 2:20).

This is the center of the Gospel message: Saying "No!" to sin and death so that we may say "Yes!" to righteousness and life. This means a new set of standards, a new code of ethics, a new daily program—all in and of and for Christ. It means submitting to His will, giving up our ways for His.

It is perhaps one of the greatest paradoxes of all. Saying "No!" to evil gives us the strength to say "Yes!" to goodness, righteousness and truth, and will at last open to us the door to eternal life. □

*Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand;
Choose Thou the path for me.*

*Smooth let it be or rough,
It will still be best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest.*

*I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might:
Choose Thou for me, my God
So shall I walk aright.*

*The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine; so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray.*

*Take Thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill
As best to Thee may seem:
Choose Thou my good and ill.*

*Not mine, not mine the choice
Though things be great or small;—
Be Thou my Guide, my strength
My wisdom and my all.*

—HORATIO BONER

Excerpts from the talks and writings of Rev. L. T. Nichols, founder of the Megiddo Church.

Searching...

One day while carefully reading, my eye caught a striking testimony in Prov. 2: 3-5, "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." How the reading of these testimonies impressed my mind! I must search as for hid treasures to ever find the knowledge of God. If that were so, what had covered it up?

I sought for the answer, and found it in the sayings of Paul, the great Apostle to us Gentiles. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:1-4). It was the fables to which mankind had been turned aside that had covered the true teachings, the sound doctrine; and the apostle Paul told us of it over eighteen hundred years ago, that we might be able to dig beneath the rubbish and find the hidden truth. How mighty seemed the undertaking, to dig beneath the rubbish of centuries and find the gold!

Where Is the Cross?

I was thinking the other day, "Where is the cross?" I looked back over the past, and I said to myself, "Where is the trial, the self-denial? It is so little!" I thought back to the time when I was a boy, and how I was put
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An Honest Man

Biography of L. T. Nichols

Part 6*

— A NEW MISSIONARY EFFORT —

As the years passed, Mr. Nichols felt the necessity of extending his missionary labors. He had an earnest desire to come into personal touch with greater numbers of people and tell them the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. He knew from his study of the Bible that we were in the last days of Gentile times, that the time was drawing near for Christ to take the reins of government on this earth and the judgments of God to be poured out. Writing of this time, he says,

"Looking at the world around us and seeing how few were keeping the commandments of Jesus, how few were looking for His coming, how few were ready to receive Him, we felt constrained to start out in our mission work at any cost. I had a lovely home not many miles from Minneapolis; a kind, loving wife who had stood by my side for nearly forty years, helping me bear the trials of life and sharing with me its joys; a large shop where I was manufacturing articles of my own invention, bringing in a good income, and an ever-increasing demand for the same; but temporal consideration could not stand in the way of duty. There was a God-given command in Joel 2:1, 'Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.' Also in Joel 2:15-16: 'Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation.'"

He felt that in order to sanctify the congregation, they must first be gathered together, and that only by daily association could the greater work of moral perfection be accomplished. Meditating upon these commands and how they could best be obeyed, he conceived the idea of a mission boat, concluding that more good could be accomplished at less expense by this method than by any other. The boat would serve as a home for the brethren and the waterways of the United States, principally the Mississippi River and its tributaries, would give access to unlimited territory for their missionary efforts.

To think was to act with this resourceful leader. Immediately plans were drawn for a large three-decked steamboat and construction was begun. Dimensions were 205 feet overall, beam 40 feet, with two engines, each of 125 h.p. The boat when completed had 52 staterooms, a complete machine shop for manufacturing and repair work, a carpenter shop and a flour mill. It was steam heated throughout, lighted by acetylene gas and fitted in every way for safety and comfort, the total cost being about \$22,000. Each family had its own staterooms, cupboards, lockers, section in the large refrigerator, etc., the family lines being as carefully drawn as in an apartment house. In no sense could the enterprise be termed communal.

*An Honest Man is available in printed book form. Write: Megiddo Press, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, NY 14619. Price: \$2.00.

The name chosen for this remarkable craft was *Megiddo*, a Hebrew word signifying "God is in this place with a band of troops," a name which since has been used to designate the religious organization founded by him. Mr. Nichols superintended the construction of the boat, and while this work was in progress the brethren engaged in disposing of their farms and property, preparatory to entering the new mode of living. Time was driving him hard; the shipbuilders were lagging grievously with their contract and winter was approaching. Not willing to be trapped by the close of navigation, he met the emergency with characteristic directness and energy. Rallying a large force of his brethren, he took them to Lyons, Iowa, where the boat was being built, and insisted that they be added to the working force. This additional labor turned the tide, and the launching took place on Oct. 24, 1901. The following account appeared in the *Clinton Herald*:

"Yesterday at the Godfrey Marine Ways was witnessed a strange and unusual sight, attendant upon the launching of the Mission boat *Megiddo*, which for several months has been under construction for the Mission Band.

"Long before the time arrived for the launching, crowds began to assemble. The weather was beautiful, an ideal October day. About four o'clock music was heard, and headed by the Rev. L. T. Nichols and led by a brass band, a large number of the group marched onto the levee, alternately playing and singing a missionary hymn. A brief prayer followed, and then 'Nearer My God to Thee' was beautifully rendered by the band; after which the Rev. Mr. Nichols delivered an address upon the proposed work of the Mission Band. He said the chief aim of the organization would be the turning of men and women from the ways of iniquity to higher, nobler Christian lives. He spoke of the prevalence of vice and sin, and called attention to the fleeting character of human life; and impressed upon his hearers the need of being in readiness when the final summons came. He paused in his remarks to say—'Praise the Lord,' as the last stay was knocked away and the great steamer glided smoothly down the ways and out upon the water.

"Mr. Nichols was listened to with the closest attention; then in the gathering twilight, the gray-haired leader of the Mission Band pronounced a heartfelt benediction upon the silent crowd before him. Once more forming a regular order, with their band playing, they marched back to their quarters in the Randall House, leaving behind them upon the waters of the Mississippi, their future home, the *Megiddo*, with the Stars and Stripes floating from the lofty staff at the bow. All present were much impressed with the earnestness and sincerity of the Christian workers and wish them success."

Where did the band come from? Mr. Nichols saw that he would need music as a part of the missionary work, as there is nothing like a band to attract people's attention. His followers had had little or no musical instruction, a few being familiar with the piano, but none had played a band instrument. "Never mind," he said, "we will have a band." A few weeks previous to the launching, he purchased the necessary instruments for a band of twenty-two pieces. Assembling the most likely candidates, he proceeded to teach them the rudiments of music from a blackboard chart. In an hour or two they were making something approximating tones; the next step was to play a scale. This accomplished, the leader wrote the music to "Home, Sweet Home" on the board and served notice that they must play it before the lesson was ended. (This, remember, was still the first lesson.) Dawn was breaking when the players left the classroom, but they had played "Home, Sweet Home." Thereafter the music for all services was furnished by the band, which drew favorable comment in many newspaper reports during the coming campaigns.

Before the finishing touches were put on the boat, the future occupants

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through the crucible, and this Word of God was the only anchor I could cling to. I had nothing to rely on but this Blessed Book and its teachings. (Tells some of his army experiences.) The commanding officer came to me and said, "Oh! Is this the way they are treating you?"

"Yes, sir," I said, "but never mind, it will come out all right." I had great faith, and time passed, the war ended and I went home.



No Ease

There came a time when I had nothing but my two hands, but they were good hands and I could do a lot of work. I worked hard, too, but still I never refused, if some one needed something to eat, to feed him. There would come a call to go thirty miles away. I knew they were hungry and thirsty, and I could not stay at home and sit down and take my ease.

I worked hard through the week and when it came Saturday I would think, There are those off there thirty miles away who need food; and I hitched up my good horse, took my wife, and drove like Jehu, and we soon had the distance covered. I would go Saturday evening and spend Sunday and Monday with them, and perhaps not get back home until Tuesday. I would hold meetings sometimes all night long. Sometimes I would go to one place on Saturday night and Sunday, and on Monday hitch up and go on another fifteen or twenty miles to another place. But, then, when I think of the pleasure we got out of it, I see no cross at all, any more than to stay at home and earn money. At home I often earned fifty dollars a day, but I took more pleasure, a thousand times over, in feeding the hungry, than in making fifty dollars a day. I would not take anything for the pleasure of it; I was paid right there.

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In Love of Humanity

By a study of the Scriptures for forty-five years, we have become convinced, without a lingering doubt, that life eternal and all its attendant blessings will be given only to those who fear God and keep His commandments, serving Him with all their mind, might, and strength. We know that apart from the blessed promises of His Word there is no hope of a hereafter. Science may make the world to wonder and applaud, but science with all its power cannot raise one man from death's slumber. Science with all its knowledge can give no hope beyond the tomb; nothing but the mighty power of God can perpetuate our existence beyond the grave.

As we realize this fact and see the world rapidly drifting into infidelity, see less and less earnest religious zeal, less searching after light, less reading of the Scriptures, in love of humanity we have felt constrained to start out in our mission work.

The Gospel Power

When I was young I attended a revival meeting where they shouted and sang until some fell exhausted to the floor. They called it the power of God. A strange way for God to manifest His power, I thought; especially when we read that *"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints"* and *"let all things be done decently and in order"* (1 Cor. 14:33, 40). I remembered that Paul said something about the power of God.

I was conversant with the Bible even then. I read in Romans 1:16, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."* Do not think you can have the power of God without the Gospel; do not be deceived, the *gospel is the power of God*. We

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were taking possession. Loading the furniture and household necessities for such a large family was no small task, but was executed by willing hands while the boat was being completed. Cold weather was fast approaching, and they must get started before the river was frozen over. By request the locks at Keokuk, Iowa, were kept open two weeks later than was customary for the benefit of the **Megiddo**.

On November 16, 1901, before their craft was fully completed and without even a trial trip, Captain Nichols and his band of gospel mariners steamed out upon the Father of Waters. Thirty families, including seventeen children, ninety persons in all, left good homes and willingly went aboard, braving the uncertainties of river life to aid in sounding the midnight cry to a world in darkness. They hurried south with all possible despatch, but even then the ice had formed in the locks ahead of them; not in sufficient quantities, however, to stop their progress; and the journey proceeded.

Traveling southward, they touched at Rock Island, Dubuque, St. Louis, and minor ports. At Island 40, just above Memphis, the **Megiddo** was for a time in grave peril, causing great apprehension and suspense on the part of the passengers. While all were seated in the assembly room, ready for the regular evening service, a loud crashing and crackling was heard. Upon investigation it was found that an immense ice floe from the Ohio River was being carried down by the current. The boat, being directly in its path, was in grave danger of being cut to pieces. The men rushed to the island, felled trees, and dragging them to the bank began undergirding the boat all around to break the force of the ice. Many times their hurriedly constructed barrier was carried away by the current and weight of ice and had to be replaced with more trees from the island. No one slept that night and everything was readied for a speedy evacuation of the boat in case she foundered.

For two days and three nights this peril continued; finally, on the third morning, Captain Nichols told the engineer to steam up and they would try to move out of danger. The hired captain protested, saying that it could never be done as there were tons of ice frozen to the boat. Captain Nichols, however, decided to make the trial, preferring to take the chances of a move rather than remain longer in their present dangerous location. So by his orders the move was carried out. Watching for an opening in the ice floe and pushing out across the river away from the current, they were soon in quiet water and all danger was past. All breathed a sigh of relief and a prayer of heartfelt thanks to God for safe deliverance. The **Megiddo** now steamed on down to Memphis, Tennessee, reaching there December 23, 1901, where it was decided to remain for the winter. While there, a small barge for carrying necessary supplies was built, and was afterward the companion of the **Megiddo** in all her travels.

On March 13, 1902, a large tent was pitched at the corner of Fourth and Looney Streets, and services were held for ten days. They were well attended and many books were sold to interested persons. The tent had a seating capacity of 1000 persons and was lighted with acetylene gas.

On the 27th of March, the **Megiddo** with her crew set out for the North, traveling 50 to 60 miles each day, often more, reaching St. Louis, April 8th, where they stopped for two weeks. The next stop was made at Alton, Illinois. Finding plenty of good clean water, green trees and a healthful Northern atmosphere, the tent was again pitched and a series of well-attended meetings was held. Proceeding on up the river on May 9th, the next stop was at Louisiana, Missouri, thence northward to Fort Madison, Iowa, May 13th, where services were held until May 29th. Sunday, June 1st, Captain Nichols held a meeting in Central Park, speaking from the band stand to a very attentive audience.

The next points visited were Lyons and Clinton, Iowa. At Clinton, land-

ing at a fine beach, Captain Nichols addressed an audience of about 400 people from the deck of the **Megiddo**. The tent was afterward pitched in River Front Park, and a series of meetings held. On June 17, Clinton was left behind and the next landing made was at Winona, Minnesota. Here another series of meetings was held until the 26th of the month. On the 27th, which was Sunday, Wabasha was visited and two services held.

July 1st saw the **Megiddo** anchored at St. Paul, Minnesota, where the summer was spent. During this time many of the ladies had taken up crochet work, making shawls, scarfs, and sweaters, etc., which were sold, the proceeds adding materially to the income of the group. While in St. Paul, meetings were held in their large tent, and many pamphlets on Bible subjects were also sold from the boat at all points visited.

On October 9th, the **Megiddo** again headed southward, stopping first at St. Louis, where a series of meetings were held, and from there to Paducah, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, where the Captain addressed several attentive audiences at the Second Presbyterian Church. The next move was to Nashville, Tennessee, on the Cumberland River, where the Captain decided to spend the winter, as it was already December. Through the courtesy of Captain Thomas Ryman and Major E. B. Stahlman, the services were held in the Tabernacle. During the five months spent here, a great many sermons were preached and solemn admonitions given by Captain Nichols. The last six meetings were held on Market Square, where large numbers of people listened attentively. The Captain preached his farewell sermon there on May 16, 1903, after which he thanked the people for the kind and courteous hospitality they had received while in Nashville.

Heading down the river again, a series of meetings lasting three weeks was held in Clarksville, Tennessee, the tent being filled to capacity most of the time. The press here, as in Nashville, gave considerable space to favorable comment upon the work and extracts of sermons from time to time. Proceeding further, meetings were held at Eddyville and Smithland, Kentucky. On June 15th, being again on the Ohio River, they proceeded up to Golconda, where three meetings were held and many books sold; thence to Shawneetown, then Henderson, Kentucky, where the meetings were attended by immense crowds and on to Evansville, Indiana.

While in Evansville, Indiana, a minister of the Christian Church, Mr. Davis by name, challenged Captain Nichols through the press to a discussion. This challenge was accepted by the Captain, also through the press, and an invitation extended to Mr. Davis to come to the tent to arrange the details. Mr. Davis failed to appear at the appointed time but came some days later and after the meeting made an ugly speech, saying that if Mr. Nichols wanted to discuss, they had a "Big Gun" in California whom they would bring to meet him. Captain Nichols then refused to discuss with Mr. Davis, saying that he would wait for the "Big Gun" and would deposit \$1000 in an Evansville bank as an evidence of good faith that he would return to Evansville when his opponent reached there. Being accused by one of Mr. Davis' members of refusing to discuss with his pastor, Mr. Nichols then said that he would discuss with the big man and with Mr. Davis as well. However, Mr. Davis never came to arrange the discussion.

The last meeting in Evansville was held August 3d; then on to Newburg, Indiana, where the **Megiddo** anchored for ten days. Owensboro, Kentucky was the next landing, and here the largest crowds of the summer attended the meetings. All was ended abruptly, however, by the news that the river was getting so low that they would be unable to reach Louisville unless they moved at once. That port being safely reached, it was on to Jeffersonville, Indiana, and Madison, Indiana, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom.

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can read what we believe in the Bible. Now read to me where the power of God is all excitement and shouting, will you? You cannot find such a thing in the Bible.

Sermons from the Holy Spirit?

When I was a boy a minister came to the place where I lived to hold a revival, and I went to hear him. He always came with his sermon all written out, and this night he had his sermon in a little book. He went up to the platform and laid the little book down on the stand, and said, "Let us pray." Then folding his hands he lifted his eyes heavenward and said, "O Lord, send down thy Holy Spirit and teach thy servant what to say, for he knoweth not how to teach this people!"—and he had every word written off on paper! Do you think he was truthful? Was it even honest?

The Camping Cure

Away back in my early days, I took my wife, we hitched up our ox team and went off into the Plains. There were no bridges, and we had to drive through rivers; but we got through all right at last. And why did we do that? We had an object in view. My wife's mother and two brothers had died of consumption [tuberculosis], and some thought my wife was getting it. I said, "The only salvation is to camp out of doors." So we went and camped out by the roadside week in and week out, month in and month out, until she began to be healthy. We had rattlesnakes and Indians to contend with; but still I was happy, because there was something ahead I was looking for. And so it is; we are laboring for a home in glory. Wouldn't you be happier laboring for such a home as this? If you work as you should, you will find more pleasure than you can ever get by laboring for the things of this world. □

Living THE NEW BIBLE

The Bible is one of the most universally circulated books in the world. Because of the respect which it commands, the Bible is the best-seller. Translated into more than 13,000 languages, millions of copies are sold annually. No expense has been spared in the attempt to translate it into contemporary English so that its message will be clear and understandable.

Impressive as these facts are, they can be deceiving. The Bible may be universally venerated, but it is not universally read. Most people today, even church people, have only the haziest knowledge of its contents. Most can not even identify familiar quotations that originated in the Bible. A lady who found herself seated next to a bishop, who wanted to keep conversation running along lines congenial to the bishop, asked him for his favorite Bible text. He insisted that he would prefer to learn what her favorite text was. There was a rather long pause, then brightening she replied that the text she particularly liked was, "They also serve who only stand and wait." And what is your favorite text?" she asked. Without even the suggestion of a smile, the bishop answered, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." If such is the common knowledge of the Bible, one wonders why it is appreciated? (The first quotation is from John Milton, and the second from Lawrence Sterne.)

In such a setting of ignorance, you and I are called to work and witness. We are called to be the saving salt of the earth, the shining light of the world.

What is the best way to communicate the Word of God to those who do not know it? Paul suggests

one answer: *"You are a letter from Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts"* (2 Cor 3:3, Berkeley).

Think of the implication of that statement! Think of being a letter from Christ! Think of bearing the responsibility in our daily lives for delivering the written message of God, factual, complete, forceful, speaking.

It means nothing less than that we are called to be the Word of God, the *living* Bible. We are the one Bible that all will read.

And surely none of us will deny it. As followers of Jesus Christ, we either commend Him or turn people away from Him. As Christians we either help to advertise His message, or we hinder the Gospel.

*We are the only Bible
The careless world will read,
We are the sinners' gospel,
We are the scoffers' creed,
We are the Lord's last message,
Given in deed and word:
What if the type is crooked,
What if the print is blurred?*

And sometimes the type is crooked, and the print is blurred. By our lives we are either promoting Christ's cause, or hindering it.

In view of this responsibility, how imperative that we be an authentic version of the Bible. An authentic version is one that is written *"Not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God"* (2 Cor. 3:3, NIV). If we are written with His spirit, if our lives are as carefully conducted as though they were dictated by God's own breath, what shining representatives we will be!

How Christ-like are you? How Christ-like am I?

Does my life reflect the message of Christ? Does it commend His teaching? Does it proclaim His gospel of meekness, humility, purity, holiness? Does it reproduce Christ's gratitude and praise of God? Are we so watchful of our thoughts and actions that we can say with Jesus, *"I and my Father are one"*? (John 17:21).

Ours is a Bible written not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. An authentic version of the Bible is not one printed on paper but one that has been transformed into a human life and is being acted out before our very eyes. That was Nietzsche's point when he said, "These Christians must show me that they are redeemed before I will believe in their redeemer." Nietzsche was wrong about many things, but he was right about this. Professing is one thing, practice is another. An authentic version of the Living Bible is one that practices what it preaches. When there is no written script, one must believe in what is seen and acted. In view of this fact, we need to pray,

*Make us to be what we profess,
Let prayer be prayer and heartfelt
praise;
From unreality oh, set us free;
Let our words be echoed by Your
praise.*

We are the living Word of God. That is the startling implication of Paul's words, and if we are to be authentic versions of the Bible, we must be a word from God. We must be, to use Paul's language, *"letters from Christ."*

We should always be conscious

of the impact that our lives have on other lives. *"None of us liveth unto himself,"* therefore we should be exceedingly careful of the life we lead.

*Thou must thyself be true,
If thou the truth would teach.
Thine own soul must overflow,
If thou another's soul would reach.*

If we would exemplify the Bible to others, if we would be the Bible in living form, we must first teach it to ourselves. The apostle Paul framed this thought in meaningful words when he wrote, *"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest not thou thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"* (Rom. 2:21). Our lives must match the quality and character of the Bible we profess.

All of us are imitators. We see it in the small child. We see it in the youth. And it doesn't stop there. In adulthood it becomes critical that Christians incarnate the Gospel they believe in, for who will trust a blind man to instruct in color, or who will hire one who is tone deaf to teach him music?

Jesus expressly taught that His followers should be illustrations of the Gospel. The force of one sentence in His Sermon on the Mount turns upon the insignificant word "so." *"Let your light so shine before men."* Why? *"That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16). Jesus said again, *"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"* (Matt. 6:23). There is no inconsistency so serious as the inconsistent Christian believer. There can be no failure more ridiculous in the eyes of a corrupt world than that of one who urges truth upon others but lives a lie. On the other hand, whenever a grand life goes about doing good, speaking good, spreading good, encouraging good, fully possessed of the power of the Gospel, pervaded with its spirit and radiant with its light, that life has a majestic driving force almost unlimited.

Some will trust an influence they cannot comprehend if they have

seen it in everyday life and action. Only those who had personally known Jesus could frame these powerful words: *"We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"* (1 John 4:14).

Then consider the means by which the message of God's truth is distributed from heart to heart. It is propagated not by transmission through mere symbols but by radiation through actual conduct. The lens of a burning glass will not only transmit the sun's rays but in transmitting them will concentrate them, until the surface they fall upon bursts into flame. Meanwhile the lens itself remains perfectly cool. Experiments of this sort have been performed with even a lens of ice, which can build a fire yet remain unmelted. There is nothing, however, in upright living to parallel this phenomenon. The torch, not the burning glass, is the emblem of the spiritual life; it flames when it illumines, and is warmed as it sets on fire. He who influences is himself influenced in return by the good which he has spread. He influences others most who has been nearest in contact with Christ.

Let us be torches, not burning glasses.

Such is the significance of the New Living Bible. It signifies the presence of the spirit of Christ; it is embodied in the meaning of the word "spirituality." There can be no accomplishment in the spiritual life unless we recreate Christ's life pattern in our own lives. *"Without me [severed from me] ye can do nothing,"* said Jesus (John 15:5). *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,...for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live"* (Rom. 8:6, 13, NASB).

This is the spirit that gives life, the spirit of which Jesus said, *"The words that I speak...they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63).

We cannot be Living Bibles unless this Spirit, this living Word of God, lives in us. No person can give more than he gets, nor communicate more than he possesses. Hence the duty of

everyone of us: to absorb the Word ourselves. This is the responsibility which the apostle Paul enjoins upon all: *"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things"* (Gal. 6:6). We must let God's spirit of truth work upon our heart, transforming us from the old creature to the new. Then another heart may be influenced through ours. This is how the message of the Living Bible is transmitted from one to the next.

When a plague was raging in Ireland many years ago, certain priests said that if any man would take

**Our lives
must match
the quality and
character of the
Bible we profess.**

from his own fire a piece of burning peat and light his neighbor's fire with it, he would deliver the family from an attack of the disease. The whole region was instantly alive with brands passing to and fro. If superstition could do this, should not a genuine devotion to truth do more? But the kindling must come from within; ours must be a heart on fire for God. Ours must be the full commitment of a dedicated heart which says, *"I give Thee all, I keep back nothing."*

What we need above all other earthly needs is that our influence be for good, that our entire Christian life be a lifting power to others. Then our lives will show a pattern of good works for others to emulate, and the holy fragrance which we diffuse will be the sweet fragrance of the Christ-like life wherever we are. We will be Living Bibles wherever we go, Bibles which everyone we meet can read. □

A past century story with a present lesson—

Engine Trouble

THE COURTROOM was very quiet. The boy standing before the judge's bench was certain to be handled in typical Maloney fashion.

Mike Faverty, bailiff in Western City's Juvenile Court, watched Judge Maloney as he studied the legal papers before him. Public opinion in the city had been demanding action to deal with the city's juvenile delinquency.

"I wonder how tough he'll get with this boy," said Mike to an assistant.

The Judge looked down at the white-faced, poorly clad boy of fourteen before him. The youth shifted his position uneasily. "I will postpone giving a decision on this case until Friday," said the Judge quietly. "I wish to talk to the defendant in my chambers."

In his chambers, Judge Maloney faced Jimmy Buerger and Mr. Olson. His well-known stern face wore a warm smile. "We've got to do something about this, Jimmy. Organizing a gang to throw rocks at trains filled with passengers just won't do."

Jimmy looked up at the Judge, and then out of the window into the cold gray of Western City's atmosphere. "I'll do something about it, Judge." The boy's tone was defiant.

"What, Jimmy?" asked the Judge, looking serious.

"I'll throw some more rocks at some more trains, Judge!" threatened Jimmy with an angry snarl in his voice.

A momentary flash in the Judge's gray eyes disappeared, as a warm smile came to his lips. He put his hands on the boy's shoulders. "I know something better than that, Jimmy."

