

Megiddo Message

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*Soon the reaping time is coming
And we'll gather what we've sown...*

When Prayer Isn't Enough

*There is little use praying for others to be RIGHT with God
if we ourselves are WRONG with Him.*

There is a story of a mountain dweller who was lying in the shade of a tree on a hot summer day. A passerby, seeing his cabin on fire, awakened him rudely. "Don't you know your cabin is on fire?"

"Yes, I know," came the sleepy reply.

"Then why aren't you *doing* something about it?" asked the traveler anxiously.

The man's answer showed a bit of irritation: "I'm doing the best I can. Been praying for rain ever since it started."

Perhaps no topic has been more grossly misunderstood than that of prayer. As a dependent child, we need our heavenly Father. And we need to communicate with Him. We need to utilize all the resources God has provided us, and prayer is one of these resources.

But we must be realistic in our expectations, and both our prayers and our expectations must be according to the will of God. God does not mean to do for us what we can do for ourselves.

No answer comes to those who pray,

Then idly stand

And wait for stones to roll away

At God's command.

When hands are idle, prayers are vain

To move the stone.

God's helping angel would disdain

To work alone.

—Author Unknown

By prayer we petition the Omnipotent God to work for us. The results can be dramatic, as we have many times read in the Divine Record. But we must remember also that prayer does not stand alone. God does not mean that we should literally ask and receive. Prayer alone is not enough.

Our prayer is pointless if it is a substitute for action. Recall the words of the Lord to Moses: "Why do you cry to me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward" (Ex. 14:15, NKJV). God is not going to do our walking for us. He has provided us two legs and two feet so that we can do it for ourselves. Nor can we expect Him to do our thinking for us. He

has given us minds, and He expects us to use them. He has given us the good earth, sunshine and rain, so that we may grow the crops we need for food. If we want our bread ready baked, or our houses ready-built, without any effort on our part, we shall wait in vain. As someone has commented, "God gives every bird its food, but He does not throw it into the nest."

We may pray for a good harvest, but we cannot expect to escape the effort and anxiety of plowing, planting, cultivating and reaping.

Nor is undirected action effective. Paul felt sorrow for his brethren who had zeal without knowledge (Rom. 10:2). In all the history of God's work on earth, there is no instance of great spiritual revival resulting from God's people sitting down to eat and drink and rising up to play (1 Cor. 10:7). Activity alone is not enough; it must be the right kind of activity. And it must be sustained, not spasmodic. And it must be action in obedience to the commands of God.

Our prayer is pointless if it is contradicted by our actions. Jesus condemned those who drew near Him with their mouth but their hearts were far from Him, and called their worship "vain" (Matt. 15:7-9). The prophet Isaiah said the same about the people of his day. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord:...Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies,...They are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them....Yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear" (Isa. 1:11-15). What is the solution? "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-17).

Neither can we expect to invoke God's help and favor if we are not doing all in our power to be right ourselves. There is another text in the book of Isaiah which expresses this thought: "And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he will come to his sanctu-

(Continued on page 27)

Megiddo means ...

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

We believe ...

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

Soon-coming events

The Herald and the KING

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

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

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

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THE 10th BEATITUDE:

BLESSED ARE THE OBEDIENT

In His first sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave His disciples nine beatitudes. Each pronounced a blessing upon a specific type of conduct. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed

are the pure in heart: for they shall

see God. Blessed are the

peacemakers: for they shall be

called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

(Matt. 5:3-10). Who had ever heard such teaching? Each line was a call to personal revolution, to a drastic change in one's manner of life. For who could say they were worthy of a heavenly blessing for the meekness, or purity, or mercy they had shown? Yes, each beatitude was a command to be obeyed, for in this same sermon Jesus declared, *"Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21, RSV).

For our lesson today we want to summarize Jesus' teachings in a statement which we will call the tenth beatitude: *Blessed are the obedient*. Does it not include all, even the whole life and teaching of Jesus? For how can one be meek, or pure of

heart, or merciful, or peacemaking—and not be obedient?

But obedience is not all soft, fuzzy and comfortable. The very idea is counter to what we naturally like. Rebellion, not obedience runs in our blood, and is characteristic of our age. Individualism is the spirit of contemporary art, literature, and morals, and of the widespread revolt against law and authority. And individualism is not obedience. If strictly honest with ourselves, we have to admit that the word "obedience" is just a little irritating. Am I not, after all, a competent, mature individual? What is wrong if I choose to think, feel and act—my way?

Nothing at all, if this world is the height of our ambition; if we are satisfied to take our chances in life, pursue the goals of this world for a while and then die, as men and women have for centuries before us. But if we want life and the infinitely greater blessings God has offered us, we must use this life as a preparation, not an end in itself. We must follow Jesus' example, give up our way and submit to God's way.

And, in the words of a famous playwright, "Aye, there's the rub..." for in submitting we are acknowledging that we do not know everything ourselves, that another's judgment is better than ours, that another law is superior to ours. This means conflict, especially when that law bears the authority of God. For when God says "no," He doesn't mean "maybe." And He doesn't mean "sometimes," and He doesn't mean "if you think so."

Obedience was the keynote of Jesus' life. His primary focus was not on serving His fellowmen, or making a name for Himself in the world, or even upon enjoying

*How can one be meek,
or pure of heart, or merciful,
or peacemaking — and
not be obedient?*

life, but only on obeying His Father. *"I can of mine own self do nothing,"* He said. *"As I bear; I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me"* (John 5:30).

Jesus, our perfect example, *"learned obedience by the things which he suffered"* (Heb. 5:8-9). Jesus, our perfect example, ate the butter and honey, according to the prophecy, that he might *"know to refuse the evil, and choose the good"* (Isa. 7:15). Jesus, it is written, *"pleased not himself"* (Rom. 15:3). *"My meat,"* He said, *"is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"* (John 4:34). His crowning act of submission was expressed in: *"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."* Such was the pattern of His life. Should we not consider seriously what was for Him the very secret of success?

And so, when Jesus was teaching His disciples, His words were not casual and interesting information but serious instructions to be applied. If any listener thought himself pretty good just as he was, he soon learned otherwise. No one could follow Jesus and remain the same.

Now just how far shall we take this matter of obedience? That all depends upon how seriously we want the blessing. For God is not compelling us. This is not the age in which the voice says, *"This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left"* (Isa 30:21). Now we must live by principle, and the benefits we receive will be just in proportion as we are willing to give. Hence our beatitude, *"Blessed are the obedient."*

More obedience, more blessing.

Obedience, Israel's Lesson

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He put them in the school of obedience. Did you ever think about how detailed and how specific were the laws by which they lived? They were instructed *exactly how* to build the tabernacle, and *exactly how* to carry the ark, and *exactly how* to offer the sacrifices, and *exactly how* to set up their camp, and *exactly how* to make the priests' garments, and so on and on. If the cloud did not move from off the tabernacle, they were to *stay*. If it moved, they were to *move*, and *right then*—not tomorrow or next week. If God said, *"Go up,"* they were to *do* it. If He told them to circle the mountain again—when

they had already circled it twice—they were to do it, not question why. The sacrifices and offerings were a never-ending obligation. Day after day, year in and year out, they had to be offered. