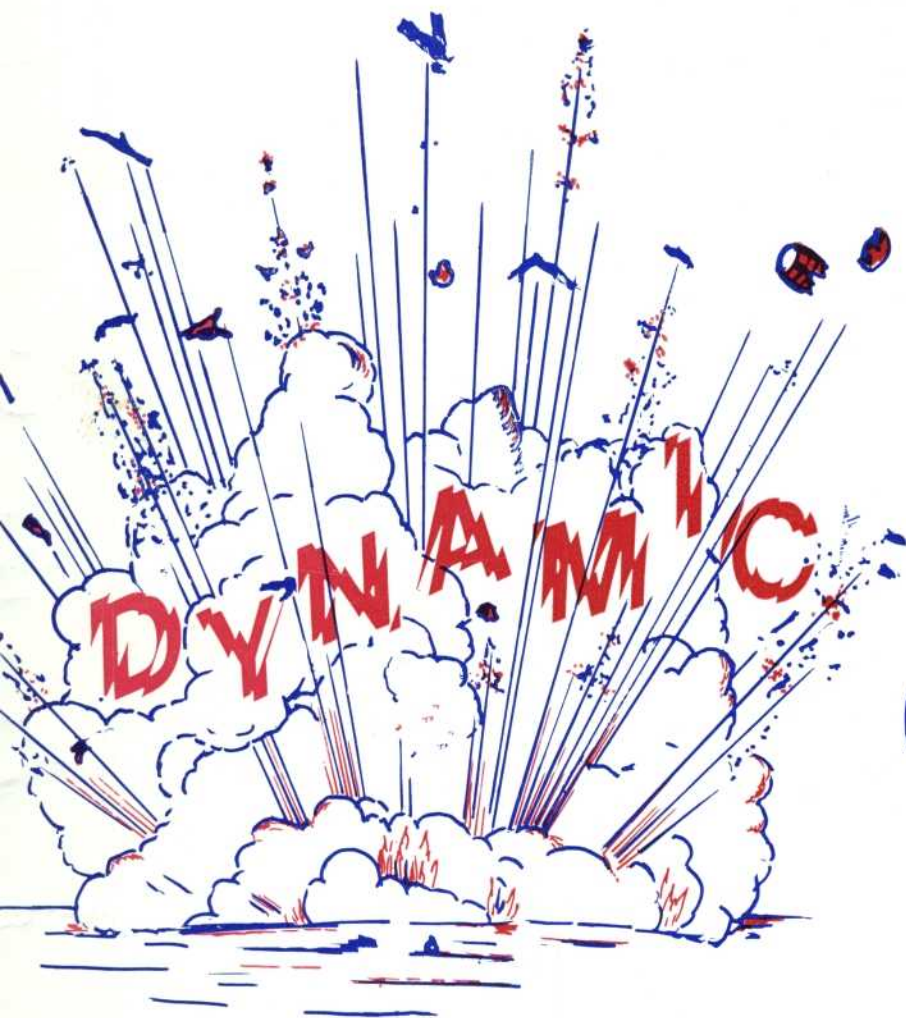


# Megiddo Message



OR



# FAITH

# Opinion or Principle?

**A**S SEEKERS after what God has to offer, each of us should be building into our lives certain principles by which we can judge what God calls right and wrong. Alongside these basic principles we have many opinions, some of which are an outgrowth of principle and some entirely independent. Both principles and opinion have their place in our lives; the trouble is that sometimes we confuse the two.

Opinions and principles differ widely. Opinions are products of our own minds; principles are derived from the laws of God. Opinions have to do with personal tastes, preferences, past experiences, human judgments, and the scores of other things that shape us into what we are; principles are God-given guidelines by which we can recast our thoughts, words and feelings until we become morally "like God."

Opinions are subject to whim and notion and change; principles are permanent. Opinions have only personal value; principles are universal. Opinions have to do with passing interests and things of this world; principles concern the eternal, even "the word of the Lord" which "liveth and abideth forever."

Such wide differences between the two, and yet how easily—and disastrously—we may confuse them!

It is impossible—and unnecessary—that we divorce ourselves from our experiences and preferences. To like or dislike certain colors, foods, mannerisms, and methods is human and legitimate. And while all these must be governed by our principles, it is important to realize that they are not principles themselves and should not be set forth as such. Opinions were never meant to serve as the standard by which we live; nor are they to be the standard by which we judge others. Strong opinions are easily voiced, and may require much governing to keep them in their proper place.

As professing Christians, we must ever

be careful that we do not take them too seriously ourselves, or allow them to absorb too large a portion of our conscious thought. They may seem all-important, but in the divine scheme they just don't matter that much. Our first interest must always be God and principle. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

When we fall into conversation with a Christian brother or sister, we would do better to discuss our opinions less and our principles more. Lengthy discussion of "pet" ideas make what Jesus called "idle" words, words that gender strifes and discord and do not edify. We are not examples of true believers when our chief topic of conversation is the selling of our opinion.

The Bible records the thoughts and words of many of God's great men and women, but among them all is not a word of their own opinions—they simply didn't matter! Yet how easily and freely we dispense ours!—if not watchful.

It might help us if we could gather all our opinions together sometime and place a large sign upon them: "Handle With Care." However strongly held and valuable to us, they are not divine and should never be handed out as such. Our opinion may be the very best, from a human point of view; still there is a vast distance between its level and the level of God's thoughts—even the distance between heaven and earth! (Isa. 55:8-9).

God gives us the opportunity of exchanging our thoughts for His, but too often we do not look upon the giving up of our own opinions as such an opportunity." We hang on to them—as if they were so much better than those of the Ruler of the Universe!

Let's try handling our opinions with greater care. And when we must give them out, let us give them for just what they are: *our* ideas, no more. We are not here to promote our opinions, but God's principles—which are sure to be worth thinking about, and worth listening to, besides. ●●

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## Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

# Megiddo Message

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July, 1977

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# DYNAMIC

OR

# FAITH



OUR LORD often used the commonplace to bring out eternal truths. An ordinary water well spoke to Him of "living water," "springing up into everlasting life." In a tiny grain of mustard seed He found an illustration of the promise of the future growth of His kingdom. In a grape vineyard with its vines and branches He saw a parable of Himself as the "true vine," His Father as the vinedresser, and His disciples as branches whose chief purpose is to bear fruit. To fishermen mending their nets He gave an invitation: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

But to a sophisticated generation who has accomplished the remarkable feat of placing a man on the moon and bringing him safely back to earth again, or of creating a bomb so powerful that it can annihilate a vast city within minutes, there seems to be little significance to the lowly well, the grain of mustard seed, or the vine.

Speaking of this generation, a minister once expressed his opinion thus:

"Had Jesus come to our generation, what in our culture would He have used to make real for us His teachings? We can only guess. Yet we are confident that His keen spiritual insight would have found memorable meaning in objects and events to which we give little thought. I think, for instance, that He might have made significant use of the noisy manner in which we celebrate what is supposed to be Independence Day, but what for most of us is only the Fourth of July. In my imagination I can almost see Him smiling gently at our firecracker fun and hear Him speaking with discernment of our 'firecracker faith.'"

We cannot agree that Christ would smile at, or tolerate in any degree, the modern methods of "noisy celebration," but let us see if we possess what could be called a "firecracker faith."

The dictionary says a firecracker is "a paper cylinder, containing an explosive and a fuse, and discharged to make a noise." A firecracker, then, is

a small imitation of a stick of dynamite. Except for its diminutive size, the chief difference between the two is that the firecracker has only enough explosive power to make a noise, not enough to be of any practical value. If you want to move a mountain or prepare a roadbed, you don't use firecrackers!

Do you see the meaning of "firecracker faith"? It is religion that is but a small imitation of the dynamic faith which was in Christ Jesus. It is religion that is just powerful enough to make a show, or a noise, but has no practical or permanent value.

Jesus described such faith in telling outwardly religious people of His day, "You are like white-washed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones" (Matt. 23:27, RSV). Paul described it again when he wrote to Timothy of those who "preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality" (II Tim. 3:5, NEB).

Never have our lives more desperately needed dynamic faith than at the present time. Our Lord stands before our very door. We are pressed for time, and no weak, faltering faith, no outward show will accomplish the gigantic task that still remains.

The apostle Paul reflected the spirit of dynamic faith when he wrote, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14, RSV).

"The upward call of God in Christ Jesus" is still heard today by those with ears to hear, those willing to be led by God's Word to new victories over evil. Each new height of moral character or spir-

itual insight brings to view challenging horizons of yet-to-be-conquered territory. God still gives to those willing to be changed a vibrant, transforming, dynamic faith.

How is our faith? Does it thrill our being to realize we are in possession of the pearl of great price? Do we exult in the fact that we have obtained the knowledge whereby we may gain for ourselves the riches and pleasures of eternity—and yet not have that knowledge a driving force in our lives? Are we enthused about the change God's Word brings into the lives of others but have no desire to change or be changed ourselves? Is ours a *firecracker* faith—a thrill, an escape, a release, something exciting that happens outside us, which we can watch with little idea of personal effect.

Do we say and do what we know will place us in good standing with our Christian friends while our heart lacks genuine sincerity in wanting really to change our ways for God's? Is our faith like the firecracker—flaring briefly, making a show and a noise, then dying away without effecting any real change in our lives?

To possess firecracker faith is to be inoculated with a mild form of religion. It is power wasted, because it does not accomplish any good purpose.

Ezekiel observed this type of lukewarm people in his day—might we be in danger of being classed with them? Of them he wrote, "And they come unto thee as 'the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." They *appeared* to be reverent; they even said, "Come, and let us hear what the Lord has said"; but they lacked that dynamic faith that changes lukewarm believers into white-heat Christians. They did not want to do the things commanded them (Ezek. 33:30-32).

Are we willing to see that much of our following of Christ has had the same shallow motivation? We want to see God change the world, but are we eager for His Word to change us? Do we want to be entertained, but not enlisted? Do we seek a religion that is comforting but not challenging, thrilling but not transforming? Is much of our religion an outward show, an effort to appear better before others than we are?

If such has been our attitude in the past, no wonder our faith has no more power than a firecracker. No wonder it has not moved the mountains of sin that hinder our progress. How weak is the religion of one who will not change! Words of

Isaiah, reflected by Jesus in describing the throngs which followed Him, are applicable to those whose only concern is to appear righteous before men: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8).

On the other hand, how mighty is the religion of those who recognize the need for personal change, whose faith is dynamite. Call the roll of great Christians whose lives have counted for the Master, and you will find that their dynamic faith sprang from a continuing surrender of self to the transforming power of God. "Follow me," said Jesus to Andrew and Peter, "and I will make you. . . ." They would become what they were not—fishers of men. As they followed Him, they did indeed become "fishers of men"—and more. They became men above men—humble, daring, loving, leading, giving, serving, growing men, purer and ever purer in heart.

How shall we acquire this living, dynamic faith? By applying ourselves to its acquisition with the same fervor we would use if seeking for silver and searching for hid treasures. To obtain it, search. To retain it, practice it!

Strong, dynamic faith is vital. It may be possible for our works to outrun a faltering faith for a while; but inevitably we lose speed to the point where the best we can hope for is to hold our own, then merely to slow down the rate of deterioration until at last we reach the ignominious end of our hopes and all that we might have been. Without faith it is impossible to please God, or to accomplish anything else of outstanding value.

The author of the book of Hebrews was feeling the dynamic thrust of strong faith as he reviewed the records of those who had gone before, for he admonished, "Let us strip off everything that hinders us, as well as the sin which dogs our feet, and let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on the source and goal of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-3 Phillips). Nothing less than faith that is dynamite can give us the power we need to reach that goal.

Right will triumph as through our surrender to a loving God we ourselves become godlike in thought and action. Such faith is also the hope of our becoming holy, even as He is holy. It is well to be interested in what religion can do *for* us; but our greater need is for what God's Word can do *to* us, *in* us, and *through* us.

Not until the cycles of eternity begin to unroll before us and our minds are expanded to comprehend the "things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9) will we know fully the power and rewards of dynamic faith. ●●

# Christian Revolution: 1977

**D**OWN with the wrong! Up with the right! The good must be bettered. The best must be multiplied. We are nearer the end than we have ever been before. It is time—high time—for Christian revolution!

Revolution—does the word sound violent, harsh, unrelated to the Christian cause? No! Jesus Himself was a revolutionary. His teachings demand change, sudden, drastic change of one's whole manner of life. Nothing less than a complete revolution of one's tastes, desires, ambitions and interests.

It was said of the activities of the early Christian Church, "These men have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

We are pressed for time, and there are evils to be dealt with. Victory demands strong, decisive action. Ours is not a soft, rose-petal religion, all pleasant, sweet and fragrant. There can be no real Christian success without real, out-and-out fighting. Nothing bland. Nothing passive. Nothing easy-going or half and half. Christianity means revolution!

Revolution has been a key means of progress since the earliest times. Think where we might be today if there had never been that spirit in a man that wanted greater worth and freer air. Think where we might be if everyone had always been content with things as they are.

But human nature is not so designed. By nature we resent authority; oppression and domination are foreign to our way of thinking. Worse than the suffering itself is the humiliating dishonor of having to submit to another. There is glory in suffering, if it be for one's own cause. But when the spirit that cries for freedom must be subject to the will of another, beware—revolution is smoldering!

Revolution, like all other human qualities, though, must be directed and controlled. It has done much good; it has also done harm. Properly guided, it can be an asset—in fact, it is a necessity to winning the victory over sin and ourselves. But as an expression of human nature ungoverned, it is rebellion at its worst.

History gives us examples of both types of revo-

lution, mostly the ungoverned kind. Even among Jesus' own apostles was a man who had been an all-out revolutionary. A member of the Zealots, Simon had worked ardently in a cause that hoped to overthrow the hated Roman yoke. He wanted a better life, freer air, independence; and he could see only one way to get it—revolution. But before he had a chance to wreck himself with the Zealots, he found a better revolution, and all else that he could ever want, in Christ.

Apparently the ungoverned spirit of revolution was stirring in the hearts of the early Christians in the city of Rome about the middle of the first century. They felt that any laws sponsored by so brutal, lustful, tyrannical and murderous a beast as Nero were not worth heeding. A declared enemy of the Christian cause, he did not deserve their slightest respect.

But news of their attitude reached Brother Paul in far away Corinth, and in due time a letter arrived in Rome. It was a profound letter that required many months to master, but toward the end of the letter—as always—was some simple, straightforward advice and warning. This is what it said: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. . . . the powers that be are ordained of God." Even powers like Rome and Nero! "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: . . . for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil" (Rom. 13:1-3). Christians had no right to withhold their tax money or protest city ordinances. Government, even when administered by bad men, was a divine institution for man's benefit and was to be obeyed when it did not conflict with the superior laws of God. All obedience was to be as to the Lord, not unto men. Christians were to be "in subjection" to the government that held their society together.

Revolution? Yes, but not this kind, and not at this time.

Many less-than-ideal situations in history—and still today—fan the spirit of revolution that results in progress.

—*Imagine:*

You are a communicant member of a Lutheran congregation in Woodstock, Virginia. The year is



1776. Your pastor, John Peter Muhlenburg, has just preached a stirring message on the text, "[there is] a time of war, and a time of peace," from Ecclesiastes 3:8. At the close of the sermon he repeats his text and adds, "Now is the time to fight." He then flings off his pulpit robe and reveals the uniform of an officer in the Continental Army. He strides to the front door and as you file out, he invites you to enlist in the Eighth Virginia Regiment.

Revolution? It is ready to blaze!

—*Imagine:*

You are a small merchantman in Cardiz, Spain. The year is 1876. Suddenly you look up to find seven soldiers in your shop looking for a certain man named Carlos. You are the man. You suddenly find yourself being led out to your new living quarters in the city dungeon. Why? Because someone reported to the authorities that you do not uphold the Roman Catholic traditions. You refused to take part in the Eucharist last Sunday.

What can you do? revolt? You are powerless.

—*Imagine:*

You are a citizen of the tiny country of Albania. Several years ago the government authorities forced you to be silent about your faith in God—they even threatened your life if you should make any profession of religious belief, or retain any religious literature. Now it is 1976. And you, Mark Jones, have just been informed that you shall be known henceforth by a state designation. You are no longer Mark Jones but Soyo IV. Your former name was a religious expression, with cultural suggestions, and might lead someone to a time-consuming search for a Bible or religious literature, long since outlawed in this officially atheistic nation.

What can you do?

Or you are one of fifty million people in the Soviet Union who still cling to a belief in God and make some attempt to practice your religion. You, together with your wife and three children, spend many happy hours together in the privacy of your home, praising God and studying His Word, though you know you cannot speak of it outside. It is 1977. There is a knock at the door. A man informs you that he has come to take your children, all three of them, with him. They must have a new home where they can live in a "free" atmosphere. You are too shocked to speak. What has happened? Headquarters have heard that you are teaching the Bible to them, a practice strictly forbidden in the Soviet Union. You protest that they cannot take them, that it is unjust, unfair—but to no avail. They are gone—gone forever. What can you do?

Today we need to thank God for the American Revolution of 1776. Thank Him for the spirit of those early colonists that demanded to be free from foreign domination. Thank Him for those men who sacrificed that we today might live and work and worship in free America! It is the blessing of God. It is a priceless heritage.

And it was nothing less than revolution that won us this heritage.

But as Christians we cannot stop here. There is yet more revolution to be fought. There are yet more victories to be won—victories for God and faith and freedom from the chains of doubt and sin that would enslave us. It is time for Christian Revolution: 1977! It is time, high time, that we were free!

### Against Indifference: Revolt!

One of our most serious battles today is the battle with complacency. The spirit of indifference is born in us and lies all round us. We live in a world that, spiritually speaking, is asleep. To relax and take things easy is as natural as to breathe. To keep ourselves alert and active in the things of God means revolution, sudden and drastic revolution.

We tend so easily to trust in ourselves and commend ourselves. We imagine that in some way or other we are essentially superior. When we prosper in a physical way, we tend to think we deserve success. We forget that all we have and are we owe to the God who gave in the beginning. So pre-occupied are we with the things that are seen that we cannot see what lies ahead.

Revolution: 1977! This indifference to the things of God must go! Some day God is going to call us to account for the use we have made of what He has entrusted to us—and what will we say if we have misused it, or not used it at all?

We cannot rest for a moment in complacency, in ease and comfort, and forget the struggle with sin. If spiritual inertia threatens our life, we must revolt. Again and again we must bring our minds to the spiritual goals which are before us and tell ourselves plainly and emphatically what life is all about. We are not here "to dream, to drift, to move in idleness through earth." There are tasks to be accomplished, and loads to lift. It is too late in the day, far too late, to go to sleep. If we are to win victories for God and righteousness, we must be winning them now—right now! The issues before us are issues of life and of death. There is no time for complacency.

Now, right now we are either laying up a good store of favorable credits against the time to come,

or we are treasuring up "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:5-6). The consequences of what we do may be postponed, but they cannot be evaded. The passing of time is bringing us steadily nearer a definite and pre-determined end. Ultimately God's plan will be manifest and His will done; and then His positive rightness will be seen by all. If our record does not measure up to His standard then, it will be too late to change.

*Now* is the time for revolution; *then* it will be too late.

We try to create for ourselves a Christian environment. We hear the Christian message proclaimed. We believe the things which God has spoken. We think about them. We approve and even applaud His forthright demands. In all this we do well. Yet there is danger that we may bear the name of Christ and bear not His character image. And only the latter, bearing His character image, really matters. Insight will not save us. Knowledge alone will not save us. Commending the way of truth and righteousness to others will not save us. Honorary membership in a strong religious tradition will not save us. Only the law of God written into the daily pattern of our lives will insure our eternal salvation.

#### **Against Doubt and Uncertainty: Revolt!**

Another enemy which assaults us today is doubt. We live in a skeptical world. Everything must be proven beyond question before it can be accepted. Even many religious leaders are questioning the authority of the Word of God as an absolute. They would rather accept it on a basis of relative value, on a par with human wisdom. Former standards are challenged, and traditional values are gone.

In the midst of all this, where do we stand?

We are not the type of people who will believe anything and everything they are told. If we were, God would have no use for us. He does not want spineless jellyfish. But neither can He use us if our wills are too stiff to bend to evidence. When we have asked a question, and He has provided an answer, and we are satisfied that He is right, why do we continue to question?

We wonder about the certainty of the God we serve, His power and His ability to do what He has promised. He says to us, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isa. 40:26). We look, and we see. We see a vast

creation, and scientists tell us of heavenly marvels beyond our power to fathom. Is it not enough? Are we not convinced, once and for all, that there is a God above and that He is able to do what He has promised?

We wonder about the certainty that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and a reliable directive for our lives. But is there not evidence abundant? Review again the prophecies within its pages that are abundantly fulfilled upon the pages of history. The prophecy of the rise and fall of four world kingdoms, when only the first was in existence—identified with their outstanding differences in organization and power, all within the prophecy—is it not enough to convince us? Then there are all the prophecies about Christ, His birth in Bethlehem, His being descended through the lineage of David, His ministry, His betrayal, His suffering and His glorious resurrection—all prophecies and all fulfilled exactly as predicted. Is it not enough to cause us to have faith?

And as if we needed more evidence, there are hundreds of other prophecies, some short-term, some longer, some very long, all fulfilled, to persuade us that the God who left His Word for us is true. There is the prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, which happened as Jesus predicted, even to there being left of the temple not "one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24:2). History tells us that after the burning of the temple, the walls were literally taken apart, stone by stone, in a desperate search for gold.

Then there is the prophecy of the long night of darkness when all men forsook the true faith; and the prophecies of the end of that night, all fulfilled before us. How can we fail to have faith in that which is yet unfulfilled!

Would not Jesus say to us, should He speak to us in one of our faltering moods, as He spoke to the two disciples on the Emmaus Way, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken"?

It is time to take ourselves in hand and call a halt to our doubtful, wayward, rambling thoughts. We have evidence that satisfies us beyond a doubt. Why do we waste precious time questioning it? Let us review and re-review the evidence! We have it in abundance!

Someone has suggested that we would do better to doubt our doubts and believe our beliefs. This would surely be a means of making faster progress, spiritually.

#### **Against Indecision: Revolt!**

Another grave danger that threatens our spir-

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itual life is indecision, or the inability to make our decision stick! We decide, and decide, over and over and over again. We tell ourselves we have stumbled again, yes, but we are going to do better. And the next thing we know, we have stumbled again. We tell ourselves this was just a mistake, that we are really going to do better. And the first thing we know, we have stumbled again.

It is time to revolt and break this monotonous routine! Enough of failure, enough of this characteristic weakness in our nature, enough of stumbling in the same old hole. Enough of this non-progressive motion that goes nowhere. Let's stand up against ourselves and actually win some victories. Add that extra ounce of determination that says unequivocally, "You're going to do it!" and then *do it*. Each time we decide and then give in to our old nature again, we weaken our ability to stand by our next decision. So call a halt! Revolt! Change! It is the only way to win.

Or we may be the type of person who is simply hard to convince. We find ourselves going over and over and over the evidence. We are continually impressed with the marvelous insight our faith allows, with the magnitude of what God offers and the relative smallness of what He asks. What we believe can be wonderfully supported by the Word of God, and we are sure of it! We are amazed at its depth, in contrast to the shallowness of many another belief.

But what are we *doing* about all this? A solid foundation of faith is good; it is essential. But it is not enough. Knowledge to be of value must be applied. Our faith must work. Are we using what we believe actually to build into our lives the character God desires?

A good beginning is a fine thing, but what runner would stop there? "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Continued on page 21)

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## Let Us Pray . . .

God of our fathers, their stay in trouble, their strength in conflict, their guide and deep resource, we worship Thee. Be Thou to us what Thou wert to them, a fortress, a high tower, a refuge in the day of trouble. We too are tossed about by the vicissitudes of life. We need security. We long for peace. We would find the things that endure. We need strength greater than our own.

Our fathers have said that Thou wert to them a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night; that Thou didst lead them, Thy Word a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path. Be that to us. We too are pilgrims and strangers, looking for a city of habitation. Each day is an adventure. O God of the pilgrims and pioneers, lead us in paths of righteousness for Thy name's sake.

Our fathers have said concerning Thee that Thou wert their Captain in the well-fought fight; that Thou, the Lord of hosts, didst gird them with Thine armor, and arm them with the sword of the spirit. Be that to us. We too must fight. Contentions rise within us and adverse circumstances rear their hostility against us, and we need the courage that our forefathers knew. Be Thou to us the Captain of the host. And at the end of the long day, grant that we too may say, I have fought a good fight.

Our fathers said Thou wert their Friend, the

unseen companion of their pilgrimage, in whom with utter trust they could confide. Be that to us. We too need friendship. But alert us that to have Thee for our Friend we must be friendly to Thy noble cause. May our daily living be such that we may feel the everlasting arms beneath us. O Father of the faithful, in the day of need we, too, like our fathers before us, would speak unto Thee as a man speaketh with his friend.

God of our fathers, we thank Thee today for the nation that our fathers founded, for the heritage that has come down to us, bought by other toil and other tears than our own. For great character that has been woven into the fabric of this nation, blessed be Thy name. For great leaders who in crucial times Thou hast lifted up to direct our paths, we thank Thee. Help us today with vivid vision to see the heroes of faith who in olden days feared Thy name. Steady our hands to grasp the torch of righteousness which they bequeathed to us. Make stable and wise our minds to understand the high entrustment, that the light of this people may not fail.

Be with Thy true Church. Beget in us unity because we are drawn close to Christ and so drawn close one to another. Bring to us the gospel of salvation through personal character and holy living.

Bless us and all who like us seek Thy face this day, that upon every one Thy benediction may rest, and at last as the result of divine administration through Jesus and His saved ones may the day of universal brotherhood and peace become a reality. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# On With Our Dream!

*This address was delivered at the Independence Day Bicentennial program of the Megiddo Church group, held last year on July 4. Its message is still timely, as it glances back at our priceless American heritage and then takes a long, hard—and expectant—look at what lies ahead.*

**I**T IS the Fourth of July. Two hundred years ago today our Declaration of Independence was signed. It was a great dream come true. It was the dream of America: freedom and liberty.

We need to look at this dream again. What does it mean? What is the American dream?

People interpret it in different ways. Some think it means having all the things you want, a shorter workweek, more leisure time, and more money to get *more* of these things. Other people think first of a home in the suburbs, a nice backyard and plenty of friends. They associate the American dream with their own pleasure and satisfactions.

Others see the American dream as “equal opportunity” for all. The land where any man can make a life and a living. The land where no one persecutes you for what you think, or where you came from, or what you believe in. All sorts of people from all sorts of places. This is America!

What was the American dream to the people who came here first? What were they seeking when they came here? Why did they come? There were many reasons. Some wanted gold; some wanted pelts of fur; some wanted a new start; some wanted a place where they could worship without being harassed; some wanted just a piece of ground that they could call their own; some wanted to get out of jail and out of debt.

About the middle of the 1600's, the American dream had begun to take form. The United States was still a long way from being born, but there were millions of seedlings springing up along the Atlantic coast. If you could read the signs right, you could see a dream forming; something was unfolding. There was a whispering in the wide forest east of the Appalachians which said that something was happening.

Let's go back to those people. Let's go back to the strange mixture of people who first tried to under-

stand some part of the American dream. Many were here simply because they were misfits. For the most part the rich and successful and well-adjusted and affluent did not leave Europe. We might say America was God's experiment with misfits.

The Old World threw out the misfit Pilgrims and the Puritans from England, and they came to Massachusetts. Then they opened the prison doors, and those people settled in Georgia. Maryland was created as a refuge for those misfit people who were driven out because they were Roman Catholics. They were all misfits, but they had something in common: They understood something of what the American dream promised.

But it's strange how difficult liberty is to handle. Take those Puritans. They wanted to come to America to have freedom and liberty of religion. Then just twenty years after they settled in Massachusetts, they built around themselves a rigid, tight, totalitarian theocracy. No one had freedom in Massachusetts unless he accepted the Puritan approach. The dream was lost very quickly, as often it is. Roger Williams, who was looking for freedom in this new country, found when he arrived that he could not even live in Massachusetts. They argued with him. They counselled with him. They held meetings with him to try to change his view so he would agree with them. But he refused to give up his views. So in the middle of the winter they drove him out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Williams founded the state of Rhode Island. He said, “We will make this a state in which no religious test will be imposed on any of its residents.” He found his religious liberty and gave it to others, too. And now because of Williams, one section of the American dream falls into place: Freedom to worship as you like.

Underneath it all was a surging, seething urge to know what liberty is. We have the Liberty Bell which was put in place long before the Declaration of Independence. The inscription is from the words in Leviticus: “Proclaim liberty through all the land, unto all the inhabitants therein.” That was their theme song. But freedom had not yet been born completely.

Struggle followed struggle, until we are now in

the year 1775. We're in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Many men here have been debating long and hard as how best to compromise with Britain so that we can bring the American dream into some kind of reality and both sides can be happy. How can there be compromise? There was rumor that gunfire was taking place in Boston. More people spoke, discussed, debated. Then one man speaks. He holds his audience spellbound. To the Virginia House of Burgesses he says:

"They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. . . . Sir, we are not weak if we make proper use of the means which the God of Nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed with the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. Our battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. . . . It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace, but there is no peace. The war has actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Patrick Henry, a man dedicated to the idea of freedom, had a great influence on this America of ours. In 1776, one year later, this America of ours incorporated his ideas and concepts into the declaration we celebrate today.

They pledged their lives, and many lost their lives. Many lost their fortunes. But this idea of freedom and liberty wasn't a static concept. It was a concept that could always move and change, over and over again. Time has forced it to be reinterpreted. But it is never easy to keep.

We see the uniqueness of America, and we can be grateful for the religious motivations behind all these men. The God who holds the destinies and courses of all men and all nations in His eternal purpose was using them. Though unbeknown to them, they were *His* servants and were doing what *He* wanted done.

The American dream was in reality God's dream all the way through. It was His plan that men should break the tyranny of those who would dominate men's minds and bodies. It was His plan that

men should rebel against their oppressors and launch out on a new experiment of government *of* the people, *for* the people, and *by* the people. It was His plan that a nation should be born where every man might be able to choose his own mode of worship and belief. It was His plan that the soil should be prepared where the seeds of divine truth might be scattered and grow and flourish and bring forth fruit unto eternal life. America was God's dream and God's work.

Unfortunately, America has not retained all the high ideals that launched it. Our land and our people have prospered above any nation that ever inhabited the face of the earth. Herein is great blessing. But herein may lie the secret of her decline. For prosperity, although not evil in itself, has become the main motive. And many Americans, disillusioned with affluence, look uncertainly into the future. Old values, old standards and old patterns of life no longer hold. One is inclined to ask, America, how long?

But though it is not all it set out to be in integrity and virtue, still it was and is the best land for the work God planned for our day and time.

And America is not the ultimate. The best is yet to be. America is but one fold of a manifold divine plan and purpose. His dream, His goal, His plan is for one unified nation extending from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. His dream is of a perfect land where suffering and sorrow and poverty and mortality are unknown!

The dream is glorious. And it is alive! It is alive today in the hearts of those who have dedicated themselves totally to its reality. It is alive in the hearts of those who seek above all else to be God's sons and daughters and eternal inheritors. And it will be realized someday, someday, for every one who wins the war for independence from himself.

*This is the dream. This is God's dream. This is our dream.* Right now it means *conviction*, transformation, and whole-souled determination, that all its promises may become real to us. Right now it means a wholehearted devotion to God and His plans and purposes and ordinances and commands, however they may conflict with one's own suppositions. Right now it means a life empowered by God to overcome the attraction of the earthly and live in the greater freedom of the higher level of thought and attitude. Right now it means consecrating all we have and are to be permitted to live when the dream reaches its fullest reality.

And the dream for the future is glorious! A nation where all men are brothers; a nation where strife and discontent are unknown; a nation where the sword is never lifted against another. A world

*(Continued on page 23)*

## Breaking the Monotony

I COULD just see our tent pitched beneath those rustling birches and feel the cooling breeze off the lake, the scent of pine needles filling the air with refreshing fragrance. Along with it all would come those precious quiet hours that were mine to enjoy alone with God's Book, while Neal and the children were out in the boat trying to land the "big ones"—which usually I only *heard* about.

We had been so fortunate to discover that delightfully quiet place away from the crowds—would it be waiting for us this summer? What a delightful break in the monotonous routine. Only a few weeks and—

But I had some misgivings. Could we afford it this year? And this morning, just before leaving for work, Neal had broached the subject. "Don't you think we'd better let the vacation go this year?"

I knew what he meant. The added expense of the trip would be almost more than we could meet. "I'm afraid you're right, Neal," was all I had said, but I'm sure he could see my disappointment. Off to work he had gone with his usual smile, though I could see a little disappointment in his face also—probably a reflection of my own. "Maybe next year," he had said cheerfully—"God willing."

I was reviewing the morning's conversation in my mind when Kenneth's sudden exclamation ended my reverie and brought me to the present. "Mom, look at this!" his voice was full of disbelief. "In Iowa, six women are being paid \$2.60 an hour to sort through seven and a half billion soybeans! Ugh, what a job!"

"Sorting soybeans? Why's that?" I leaned over to adjust the doily on the chair arm—lest Kenneth see the disappointment which in all probability still showed on my face. All too soon the children would hear the news. How they had been looking forward to the day of our departure. Perhaps part of the disappointment I felt had been for them.

"It seems that fifty bushels of treated seed beans were mistakenly mixed with 50,000 bushels of untreated beans suitable for food. Since the treated beans are hazardous to human health, they have to be removed if the good beans are to be used."

"I think I'd be tempted to dump the whole lot!" I was emphatic. "Who wants to sort through seven and a half billion beans, even if they're getting paid for it?" I could see myself overcome by the monotony of the job after the first half-hour.

"Well, Mom, at the present market value," Kenneth stopped to check on the value, "the soybeans are worth \$260,000. The owner estimates that it will cost \$100,000 to clean the beans. He feels it is worth it." Kenneth laid aside the article and started for the door whistling, obviously grateful that he had something more interesting to do than sorting seven billion soybeans.

But I could not dismiss it. Sorting all those soybeans—it was something like the monotonous routine of household duties—making beds, washing dishes, cooking meals, and washing clothes. No matter how much you do, it seems as though you always have a few billion yet to do.

I have to admit that occasionally I have felt as though I would like to dump that part of my life—at least long enough to spend a few days at the lake. Do you realize how these everyday duties add up? After twenty-five years of marriage and five children, I figure I must have made 25,000 beds, washed dishes 28,000 times, cooked 28,000 meals, and washed at least 12,000 loads of clothes.

Considering my low tolerance level for housework, that is a discouraging picture—a little like sorting through seven and a half billion soybeans one by one.

But fortunately, that is not the whole picture. There is a brighter side. I have no right to complain, or to feel sorry for myself even if we can't have a vacation this year. I am learning to take God into all my plans and tasks, and with Him for my helper, my whole attitude toward the sameness of my tasks is changed. This fact of working for God gives dignity to the plain and ordinary. The big "I" is no longer seeking to be the central figure in my little world. The menial tasks of every day, I find, can be done as to the Lord. When I look at it this way, it no longer matters that I am not doing the spectacular.

The hope of rewards that will be *everlasting* (think of it!) gives my life depth, meaning and direction, whatever the tasks I have to do.

I am finding that making beds, washing dishes and preparing meals can be helpers—boosters—instead of hindrances. Did not Paul say, "For our

light afflictions which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"? If *his* afflictions were "light," how would he describe *mine*?

Yes, somewhere in the midst of those twenty-five years and five children, I concluded it was worth it—fully so.

There is yet another benefit—a "bonus" of temporal pleasure which God gives. I may have made 25,000 beds. I have also heard several thousand bedtime prayers and received untold hundreds of good-night hugs. Sometimes the meals I have cooked and dishes I have washed seem to stretch into eternity. But they can never dim the glow of delight in my child's eye as he realizes a certain dish was prepared especially for him; or the contented smile of my husband after his favorite meal. Our mealtimes are times of family reunion. They prove a rich source of added strength, a time for spiritual devotion which gives our family strong binding power.

Though my washing machine seems to run continually some days, I have discovered that having a

clean pair of socks that are the right color can make a world of difference in the way a day begins.

When I realize the value of the monotonous routine of duty—both in temporal peace and happiness and in building credits toward life in God's kingdom, I feel ashamed that I ever complain or long for an escape. Even when we have to give up our vacation and perpetuate the routine I naturally disdain—it is worth it. I have no reason to feel sorry for myself—with such glorious promises from God to buoy me over the sameness of every day. Can life be drudgery when we think of "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11)?

I hummed a happy tune as I went about my tasks that day. Ordinary work, yes. But I was far better off than the women who were sorting soybeans all day long for \$2.60 an hour, because I could do my work as unto the Lord. I was doing my part toward making a happy, God-fearing family and at the same time performing my own job—that of changing myself into the likeness of Christ's own servant.

Call it monotony? Never! Just *glory*! ●●

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## Needing A Change?

Vacation season is here for millions of people. Armed with almost everything they could ever need, or just "traveling light," they head for the mountains, the lake, the seashore, or some other enchanting spot. What do they seek? A change, a break in the routine of everyday, an escape from the demands of work and home. Rest. Relaxation. Or just a different type of activity. It's a chance to "get away from it all."

A vacation can be a wonderful time for change and spiritual refreshment. There is only one problem: Wherever we go we have to take ourselves along. And the problems we have at home are very likely to go with us to the mountains, the seashore, or any other enchanting spot. Wherever we go, our thought patterns and our disposition go, too. There is no escape from ourselves.

What most of us really need is a change—not of pace or place, but of *heart*. It is the change the prophet Ezekiel prescribed for Israel centuries ago. The only alternative to following his advice, he said, is to die. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 18:31).

The apostle Paul commanded the same vital

change: "Throw off your old evil nature—the old you that was a partner in your evil ways—rotten through and through, full of lust and shame. Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better. Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature" (Eph. 4:22-24, Living Bible).

If we follow this advice and make us a new heart and a new spirit, we will find ourselves happier wherever we are—even at home. We will be more content, more optimistic, more willing to accept our circumstances as they are, knowing that what we cannot change is for our best. We will be becoming more and more that new creature in Christ, that new and beautiful creation of which Paul wrote: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). As we become "new" we will have new interests, new goals, new desires. More and more we will bear the moral likeness of our Master. Then there will be no need for a vacation to "get away from it all," for our whole life will be one grand, purposeful experience of happiness in the prospect of a better life in the world to come. ●●

# PREMILLENNIALISM



Last month we discussed the differences between those who believe Christ will come **BEFORE** the Millennium (Premillennialists), those who believe Christ will come **AFTER** the Millennium (Postmillennialists), and those who believe there will be **NO** Millennium at all (Amillennialists).

We believe firmly that the Bible supports the Premillennial position—that Christ will come to judge and conquer and establish His kingdom, bringing in the Millennium.

But there are objections. Here are a few which different people have raised, and which we have attempted to answer from a Bible standpoint.

**OBJECTION 1:** *"Premillennialism renders its advocates unfit for practical duties."*

Answer: In the parable of the Laborers, Jesus compared Himself to a nobleman who went away and commanded his servants to "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:11). What could be more practical?

**OBJECTION 2:** *"Moses is declared to have been a believer in the second advent of Christ, an event said to be imminent only now, after some three thousand years. Shall we still look for God to introduce a new order after so long a time, or shall we assume the responsibility of bringing about our own millennium, believing that God is working in us?"*

Answer: God did not promise three thousand years ago to fulfill His purpose *then*. He set aside a period of seven thousand years for the completion of it. Through the prophet Habakkuk He revealed: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3).

It is not within our capabilities to bring about the millennial state, nor is it God's purpose to work in us to do it. The Lord plans to intervene directly, and perform His work openly. "The Lord also shall roar out of Mount Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem" (Joel 3:16). "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence" (Ps. 50:3). "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord [Emmanuel, God with us—Matthew 1:

23]; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

**OBJECTION 3:** *"Premillennialism takes hold of one's emotions. In troubled times, people have always pictured and imagined wonderful deliverance, but their hopes vanished into thin air."*

Answer: The belief that Christ will come to inaugurate a new era and establish a new government on earth, which will result in a new state of affairs and new living conditions for everyone on earth, is not an idle dream or a figment of someone's imagination. It is the teaching of the Bible, repeated again and again in different ways. God never asked His people to believe in a hope that would vanish into thin air. Just as the many prophecies in Scripture have already been fulfilled, so will the remainder meet a real and visible fulfillment.

**OBJECTION 4:** *"Premillennialism is pessimistic. It is built upon the principle that the world is growing worse and worse, and that there is no power that can reform society until Christ comes in person."*

Answer: Is it pessimistic to look forward to a new world under a new government, in which all will enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity? Is it pessimistic to believe the Bible, whatever it teaches? Is not God's plan designed for the good of mankind, or that segment of mankind who will cooperate with Him? Does not the Bible say that men will learn God's righteousness only *when His*

# and **SCRIPTURE**

*judgments are in the earth* (Isa. 26:9-10)?

The Bible gives detailed description of conditions just prior to the time when He will break into history; the purpose of this is not to make us pessimistic but to give us hope of a better age coming and to confirm our faith in His Word. Paul was inspired to write: "In the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:1-4). Is it pessimistic to recognize the conditions we see all about us as a fulfillment of the prophetic Word and to realize that as surely as this has come to pass, so surely will the better Day become a reality?

Paul also wrote that "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13).

Jesus compared the time of His return to the days of Noah and the days of Lot. There was nothing about the time of Noah to make men optimistic, for "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). But in due time God sent a Flood to remove the evil. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot lived, were condemned for their wickedness. But again, despite the unbelievers, God sent destruction upon the evil and deliverance for those who obeyed Him. Shall He not do the same in our age? Indeed, we look forward to the end of evil!

The prophecy of Malachi indicates that the world will not be in a converted condition when Christ returns. This is the purpose of sending the forerunner, Elijah the prophet: "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6). If the earth were to be at the end of a long period of advancement and spiritual prosperity, it surely would not be ready to be smitten with a curse.

Jesus predicted the conditions that would exist just prior to His return, and then added: "When

these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

OBJECTION 5: "*It is nonsense to talk of the deterioration of society to one who is familiar with the actual course of human development from pre-history to the present. Man's career actually has been one of ascent. The world is growing better. There is no room for pessimism of the Premillennial type. It is sad for any religious group to spurn all serious effort that is being made to secure the betterment of the world by social reform and popular education.*"

Answer: History reveals patterns of ascent and descent. Toynbee's *Story of Civilizations* points out many such ascents and descents. And the Bible indicates that Christ would come at a time of descent. Most of the ascent of civilization, so far as living conditions are concerned, has come about in the last two hundred years. Prior to that time there had been only a limited amount of progress. And now our modern world is deteriorating morally, just as the Lord predicted it would. God does not judge external living conditions as He judges the hearts and intents of men. Scientific advancement does not necessarily mean a more advanced world morally, in His estimation.

OBJECTION 6: "*According to the Pre-Mils, the mystical body of Christ will not be complete until the close of the thousand years. Yet Christ accepts His bride at the time of His coming. In this way they are saying that Christ has two brides, one at His coming and another at the end of the thousand years. This makes Christ a polygamist.*"

Answer: Christ has nothing to do with polygamy or monogamy. He will have living saints ready to receive Him when He comes, who will form His bride. And by the close of the Millennium many more people—the populace of the Kingdom—will be received into His family. They will be the second harvest of the earth, when the angel of harvest gathers the "clusters of the vine of the



earth" (Rev. 14:18), a great number. But these will not be part of His bride; they will become the immortal inhabitants who will live under the rulership of Christ and the saints. Christ will have but one Bride, to whom He will be joined when He returns (Rev. 19:7-8).

**OBJECTION 7:** *"If Christ and His Bride are complete before the Millennium, where do the Millenarians fit in? Are they to feel eternally excluded, as though there were an eternal distinction between them and the members of the Bride of Christ?"*

Answer: The bride of Christ will be a group distinct from the great mass of Millenarians, though the people who make themselves worthy of immortal life during the Millennium will never feel excluded. Revelation 7 pictures the two groups, the Bride or associate rulers who sit with Christ upon His throne, and the great multitude "clothed in white robes" who stand before the throne and serve. All are immortal and all are abundantly blessed, though the blessing and honor of the former group is far greater. The Millenarians, the children of the Millennium who become worthy of immortal life, are called sons and daughters (see Isa. 60:4; Hos. 1:10; Isa. 43:6; Acts 2:17). In our present families, sons and daughters do not feel excluded, as though they were in an outer circle. To be an immortal son or daughter of God Almighty is surely an honor; to be a co-ruler with Christ forever is honor supreme. But we can be sure there will be happiness and harmony between all the members of both classes.

**OBJECTION 8:** *"According to the Pre-Mil theory, a curious situation arises when Christ and the translated saints return to this earth to set up the Millennial Kingdom and to mingle freely with men still in the flesh (our objector assumes that Christ will have taken His faithful Bride to heaven in what is commonly called the 'rapture,' a belief of many Premillennialists which is unscriptural). Think of glorified immortals and ordinary mortals mingling freely throughout the world for a thousand years! It strikes us so unreal and absurd that we wonder how anyone can take it seriously. Such a mixed state of mortals and immortals, terrestrial and celestial, surely would be a monstrosity. It would be as incongruous as for the holy angels now to mingle in their work and pleasure and worship with the present population. And how could mortals in the flesh ever stand before the glorified Christ and the saints? Premillennialists do not realize how utterly inconsistent is the scheme of bringing glorified saints back to this world order."*

Answer: There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that mortals and immortals cannot dwell together. Surely the angels that followed Israel through the wilderness were close to them much of the time, yet there was no problem. Angels know mortal limitations and can apparently control their glory accordingly (see Gen. 18:1-3; Dan. 9:21; II Cor. 3:7).

Revelation 21 states that Christ, in His glorified state, "will dwell with [men]" (vs. 3-4). The prophet Zephaniah foretold of the Millennial time that "the king of Israel, even the Lord" will be "in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more" (3:15); again, "the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (v. 17). How strange to make such a prophecy if the "king," the "Lord," who is immortal, could not dwell in the midst of mortals.

It will be the glorious work of the glorified saints to improve conditions on this earth until this world order we now know shall have been replaced by a better, more glorious world.

**OBJECTION 9:** *"According to the Pre-Mil theory the kingdom is future. The following texts show that the Kingdom is NOW in the world and is a present reality: Luke 17:21, 'Behold the kingdom of God is within you.'"*

Answer: Jesus was addressing the Pharisees when He said this. Did He mean that the Kingdom of God was in the hearts of men whom He called "whited sepulchers" and a "generation of vipers"?

The Greek word translated *kingdom* may also be rendered "king," "his royal majesty." Jesus was referring to Himself, His royal presence, which was even then among them. The marginal reference gives "among" instead of "within." Even now, He told them, the King is in your midst and you do not recognize Him.

*"What about Romans 14:17, 'For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.' Are not these things a present-day reality?"*

Answer: Paul is referring not to the kingdom itself but to our marks of membership in that kingdom. Matters of "meat and drink," which were causing strife among his brethren, were trivial; our membership in that realm will depend on our righteousness and peace and joy in the Lord. The next verse clarifies the point even more: "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God"—Paul was speaking of conditions of acceptance.

*"What about Colossians 1:13, The Father has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"—again a present reality."*

Answer: God delivers His people from darkness, bringing them into the light of knowledge now, that they may be "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (v. 12). Paul does not say that inheritance is theirs now, but that they are made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance" when it shall be given. In the same way we are now translated "into the kingdom of his dear Son"—not that the Kingdom is a present reality, but that we must now in the present time prepare ourselves for a place in that Kingdom.

*"What about Matthew 6:33, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you'? This implies that the kingdom is obtainable now by the believer, and that as it is obtained, these other things also are given."*

Answer: Jesus did not say we are entering the Kingdom now; He said we should *seek* for it, putting it first in our lives. Nothing in Jesus' words implies that the Kingdom is obtainable now; that is merely supposition.

The Kingdom is to be a physical entity, complete with rulers, populace, laws, territory, a real government. When such a Kingdom is set up on earth, everyone will recognize it.

OBJECTION 10: *"The Premillennialists base their theory on one text. The mention of a period during which the saints are to reign with Christ occurs but in one passage of Scripture, and that is in a book which is highly figurative."*

Answer: We have already covered much of the evidence that the Millennium will be a reality, with Christ as the king and the saints as His associate rulers. But should not one text from the Almighty be sufficient to cause us to believe? These are the words of Jesus Himself: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

The Pre-Mils cannot possibly base their belief on but one text, or which text should they choose? The thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints, or the "thousand years" is mentioned no less than five times in Revelation 20. And even if Revelation is "highly figurative" (as we would agree), we cannot think the book is *entirely* figurative. There are references in Revelation to the physical earth (Rev. 5:9-10); to angels (Rev. 20:1; 22:8); to the "light of the sun" which is physical (Rev. 20:5);

to the "twelve apostles" (Rev. 21:14). To say that *all* the terms in Revelation are figurative is to misinterpret and confuse the whole. Revelation was written to "reveal" knowledge about coming events, and we must study it in relation to what is revealed elsewhere in Scripture. Revelation is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." Should we not believe what it says? ●●

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From A Reader --

## The Plight of Banana Mentality

When we think how people have changed God's Word to make an easy religion for themselves, I am reminded of an article I read recently. It said the Lord Beveridge, who prepared the report of British Social Insurance some years ago, made a speech in New Zealand. In the speech he dealt with this menace. He said:

"In some parts of the world life has been made too easy by nature. In tropical climates where man can meet his physical needs without work, sitting in the open under a banana tree waiting for the fruit to fall into his lap, he has a tendency to make sitting his principal occupation.

"We who have the advantage of more bracing climates must make sure that we do not allow economic security to reproduce the banana mentality."

The easy "Do-nothing" type of religious philosophy so common today is really a menace, lulling people into believing that all they have to do is sit there and the reward will be dropped into their laps. We as followers of Christ and His true teaching do want to keep ourselves in the right type of climate, or surroundings, or we, too, will start to develop a so-called "banana mentality."

E. H., Manitoba, Canada

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*A little boy read in his science book about plants and how they grow. He planted some seeds and watered them. But each day he dug up the seeds to see what they were doing. He had faith enough to plant the seed, concern enough to water the seed, but no patience to wait for the seed to sprout.*

*How patiently do we wait for God's sprouting time?*



## Out of the Archives

### The Epistle of Polycarp

*Toward the end of the first century there lived a man who was apparently an important leader in the Early Church, and outstanding in the fight against heresies. His name was Polycarp.*

*As a youth, Polycarp seems to have received instruction from the lips of the apostle John himself. In later years he served as bishop of the church at Smyrna. It is possible that he was holding that position at the time Jesus sent the letters to the seven churches in Asia, as recorded in the book of Revelation.*

*Polycarp spent much of his life collecting and studying the Christian writings. When he himself wrote, he placed heavy emphasis on the First Epistle of Peter, possibly because he was personally acquainted with this apostle. From what is written, his life was long and at times momentous, ending in martyrdom which he faced with unfaltering courage.*

*The following was written about 115 A. D. by Polycarp, to the Church at Philippi. Its words of exhortation are as vital to Christians today as they were during the first century.*

*For these choice passages we are indebted to the translation of J. B. Lightfoot.*

**P**OLYCARP and the presbyters that are with him unto the Church of God which sojourneth at Philippi; mercy unto you and peace from God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Saviour be multiplied.

I rejoiced with you greatly in our Lord Jesus Christ, for that ye received the followers of the true love and escorted them on their way, as befitted you—those men encircled in saintly bonds which are the diadems of them that be truly chosen of God and our Lord; and that the stedfast root

of your faith which was famed from primitive times abideth until now and beareth fruit unto our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore gird up your loins and serve God in fear and truth, forsaking the vain and empty talking and the error of the many, for that ye have believed on Him that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave unto Him glory and a throne on His right hand; unto whom all things were made subject that are in heaven and that are on earth; to whom every creature that hath breath doeth service; who cometh as judge of living and dead; whose blood God will require of them that are disobedient unto Him.

Now He that raised Him from the dead will raise us also; if we do His will and walk in His commandments and love the things which He loved, abstaining from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing or blow for blow or cursing for cursing; but remembering the words which the Lord spoke, as He taught; "Judge not that ye be not judged. Forgive and it shall be forgiven to you. Have mercy that ye may receive mercy. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," and again (He says) "Blessed are the poor and they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God."

These things, brethren, I write unto you concerning righteousness, not because I laid this charge upon myself, but because ye invited me. For neither am I, nor is any other like unto me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who when he came among you taught face to face with the men of that day the word which concerneth truth carefully and surely; who also, when he was absent, wrote a letter unto you, into the which if ye look diligently, ye shall be able to be builded up unto the faith given to you, which is the mother of us all, while hope followeth after and love goeth before—love toward God and Christ and toward our neighbor. For if any man be occupied with these, he hath fulfilled the commandment of righteousness; for he that hath love is far from all sin.

But the love of money is the beginning of all troubles. Knowing therefore that we brought nothing into the world neither can we carry anything out, let us arm ourselves with the armor of righteousness, and let us teach ourselves first to walk in the commandment of the Lord.

Knowing then that God is not mocked, we ought to walk worthily of His commandment and His Glory. . . . For if we be well pleasing unto him in this present world, we shall receive the future

world also, according as He promised us to raise us from the dead, and that if we conduct ourselves worthily of Him we shall also reign with Him, if indeed we have faith.

If then we entreat the Lord that He would forgive us, we also ought to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and we must all stand at the judgment seat of Christ, and each man must give an account of himself. Let us therefore so serve Him with fear and all reverence, as He himself gave commandment and the Apostles who preached the Gospel to us and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of our Lord, being zealous as touching that which is good, abstaining from offences and from the false brethren and from them that bear the name of the Lord in hypocrisy, who lead foolish men astray.

Stand fast therefore in these things and follow the example of the Lord, being firm in the faith and immovable, in love of the brotherhood kindly affectioned one to another, partners with the truth, forestalling one another in the gentleness of the Lord, despising no man. When ye are able to do good, defer it not, for pitifulness delivereth from death. Be ye all subject one to another, having your (conduct) unblamable among the Gentiles, that from your good works both ye may receive praise and the Lord may not be blasphemed in you. But woe to him through whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed. Therefore teach all men soberness, in which ye yourselves also walk.

Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal high priest Himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth, and in all gentleness and in all avoidance of wrath and in forbearance and long-suffering and in patient endurance and in purity; and may He grant unto you a lot and portion among His saints, and to us with you, and to all that are under heaven, who shall believe on our Lord. Pray for all the saints.

Fare ye well in the Lord Jesus Christ in grace, ye and all yours. Amen. ●●

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July, 1977

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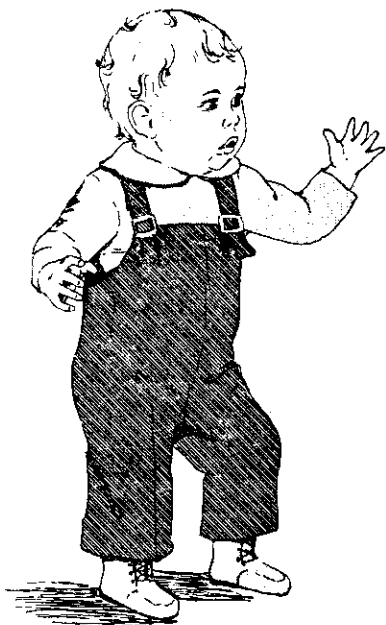
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# Still . . .



# TODDLING?

TO enter the Christian life means to begin a life so completely different that we were not alive at all before we began it. It is like being born all over again, so drastic is the change. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), and the first part of this birth—"born of water"—is a person's beginning in the Christian life.

The newborn is an infant. He must learn. He must grow. He must step by patient step acquire all the skills he will need to live as a mature adult.

One especially important advancement is learning how to walk. The babe in Christ also must learn to walk. As the young Christian takes his first few steps, he is frightfully uncertain. Like the toddling child edges along close to chair and table and sofa, never getting too far from safety until he gains confidence in his steps, so the toddling Christian is slow, supercautious, clinging. The first careful step away from security into the wide open areas of progress, that first step is great victory. And it is followed by step, after step, after step, until he is walking! He will stumble easily and stagger at the first, but before long he will be moving with more ease and the props will be for-

gotten. And if he continues to grow in strength and certainty, he will soon be running.

All of the noble saints of old were once toddlers. They had to start out in the ways of God as newborn children. They had to learn to stand, then walk, then run, just as we now must learn. And they did it. The Record tells us of Abraham that "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," indicating that other men *did* stagger. Abraham himself probably staggered in earlier years, but by this time he had learned to walk with certainty and skill.

So far as we know, no one ever did learn to walk perfectly with no stumbling—that is, no one except our Perfect Example. And even He had to learn (Heb. 5:8).

David found straight, steady walking a difficult art—he stumbled many times. God allowed Moses plenty of time to learn to walk erect and steady in His ways before He called him to teach others to walk. And even after this, Moses stumbled and fell. But he rose quickly and traveled on.

God's diploma in walking is generally received only after a long course in the school of hard knocks. Peter felt one of these knocks the night Jesus was betrayed. And he fell. He fell hard. But he did not stay down. Like a growing child learning to walk, he was soon on his feet—and running!

Paul the great Apostle had to learn to walk. And he learned well. See him in the Roman prison awaiting the final hour. "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me. . . Demas hath forsaken me, . . . only Luke is with me." Hard knocks these, enough to take many a man off his feet. But not Paul. Not now! Had Paul had this experience soon after his conversion on the Damascus road, he might have suffered badly. But by this time Paul could walk with such steadiness and strength that nothing could throw him off balance. And nothing did; Paul stood the test, saying as he closed his letter to Timothy, "The Lord will . . . bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever" (II Tim. 4:18, Jerusalem Bible).

We today have an added difficulty in learning to walk with steadiness—we must walk by faith in even greater measure than did those holy men and women of old. Ours is not the privilege of having seen Christ, or an angel, or of experiencing a heavenly vision. We walk entirely by faith. For this reason we tend to walk more slowly and hesitantly than we should. We tend to remain too long in the toddling stage. If only we could see the way ahead of us—!

A traveler on an ocean liner relates an experience that illustrates our walk by faith. He says:

"As we sailed northward from South America

on a Grace Line ship, the captain invited us up to the bridge and patiently explained all the appliances of modern navigation. There was a depth indicator, functioning by the rebound of a sound wave and showing the distance from the bottom of the ship to the bottom of the sea. Since the ocean depths are everywhere charted, this was one way of defining our location. Then radio beams were coming in from stations at known points on the shore, and these were picked up as a further means of orientation. Another operator was listening for any call from sea or land. But when he had finished his recital of all the safeguards of navigation, the seasoned old captain smiled and remarked, pointing with his hand, 'But the best of all is when you can see it right over there!'

This is the way we feel about our walk by faith. We have as much as we need, we know we are able to walk with certainty. But what will it be to see!

Thank God that sight is coming! But in the meantime we must be moving steadily down the narrow way to life. We must be walking. We need not hesitate, for with every step we take God reveals the next, and the next, and the next, so that our progress is not hindered. And He keeps providing us more and more evidence on which to build our faith and confidence.

All this—because He wants us to walk.

How are we doing? Are we walking—and running? Or are we still toddling? ●●

## Christian Revolution 1977

*(Continued from page 9)*

tion" (Heb. 6:1). We cannot spend all our days just building and rebuilding a sure foundation. We read, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." What tremendously encouraging words! But this is not all—"And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Timothy 2:19). God does not want us spending all our days just building and rebuilding a foundation. He tells us plainly, the foundation is sure. It is time for us to get on with the work of actual building, raising a superstructure of noble, godly character. If we do not, we will someday hear the Judge saying to us: "You made a fine beginning. But what else did you do?"

We are not the first to be afflicted with this human weakness. To another people of another day and time the sacred writer addressed these

words (though their message is for our admonition as well): "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Heb. 5:12).

And again: "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as [ordinary] men?" (I Cor. 3:1-3).

Let us take the warning to ourselves. "Ye are yet carnal." We are yet carnal. Bound by our own selfish, sensitive, earthly ways, we are carnal. It is time to revolt with righteous indignation! It is time to rise up and go on to perfection!

### Against Halfheartedness: Revolt!

Long ago God declared war on halfheartedness. He did not say, "I wish you wouldn't be quite so halfhearted," or "I prefer that you go all out for me." He said, "I hate men who are half and half" (Ps. 119:113, Moffatt). No room for *any* divided loyalties here!

Many are the good intentions that have ended in defeat because the effort behind them was not wholehearted. Halfheartedness suggests instability, unsettledness, even deceitfulness. When a person is not wholehearted in any cause, he cannot be fully trusted. He may be one way today, another way tomorrow. Or he has two very different sides to his nature, and one may never know which side he may expect to see.

Or a halfhearted man may lack integrity. He thinks two ways. He has two reasons for what he does: one which sounds good, which he announces; and the real reason, which he keeps to himself.

James Moffatt, who translated the Bible, is reported to have said that the sixth beatitude means "Blessed are those who are not double-minded, for they shall be admitted into the intimate presence of God." The Epistle of James contains a similar thought: "Purify your hearts, ye double minded" (Jas. 4:8).

Here is something for every one of us to do. "Purify your hearts, ye double minded." In other words, declare a revolution against all your instability and divided loyalty. Pray with the Psalmist, "Unite my heart to fear thy name" (Ps. 86:11). Unite my mind, so that it will think only noble thoughts. Unite my hands, so they will do only that which is open and honestly right. Unite all my

physical and mental powers that my whole life may be a psalm of praise to God. Only the united heart, the pure heart, shall ever see God.

When we are not wholehearted, when we obey but with inner reservations, there is a looseness in our grip. We lack a firm grasp of the reality of our obligations to God and in a time of extreme testing may lose our hold completely. Hence we need to beware. The first slight compromise of principle always seems quite harmless. We always have a reason to excuse ourselves. But the prophet Hosea said, "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7). How easily the little breeze grows into a whirlwind beyond our power to combat. How easily the gentle going with the wind of circumstance accelerates until our character is gone with the wind.

Some years ago a British inventor devised a gadget for decreasing automobile accidents. It was his theory that many accidents result from the driver's becoming fatigued and relaxing his grip on the wheel. This man therefore designed a buzzer which could be kept quiet only by a firm hand on the wheel.

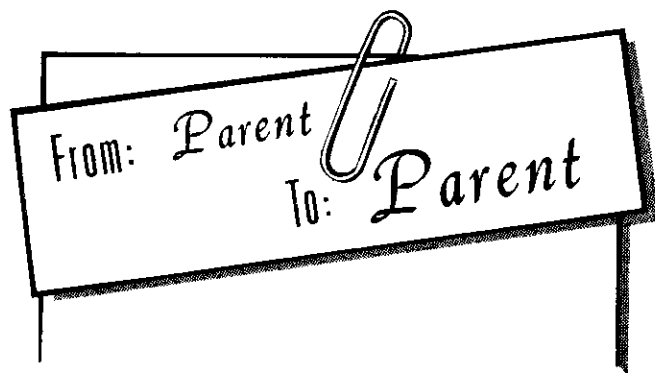
However feasible such an invention might be in the automobile world, it is of genuine value in the moral realm. We need a warning signal, to tighten our grip on the steering wheel of divine principle, whenever we are tempted to relax. We need a fixed standard to which we keep drawing ourselves. We cannot afford to slip into halfheartedness.

Solomon is an example of one whose heart was divided. Had he followed his father's advice to serve God with "a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (I Chron. 28:9), the verdict on his life would be very different. Had he had the united heart of his father David, he might have resisted the first impulse to sin and might have remained faithful to God. But he allowed the first wedge of division to enter, and the divide grew wider and wider and wider until he had no heart to serve the Lord.

It is interesting to note the differences between Solomon and his father David. Both sinned; but David repented and turned; Solomon did not. But David's sins were of a different sort than Solomon's. David's sins were all sudden, outright, open disobediences, which brought him into disgrace, and awakened in him a desire to repent and make himself right with God. Solomon's sins were insidious in nature, the result of a slow deterioration of character within, and a slow deadening of the consciousness of sin. There was no spirit of revolution in him, no fight, and no victory. And Solomon was defeated. David each time revolted against himself, fought and won. Revolution is always the

safer course. Sin persisted in is always fatal. Sin successfully fought means *victory*.

We need a Christian Revolution in our lives today as never before. Our days in the present cosmos are numbered. What we do we must do *now*. If we are going to make the changes in our lives that God requires, if we are going to do the things we have set out to do, we must be about it *now*. While we hesitate, while we consider, while we decide and decide and decide again—and do nothing—time is passing. Right now is the time for Revolution 1977! This present opportunity *could* be our last! ●●



## Always Encourage

(A Mother's Experience)

**M**Y young son Bryan had been trying to reach his raincoat in the front closet. He wasn't quite tall enough. So, typically boy, he decided a nice big jump would pull it right down. Well, the jump pulled it down all right, only the raincoat wasn't the only thing that came down. The entire bar, with its array of coats, jackets, and sweaters collapsed in a heap on the closet floor.

"Mom, help!" came the cry of distress.

I hurried to the rescue. "You should have known better than that," was my first response. It was the end of a long, busy day, but my tongue wasn't too tired for a scolding.

But suddenly I stopped myself. A picture came to my mind. I saw a little boy, arms full of tools, going outdoors that afternoon, hoeing the garden, mowing the lawn with all the strength a seven-year-old can muster, and raking up all the sticks that collect so quickly under the big old maple tree in our back yard. And all without even being told!

Had I been as anxious to praise and thank him



for all the work he had done that day as I was now to scold him for his childish mistake? After all, that bar had been bending under the weight of the coats and jackets for some time now; we needed a stronger one anyway.

I turned to him kindly. "From now on, when you can't reach something, I think you will use the stepstool. But Bryan, I haven't thanked you yet for all the very nice things you did to help us this afternoon—making the back yard so clean and tidy. It's a real help, I should have thanked you before."

When Daddy came home from work I made sure he heard about all the jobs his Bryan had done, instead of confronting him with the one mistake immediately.

Why is it so much easier to criticize than to appreciate and thank and encourage? The children are sure to hear about it when they do something naughty, or aggravating, or even when they make a simple mistake. Shouldn't we be just as anxious to let them know when they are helpful and good and their effort is appreciated? The good won't take care of itself; it must be cultivated.

Of course we want to develop as much good Christian character in our children as we possibly can. To do this, we *need* to correct them by word and by discipline. But there is a difference between training in good habits and just plain criticizing.

The Bible gives some very good advice to parents:

"Fathers, don't scold your children so much that they become discouraged and quit trying" (Col. 3:21, Living Bible).

"And now a word to you parents. Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful" (Eph. 6:4, Living Bible).

"Don't overcorrect your children or make it difficult for them to obey the commandment" (Eph. 6:4, Phillips). And the New English Bible says, "You fathers, again, must not goad your children to resentment, but give them the instruction, and the correction, which belong to a Christian upbringing."

Encouragement and tolerance have definite places in the Christian home. Cultivating these traits will rid our homes of unnecessary strife.

I try to ask myself these questions: Am I expecting too much of my children? Am I allowing myself more leniency than I allow them? Would I want others, or God, to deal with me in the same manner that I deal with my children?

Yes, God demands obedience, and He promises to punish for wrongdoing; but He is a very merciful Father, not giving up on us though we may

make the same mistake again and again.

Discipline and encouragement must go hand in hand. I, for one, am going to try harder to give them out in equal parts. ●●

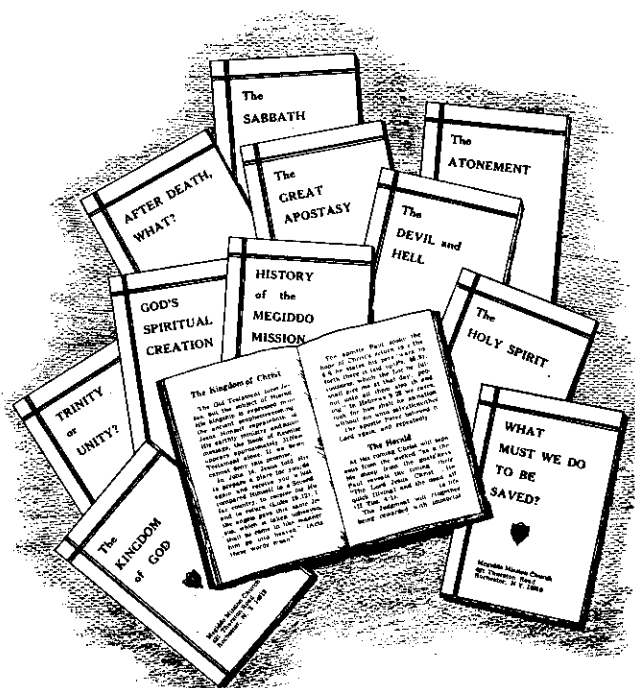
## On With Our Dream

(Continued from page 11)

of prosperity. A world of happiness. A world at peace with itself and a part of heaven.

This is the dream.

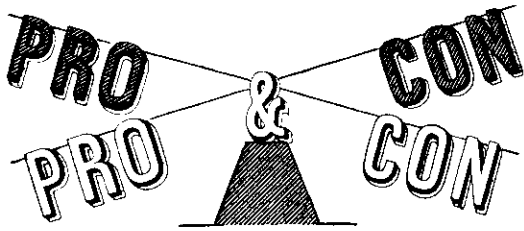
So now, right on with it! Right on with the conquest and the war and the struggle that will assure our part in the dream when it is realized. Right on with the banishing of every wayward inclination and tendency that threatens to mar its glory for us. Right on against the most formidable foe that besets us. Right on with the battle against everything that is inconsistent with the reality of the dream. Right on with the dream and all it means to us, for as surely as God lives it shall someday be a *reality!* ●●



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### *A Column for Open Discussion*

*All our readers do not agree with us. If you are among those who differ on some point, write us your views and we will publish them, together with Scriptural comment. Our policy is the Apostle's injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*

**"In First Corinthians 15, vs. 42-44, Paul says, 'So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown... a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.'"**

Paul is discussing the raising up of the faithful to immortality, not just bringing them back to mortal life. The word "sown" is used in the same sense that seed is cast out on the surface of the ground. The sowing then, as the term was used in those days when grain was sown by hand, refers to the restoring of the dead to mortal life. So those in Christ will be cast out upon the surface of the ground, raised to mortal life, corruptible. Then, after the Judgment, if faithful, they will be raised to incorruptibility.

(For more on this subject, see the February, 1977 issue of the MESSAGE, "Understanding the Bible," pages 13-17.)

**"You say there is no such thing as a universal resurrection, that only those who have learned God's law and agreed to live by it will be judged by that law.**

**"In this you are definitely in error, and if you'll just be patient I'll prove it to you, and from your own Bible.**

**"You use Paul's statement, 'For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law' as support for your argument above. You are saying, How can these ungodly and heathen classes be judged by a law that they did not know anything about?"**

**"But please read Romans 2:12 more carefully. Here Paul is saying that even those 'without' the law 'sinned.' That word 'sinned' is a very key word, as you shall see. So, naturally that includes those ungodly and heathen whom you say will not be resurrected. So they sinned, right?"**

Indeed they did evil, in that they did that which was contrary to the will of God; but having no working relationship with God or His laws, they were not accounted as sinners. Paul states it plainly in Romans 5:13, "For until the law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." This verse seems to be even plainer in the *New English Bible*: "For sin was already in the world before there was law, though in the absence of law no reckoning is kept of sin."

**"Or are you going to tell me that those 'heathen' did not sin? Now, turn over to I John 3:4, 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.' This verse states beyond any shadow of doubt that no one can sin except he transgress—what? The law of course!"**

Sin being as the book of John says the "transgression of the law," no one could transgress the law without sinning; but transgression outside of a working agreement with God would not make one a sinner within the context of this discussion, hence the "heathen" would not be counted as sinners accountable for their deeds.

**"I'm not saying that these heathen classes knew they were sinning, but they did sin! Now is God going to simply forget their sin and not judge them at all? Ridiculous!"**

We repeat: By doing evil they did not sin within the context of this discussion. They sinned, as Paul said, "without law," hence shall "perish without law."

We do not believe it is ridiculous for God *not* to judge those who sin without knowing His law. It is only justice and mercy. If a person does not know God and has never agreed to serve Him, it would be unjust for God to punish Him for disobeying a law that person never agreed to live by. Permit me to quote Romans 2:12 once again: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Paul, preaching to the people of Athens, explained God's

attitude toward such in this way: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at," or allowed to pass without judgment (Acts 17:30).

**"God is simply not going to let them get away with sin without some kind of judgment! What about all the millions upon millions living under Communism today, where the gospel isn't carried? And all through history, various peoples have lived under dictatorships. These people did not choose to be born into these godless nations. Please tell me, how can a sound mind reason that a just, merciful, wonderful, loving God would leave all these millions of people lying in their graves forever and ever? And without ever giving them a chance! Absolutely preposterous!"**

I fear that our friend, along with many well-meaning clergymen, holds to the false premise that all people on earth are God's children and that He is a devoted Father who loves everyone regardless of one's character. This conclusion may be valid from man's point of view. However, there is no evidence in Scripture to support it. It is pure supposition. There is ample evidence that God is *not* concerned with every human being; all are *not* naturally His children. We must become *adopted into* God's family to share in the benefits of that family. The Bible states, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die"—no mention of a second chance if we might need it. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:13-15).