The snarl deepened. So did the Judge's smile. He went to his desk and wrote a note. Handing it to Mr. Olson, he said, "You may go. I'll handle this. Will you please hand that slip of paper to Mr. Faverty?"

The Judge turned to the boy again. "We're going to take a ride, Jimmy. I want to show you something."

"Jimmy," said the Judge, as they were driving along, "it's a good

thing that you and your outfit weren't good shots. You broke only two windows. Most of the rocks bounced off the sides of the trains, I understand."

"Yeh, too bad!" The defiance was still there, but mixed with perplexity. "What are ya' gonna' do?"

"You'll see."

They rode on in silence, but soon the car turned up the driveway leading to the Judge's home. A few moments later they entered the Judge's living room, and there, to Jimmy's great surprise, were Mr. Faverty, Mr. Olson and four solemn-faced ragged youths.

"We got them, sir," said Mr. Faverty to the Judge. "It took some fast work, but the precinct captain in that district knew just where to go."

"Fine," said Judge Maloney. "You see, Jimmy, I didn't have the other boys come to court today because I wanted to study your case first, since you're the oldest. After I had talked to you, I asked Mr. Olson and Mr. Faverty to get the other boys. Now I think all of us are about ready to go down to the basement quarters."

The boys looked frightened, wondering what was ahead.

The Judge led the way down the long winding stairs.

"Rather a big house for an old bachelor," said the Judge. "I'm all alone in the world, but there are a lot of things which I like to have around."

They entered a door at the end of a corridor. The room was a large one. The floor was covered with a gigantic model railway system. The Judge pressed some buttons on a control table, and two gray streamliners began moving along the miniature tracks.

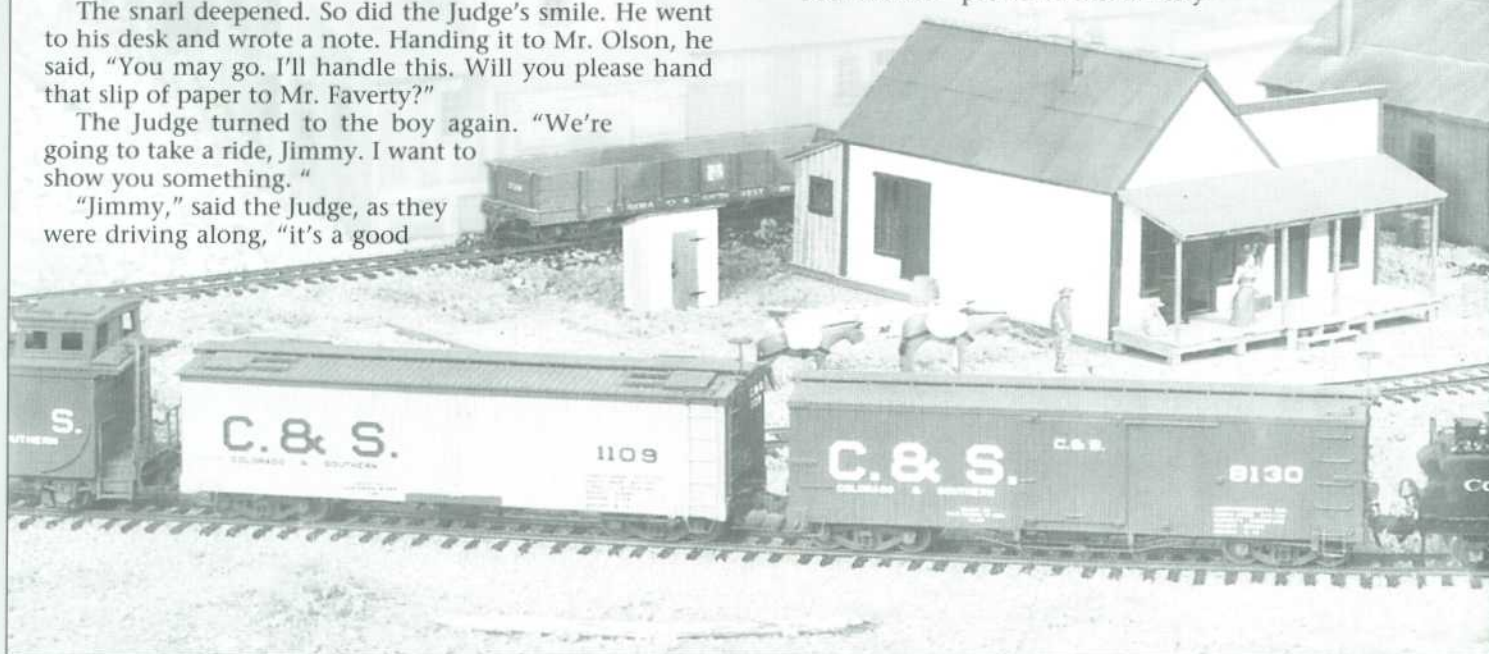
"Want to throw rocks at them, boys?"

The Judge studied the boys. All five faces were intent on the moving trains. There was no evidence of a snarl.

"What a layout!" exclaimed Jimmy. He dropped to his knees as the streamliners roared by. The other boys did likewise. After a few moments, Jimmy jumped to his feet. "Could we—could we—run them, Judge?"

"I'm going to give everything in this room to you and your friends, Jimmy," said the Judge quietly.

"Your Honor!" protested Mr. Faverty.



The other boys jumped to their feet, excitedly.
"Oh, you've got to earn it," said the Judge. He met the bewilderment in the boys' faces with a smile.

"You see, I had to earn it before I got it," the Judge declared. "I've had to earn a lot of things. I don't have any family, but I'm able to have these things by doing for others. I want to share them with you now."

"Do you mean you're going to give us these tracks and trains?" asked one boy. "Where could we put them?"

"I said you had to earn it. You boys did enough to be sent to reform school." The Judge hesitated.

"I don't want to handle your case that way," continued the Judge. "I guess I really don't need these trains any more—not as much as you do. You're going to have charge of them in the new boys' club being built."

"You mean, Judge—" That was all Jimmy could say.

"We'll put you boys on probation. When the club gets going, you will organize a model railroad room on one floor. You will have to set up the room, and most of the responsibility for taking care of it will be yours. Carry it out, and there will be no reform school."

"Oh, thanks, Judge." The chorus of voices was excited with genuine enthusiasm.

"You see," said the Judge, "there are other ways to get excitement than by throwing rocks. Running these trains can be exciting, and it's all within the law, too. Let's see what good railroad men you can be. If you run into engine trouble, I'll try to help you, as one railroad man to another. Now clear out, boys. I'll see you next Tuesday afternoon down at the new club. See how many more boys you can get interested."

The boys made a noisy departure, thanking the Judge, promising their support in the new venture.

The Judge turned to the two amazed men, who stood watching the departing boys.

"Well, I'll be, Judge!" Mike Faverty spoke first.

"How did you happen to think of something like that?"

The Judge fingered the switches on the control table, a reminiscent smile on his face. "It has been many months since I've been down in this room. I used to spend a lot of time working on these trains. I got interested in them when I was a boy on the East side, just like Jimmy. Then one day I met old Judge Ronen, and he told me about trains. You see, men," the Judge spoke slowly, "I once had engine trouble, too."

—Reprinted from
Sunshine Magazine

Watch Out for the Blind Spots

I almost got hit a few weeks ago. A friend and I had been stripping woodwork and ran out of supplies. So I drove to the nearest shopping area and parallel parked in front of the hardware store. I made my purchase, returned to the car, and began to pull out of my parking space. I looked over my left shoulder, saw a car approaching and waited. Then, as I glanced into my side-view mirror to make sure the street was clear, I pulled out quickly.

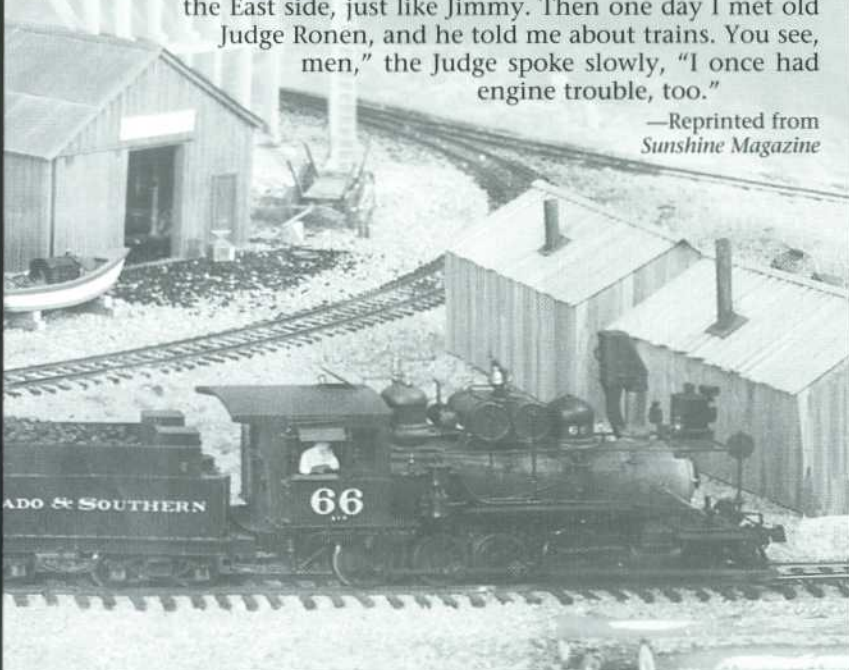
Instantly, a horn blared and tires screeched. Shocked, I looked to my left and realized that I had almost been hit. How could it have been? Then I realized: Even as I had looked the unsuspected car had been there—in my blind spot.

Reflecting on this incident, I realized that the blind spot in my left-view mirror is not the only one I have, nor is it the most dangerous. Worst of all, blind spots are something I am usually unaware of, until I am in a near tragedy.

Blind spots are the inconsistencies in our thinking, in our beliefs, in our behavior, that we fail to see. The father who reprimands his child for using rough language, then uses it himself, has a spiritual blind spot. The woman who refuses to attend a lurid movie, yet watches the same on her TV at home, has a moral blind spot. The person who criticizes the politician whose performance does not measure up to his promises, yet is not strictly honest with the grocery clerk, has a moral blind spot. The person who thinks his neighbor unkind, yet is harsh with his own children, has a moral blind spot.

I don't know what your blind spots are, but I am trying hard to discover my own, and trust that God will keep revealing them to me, so that one by one I can overcome them. What a tragedy to be at the Judgment Seat of Christ and find that we have sins on our record that we refused to acknowledge!

God grant us the self-honesty to welcome any help that He sends, whether from family, friend or stranger—so that we may correct these deficiencies before too late! □



WHY DID ESAU SELL HIS BIRTHRIGHT?

"Could you make this plainer to me? I have often read of how Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Hebrews 12:17 says Esau found no place for repentance 'though he sought it carefully with tears.' Does this mean that God can reject our repentance, or maybe Esau did not fully repent?"

There is no question but that God wants us to repent from our wrongdoing. In fact, through His prophets he pleaded with the people to repent and turn from their wicked ways, so that they would not have to suffer the penalty of their transgressions, so that iniquity would not "be their ruin" (Jer. 26:3; Ezek. 14:6; 18:31). The Bible tells us that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). He would not be consistent if He rejected one who truly repented.

Why was it that Esau "found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears"?

Since we have only a limited amount of information from which to judge, and we know that God is just, we may conclude that 1) Esau's repentance was not a complete repentance, as you suggest, or 2) Esau's repentance was not genuine, or 3) it was not according to God's terms.

True repentance is not merely regret for one's conduct but a complete turning from sin and toward God. It involves a right about face, a willingness to change one's direction and pursue a totally different course of action (conduct). As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, "Repent... and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

True repentance includes the blotting out of one's sins. The prophet Ezekiel tells us that God blots out the sins of one who turns from them and does that which is right. "If the wicked...walk in the

statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 33:15-16).

What do we know about Esau? Did he meet God's conditions for repentance?

1: Esau is called a "profane" person (Heb. 12:16).

The basic meaning of the original word translated "profane" is "outside the temple," "removed from the sacred, unconsecrated" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). It has been translated as "godless," "irreligious," "irreverent," "careless about God." The word seems very appropriate in describing the character of Esau. He did as he pleased, and made no effort to frame his life to the Divine pattern.

2: Esau "despised his birthright" (Gen. 25:34).

The word translated "despise" means "to disesteem:—despise, disdain, condemn, think to scorn" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). This suggests that he did not take seriously the birthright or the loss of it—very possibly because he did not really believe that he could lose it. The double portion was his because he was the eldest son, a fact nothing could change. When he made the exchange with Jacob, he very likely did not think it was anything "for real."

Esau was not seeking a place in the Divine plan, and did not see the opportunity that lay in his path for the taking. Little did he realize that this was no ordinary inheritance, or that in that inheritance lay the destiny of the nation. Esau could have been an instrument in God's hand, but he did not seek God or try to work with God. And by giving away the inheritance he forfeited what he could have had.

Esau's "repentance" very possibly means that he changed his mind about forfeiting the inheritance when he found he could not recover the loss. The word translated "repentance" (*metanoia*) has two meanings. Both involve a change of one's mind, but one definition implies guilt, as turning from one's sin, a "reformation"; the other means the "reversal of a decision." It seems likely that Esau's repentance was of the latter type, especially in view of the fact that God did not accept Esau's repentance. The word from which *metanoia* is derived (*metanoeo*) means "to think differently afterwards; to reconsider." By seeking "repentance" Esau indicated that he now saw the value of what he had thoughtlessly given away and wished to reverse the decision and claim the inheritance. When he found that the loss was irretrievable (the integrity of the system had to be maintained by the bestower) he was grief-stricken.

Esau in making the decision to sell his birthright did so of his own free will. Jacob and Esau as individuals were both free to choose their own course of action; but God, by His Divine foreknowledge, revealed in advance that Jacob would be favored above Esau. As the apostle Paul wrote, "It was said unto her [Rebecca, before the children were even born], The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:12-13).

In Summary

It appears that Esau's "tears" were not for his sinfulness but for his material loss, the realization that he had forfeited something of value which he could not recover. We have no evidence that he repented from his wrong course and made a right-about-face in his life.

The Bible record shows that Esau was of an earthy, carnal character,

without spiritual insights. Esau was a man of the flesh, a slave to his appetites, a stranger to God's will. One law binding upon the God-fearing people of that time was that they not marry people from the idolatrous nations around them. Contrary to this law, Esau took two wives from the Canaanites (Hittites), which, we read, *"were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah"* (Gen. 26:34-35).

Someone has commented that Esau acted flippantly toward his sacred rights; he did not take seriously his spiritual opportunities. It is written of the wayward Israelites that they *"despised the pleasant land"* (Ps. 106:24). This seems to have been Esau's attitude toward the birthright. Only when he realized that he could not recover that which he had so lightly rejected was he sorrowful. By not appreciating God's goodness, he showed himself unworthy of greater blessings.

Had Esau shown that he sincerely repented and wished to change his manner of life, God would have forgiven him; but even then he would have had to live with the consequences of his irresponsible conduct. God does not undo the wrong. He does not remove the present consequences of our transgressions, even when we turn and repent.

There is a lesson here for us: to appreciate our God-given opportunities, to esteem them for their true worth, and show our gratitude by a life of obedience to God. If we do not do this, our bitter tears of remorse will not avail to recover what we have lost.

◆ When was the creation?

"I have read in your magazine that you do not believe in 'a literal creation 6000 years ago.' I believe there was a literal creation as recorded in Genesis 1, and according to the center references of KJV, it was in 4004 B.C., which would have been almost 6000 years ago. When do you people think the creation was?"

We certainly believe that God is the creator of all that we see about us, however we do not believe that Genesis 1 is telling us principally

about that literal creation, therefore do not believe that the literal creation took place a mere 6000 years ago. In the first of Genesis, the inspired writer is describing a special, on-going, spiritual creation which is revealed throughout the entire Bible as His plan of salvation for humankind. His great purpose is to fill the earth with His glory, a righteous people, who will be eternally blessed (Num. 14:21).

The Bible many times speaks of God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, but we have no reason to believe that this creation took place only 6000 years ago. The evidence of rocks and fossils testifies to a planet that is billions of years old, and there is nothing in the Bible to contradict this. (Refer to our booklet *God's Spiritual Creation*).

You say that according to the center references in the KJV the creation occurred in "4004 B.C., which would have been almost 6000 years ago." The dates in most common publishings of the KJV of our Bible, such as you cite, were not part of the inspired revelation from God but were added by a Bible scholar named James Ussher, in the 17th century. Mr. Ussher did many calculations, and figured out a time scheme which he thought realistic, but he did not claim it was infallible, nor is his dating accepted by Bible scholars today. It is still, however, printed in many Bibles.

◆ What about Cain's Wife?

"On a different subject, who was Cain's wife and who were her parents? After Cain slew Abel, we read that he 'went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden' (Gen. 4:16). Verse 17 says that they had a child, Enoch. Since the Bible doesn't mention any daughters of Adam and Eve, whose daughter do you think Cain's wife was?"

Your question assumes that Adam and Eve were the first persons on the earth, and the only ones until they had children. This is a commonly held assumption, but we find nothing in the Bible to support

it. Taking the creation narrative in Genesis, chapters 1-3, as the account of a spiritual creation, we are convinced that the author is using these people in his narrative not as individuals but as representatives of classes of humankind. Even though there was a literal Adam and a literal Eve, who had literal children, we do not believe they were the first persons to be created. They were simply the first called by God to learn His knowledge and to be given opportunity to serve Him.

There are several inferences in the Genesis account which suggest Adam and Eve and their children were not the only persons living on earth at the time. One example is Gen. 4:14, where, after Cain killed Abel and was condemned by God, he said, *"My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold thou has driven me out this day from the face of the earth;...and it shall come to pass, that everyone that findeth me shall slay me"* (Gen. 4:13-14). If the three persons (Adam, Eve, Cain) were the only living persons at the time, who constitute the *"everyone that findeth me"* in Cain's speech? Would his own family members react in such a way?

In verse 16, we read that Cain *"went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod."* The next verse mentions his wife—where did he find a wife, if there were no other people on the earth? Also after his son Enoch was born, we read that *"he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son"* (verse 17). Where were the people to inhabit a city if there was only one family on the earth?

Who was Cain's wife the daughter of? We are not told, but we are reasonably sure that she was not of the immediate family. The secular records of history document people living on the earth much longer ago than 6000 years. Though the earth was only sparsely populated at that time by modern standards, there were many people, especially in certain areas of habitation. Semitic civilization is said to date back to about 8000 B.C., and there were many people who lived many years—probably many thousands of years—before there were what we know as civilizations.

◆ **Is the voice of Wisdom the voice of Jesus Christ?**

"You say that in Proverbs 8 the voice of wisdom is speaking, but you missed the real point, because that voice of wisdom is Jesus Christ."

Proverbs 8 is written as giving a human voice to the wisdom of God. The effect is that of a person speaking. *"Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?...She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men"* (Prov. 8:1, 3-4). Wisdom is given the ability to speak as a person, a literary device known as personification. *"Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips"* (Prov. 8:6-7).

Throughout the chapter, the voice of wisdom continues, but nothing in the chapter alludes to Christ or states that the voice of wisdom is the voice of Christ.

Wisdom is represented as giving counsel, leading in righteousness, appointing kings and judges, and dispensing riches and honor. All these are clear functions of the wisdom of God, or God working by His wisdom.

The chapter even associates the work of creation with the wisdom of God. *"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was....Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world....Then I was by him as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him"* (Prov. 8:22-26, 29-30). Proverbs 3 also makes this link: *"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up."* (Prov. 3:19-20). The Lord is said to

work according to His wisdom, His knowledge.

How is Christ related to the wisdom of God? The apostle Paul made the connection several times. In 1 Cor. 1:24, he writes that *"Christ [is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God."* And at the end of the chapter he says, *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"* (verse 30).

How was Jesus Christ the "wisdom of God"? As He personified it in His life, as He allowed His life to be directed by it. But we are also told that Jesus had to acquire this wisdom, that it was not His by nature. This fact was prophesied of Him: *"Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good"* (Isa. 7:15).

Paul explained how Jesus was the wisdom of God: *"In him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col. 2:3). He was called the wisdom of God because He possessed it. If we were to take literally the statement that Jesus Christ was the wisdom of God, we would also have to say that Jesus' disciples were literally the *"light of the world"* because Jesus said, *"Ye are the light of the world"* (Matt. 5:14). The two illustrations are parallel. Jesus was the *"wisdom of God"* in the same sense that His disciples were *"the light of the world."*

The Bible tells us that Jesus was

the Son of God, and as such He had no existence until He was born of the virgin Mary. He was *"made of a woman, made under the law"* (Gal. 4:4), and when He was a youth it is said that He *"increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"*—He had to acquire wisdom, He was not born with all wisdom (Luke 2:52).

When Jesus was called the "word" or "wisdom" of God, it was because He exemplified its character and meaning in His own life, because He lived it perfectly and completely (John 1:10). On His lips the Word of God came alive.

This fact leads to another Scriptural singularity: The term *"Christ"* is sometimes used to personify the Word of life, the wisdom of God, the teachings He embodied. This spiritual Christ, the Word of truth, is what Paul was speaking of when he wrote, *"Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above:) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach"* (Rom. 10:6-8). In this passage the apostle is speaking of Christ as being the *"word of faith,"* the gospel.

For further discussion of this subject, see our booklet, *"Trinity or Unity?"* □

**Obituary
Martha A. Walck**

On Sunday, February 2, we met to pay our last respects to a Friend and Sister, Martha A. Walck. Sister Martha passed away Thursday evening, January 30, 1997, at the age of 85. She, with her mother, sister and brother, became interested in the Church during the early 1920's when the Megiddo missionaries were traversing Western New York by yacht. The family moved to Rochester in 1945.

Sister Martha believed strongly in the principles and beliefs of the church, and gave generously to

help with its work. She was kind, thrifty, and very grateful for all the help she received. She spent much of her life caring for sick family members—her father, sister and brother, each in turn.

She spent her last weeks at the Church's home care facility, where she thanked her caregivers daily for the excellent and kind care.

Her hope was in the resurrection, the great Day when the *"Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise,"* to receive the fruit of their labors.

Pondering the Word...

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."
—1 Tim. 4:13, NIV

A man once told of his own experience. When he was young, he had a glowing religious faith. Then he changed his career, and did not take time for his religious life. One day he realized that his faith was gone. "I never consciously gave up my religious beliefs," he explained, "I simply didn't use it. It was as if I had put my beliefs in a drawer, and when I opened it, there was nothing there at all."

The apostle Paul has the formula for preventing this disaster: "...devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."

Keep your faith active, and you will keep your faith.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
—Rev. 22:14

To obtain permission to live in another country can be a difficult process. There are also requirements for those who wish to enter the City Eternal and partake of the tree of life: they must "do his commandments." God wants the honor of a total obedience to His mandates. The one who would enter must be morally acceptable, upright, blameless, for we read, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27, NIV).

The price of admission may seem high, but it will be only a faint shadow compared with eternal delight.

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." —Psalm 66:18, NIV

God is not judging only our actions but our heart. When we agree to serve God, we agree to hate every form of evil.

Sounds good in theory, but when we come to a sin we really love, which we can hardly bring ourselves to give up... what then? The Psalmist had this problem—or he had had it when he wrote these words. At this point, he is looking back on a victory, with this shocking thought: "If I still held the sin I had against my record," he says, "if I had kept cherishing it deep in my heart, the Lord would never have heard my prayer."

Can we think of anything more dreadful than to be isolated from God, to have His ears closed to us in our hour of distress?

David's feeling comes through to us: let go the cherished sin; it isn't worth it!



I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." —John 9:4

Jesus was practical. He did not let time go idly by; He made the most of it. He had a great amount of work to do in a very short time.

While our situation today is very different, the effect is the same: we, living at the very end of this age, have a great amount of work to do in a very short time. If we have lost time in the past, we have all the more reason to make the most of today. Our need is urgent, because "the night cometh when no man can work."

Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." —Psalm 26:2

David was concerned to know the true state of his heart before God. He did not want to be deluded. "Reins" and "heart" represent our most inward thoughts and feelings. If our first desire is to be right with God, we, too, will long to be examined; we will welcome any correction God allows to teach us.

The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." —Psalm 29:11

Strength. Peace. Blessing. God allows difficult experiences in our lives, but He also equips us for them, and uses them to draw us closer to Him. Just as the eagle faces the storm head-on and allows it to carry him to higher altitudes, so we can face the storms of life with God and be lifted to higher spiritual levels. We can even have peace in the storm.

The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever."
—Psalm 121:8

Going and coming, coming and going: such is the pattern of our lives. But what assurance to know that through it all God watches over those who are faithfully serving Him. In all their undertakings He will keep them, so that nothing will hurt or hinder their prospect of eternal salvation. □



By and By

*A better day is coming,
A morning promised long,
When girded Right with holy might
Shall overthrow the Wrong;*

*When God the Lord will listen
To every plaintive cry
And stretch His hand o'er every land
With justice—by and by.*

*The boast of haughty error
No more shall fill the air,
But Age and Youth shall love the Truth
And spread it everywhere.*

*No more in want and sorrow
Will helpless mankind cry,
But strife shall cease and perfect peace
Shall flourish—by and by.*

*Oh! for that holy dawning
We watch and wait and pray,
Till o'er the height the morning light
Shall drive the gloom away.*

*And when the heavenly glory
Shall flood the earth and sky,
We'll bless the Lord for every word
Of promise—by and by.*