Obadiah 16 clearly states the condition of the heathen, those who never knew God or became acquainted with His ways: "they shall be as though they had not been." (See also Jer. 51:57 and Psalm 49:19-20.)

According to the Bible, there is work to do if one is to obtain salvation, and most people are unwilling to do the work or even to acknowledge that it is necessary. Even many who begin the work do not finish it. Consequently, those who do not know, not being accountable to God, are better off than those who know and do not do. They simply die without knowledge and are not required to face judgment.

It is God's prerogative to see that anyone who will do His will shall be acquainted with it. He will not let any good material be lost. As in the parable of Jesus, He sends out His call for laborers to work in His vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). All who would come hear the call, and the Lord prom-

ises to reward each for what he does.

Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). While this verse says that the man who will do God's will shall have sufficient evidence to know the doctrine that is of God, it at the same time states the principle upon which God works. He who "will do . . . shall know," wherever he be born, whatever his race or status among men. To state this principle another way, if a man does not know the doctrine, we may be sure that that man would not have done what the doctrine required had he known it.

**"I believe people will be given a second chance to decide for themselves. This is the only sane answer to the problem.**

**"Explain to me God's dealings with Pharaoh back in Exodus. In verse 3 of chapter 7, God says, 'And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.'"**

The Bible describes the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in three ways: "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Ex. 7:13; 9:12); "The heart of Pharaoh was hardened" (Ex. 7:22; 9:7); "And Pharaoh hardened his heart" (Ex. 8:15, 32). The meaning must be the same in each case. God is said to do that which He allows. This concept was especially strong among the ancient Israelites, who looked directly to God as the cause of everything that happened. In this sense, the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh; that is, He allowed the circumstances and the disposition of heart which led to this result.

Man is a free moral agent; he can serve God or not, just as he chooses. At times, God uses men for His purposes, even though they may not be serving Him, as in the case of Cyrus the Persian (Ezra 1).

**"All through the Bible it speaks of God deliberately blinding people. Why? That they may be examples for us today, naturally."**

The statement that "all through the Bible it speaks of God deliberately blinding people" is *not* true. Isolated texts may be found which upon surface reading seem to say this, but the great burden of Bible teaching says to the contrary. Never did God deliberately blind people to the truth; they blinded themselves (John 3:19), and He allowed it, otherwise He would have taken away their freedom of choice, which is part of God's manner of dealing with men (see Deut. 30:15-17; Josh. 24:15). ●● (To Be Continued).

# Our Readers Write...

## Christian Friends

It is so good that we can communicate by letter and express our feelings and tell and let each other find more peace of mind with the Word of God, in which we need so much to place our confidence at this present time.

We pray for one another, so that we may be strengthened to be able to fulfill God's work here on earth.

I also have received your books. I have started to read them, and shall pass them on so that the message can go far and wide. I pray that God will bless your ministry so that you may be able to continue to send the message to the world to bring lives to Him. Again, thanks so very, very much for the literature. I do appreciate it.

*St. Lucia, West Indies*

A. A.

## Think First

God does not tempt us more than we can bear, if we just put that will-power of ours to work before we act or speak and look before we leap and think before we speak. By doing so we often see that what we would have said or done on the spur of the moment would have been wrong, and we learn that our silence was golden. The Bible proves true again and again, when it says that the tongue is an unruly member.

*Nova Scotia, Canada*

S. M.

## Obituary

### Flora Hendricks

As this issue goes to press, we have just received word of the passing of a longtime friend and sister of Winterset, Iowa, Flora Hendricks. Sister Hendricks' acquaintance with the Megiddo Church dates back to 1931, and she and her husband shared a lively interest in the true teachings of the Bible and in preparing for the better life which is to come, until his death in 1970. Through her active years Sister Hendricks maintained a regular correspondence with other members to encourage them in the faith, and with her husband made several visits to the Church in Rochester. Together they participated actively in the meetings of the local group of interested readers in Iowa, as long as health permitted.

Sister Hendricks is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Florence Burkett, of Peru, Iowa, who is an active member of the Megiddo Church and shares her mother's living faith and desire for a better life. Sister Hendricks is also survived by another daughter, Edith Hull; two sons, Lawrence and Francis; seven grandchildren, twelve great-grandchildren, all of Iowa, and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were conducted on June 12, her nephew Russell Trachsel officiating.

Such is mortality, even after a life of more than four-score and ten years. Let us the living realize the limit of our days and apply our hearts the more earnestly to that which will endure. ●●

## Appreciative

I wish to express my appreciation for the *Megiddo Message*. The Messages are very helpful to me in the words that I speak, which I know will be judged, and my actions which I know will be weighed. The truth that I am receiving answers my need.

*Franklin, Tennessee*

Mrs. J. H.

## Scriptural Spotlight

*(Continued from page 27)*

The promising sound of the gospel made such tremendous impact on their lives that everywhere they went they were all on fire for God and the world to come. True, they were beset by shortcomings, and many a restraint proved to be more than a temporary block; but sincerely believing the Word of God could work wonders in the transforming of their sinful lives, how fervently, how enthusiastically they let it work. To them, the way of Christ was "the way, the life and the only truth" worth living for. How well they followed it is for us to read in the Scriptures.

Unending life with none of mortality's limitations!—is not such a promise cause enough for the greatest enthusiasm? Poor mortal man so feeble in all his attempts at success in this life, unable to get beyond the few short years allotted him, has little to live for. But consider what God can and will do for him—exceeding, abundantly above all we can ask or think (Eph. 3:20)!—if he is willing to serve the Lord with heart and mind and hand.

Should not such a prospect cause every fiber of our being to sing?

Of all people, have we not the greatest cause for enthusiasm? Have we not a banner to display because of the truth? Have we not within our sacred halls eternal values which we are duty-bound to proclaim? We dare not drag our belief in the dust. Lukewarm unenthusiastic conduct is loathsome to the Lord.

The throngs of thrill-seekers have no need to be concerned; this world holds all their interest, and they can hide behind a cynical self-interest and go their way. But not so with us. We must care. We must be concerned. We must be enthusiastic. If we are not, we are indeed unworthy.

Let us think and deeply ponder. Was anything great ever achieved without enthusiasm? And if the offer and opportunity God is giving us now is not worth our all, it is worth nothing.

Let us proceed at once with enthusiasm, that our enthusiasm may stimulate others. The time is short. ●●





# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"Your enthusiasm has . . . stimulated . . . them" (II Cor. 9:2, Phillips).*

THERE IS a phrase current in conversation these days which is depressing or even offending. "I couldn't care less." It is said with cool dispassion in reply to a burning issue or to a fanciful dream. What does anything matter? What difference does it make where we go, what we say, what we do, as long as we are pursuing happiness? Let's not burden ourselves with the world's troubles. If we must die, let us at least die happy.

This is the attitude of the apathetic multitude, who are loathe to become involved in any human emergency.

Contrast this with Paul's words to the Corinthians, and his feelings toward them, as expressed in our text. The subject at the time was the giving of money to help the needy; but the principle beneath the act was timeless. Paul's enthusiasm had stimulated the Corinthians, and the Corinthians had stimulated their brethren. There was mutual care, concern and enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm was contagious.

Enthusiasm is a quality to be nurtured and cherished. This is true in every affair of life. But especially is it true in the life of the practicing Christian. Truth—vital, impelling—calls for enthusiasm, plus. If we are at all alive in the work of the Lord, we will feel enthusiasm for it. If we have no enthusiasm, either we fail to summon it or we are not alive.

True enthusiasm is not feigned. It is not false imitation proceeding from the lips. Frank, sincere enthusiasm looks out of the eyes, springs up in the heart, and makes itself seen in voluntary action. It is inspired by faith in the living Word of God.

God's great enthusiasts, no matter how small the arena of their operation, are always memorable. Take, for example, our Lord and Master. He never traveled more than a few miles in and around His home town. Yet consider the amount of good He accomplished and the many people who

were affected by His holy example of enthusiasm. By observing Him, His disciples knew it is possible to feel all infused with the love of life—life not as we see it today but as we know it will be in the future gloryland of peace and unheard-of happiness.

If we have the drive and the honest determination to meet our sacred obligations head-on, our whole commitment will take on real heartfelt significance. Such enthusiasm will result that no obstacle, however formidable, will be able to hinder our push toward the goal.

We are told that enthusiasm begets enthusiasm, just as it did among Paul's brethren; and the small ripple becomes the widening circle that has no limit. What we as God's spokesmen have to say is of such vast importance that we cannot be silent, much less inactive. What we have to live is a Gospel with life-changing potential. What we have a small preview of will someday soon become earth-shaking news, rending the very foundations of wickedness. Should not such knowledge fill us with enthusiasm?

Fellow-workers, we must and should care for our way of life with a holy intensity, with a zeal that cannot be dampened. We must have that care that Brother Paul felt toward his brethren in the faith. To refuse to summon that spark of true enthusiasm is to deny ourselves the right to future existence. Our effort must be coupled with enthusiasm, or we will never succeed.

Enthusiasm will always be ours if our heart is in the right place. Rich or poor, educated or not, in pleasant circumstances or adverse—our position in this world has nothing to do with it. God is no respecter of persons. Peter was a fisherman, Paul a scholar; yet God did not differentiate between the two. He had work for both, and both were given the same opportunity to work for life eternal.

*(Continued on page 26)*





## Only RIGHTEOUSNESS Exalts

*"Our nation--indeed the world--today stands in its gravest time of peril, from the standpoint of human survival on earth. Thermonuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the swift means to deliver these weapons of mass destruction to virtually any point on earth carry grave signs that perhaps the Biblically--prophesied Battle of Armageddon may not be too far away. Many who once scoffed at this prophecy . . . are now concerned for fear of its validity.*

*"For our nation to come through these dangerous times with survival and preservation of our liberties, we need not only to remain strong economically and militarily, but--above all--we must be strong spiritually and ever seek the guidance of Almighty God. We must be sure--as Mr. Lincoln so aptly put it years ago--not only that God is on our side, but more importantly, that we are on God's side, individually and as a nation.*

*"Our nation, though richly blessed by God, is certainly not immune from His judgment. Therefore, every American must give consideration, prayer, and effort toward individual spiritual regeneration so there can be no question as to our nation's being on God's side. We, who are in positions of leadership, must be humble and seek God's guidance in determining the course of our nation. For, it is written in Proverbs, "Righteousness exalteth a nation. . . . When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice."*

*From remarks of Senator Strom Thurmond to the U. S. Senate Prayer Breakfast group, 1961.*

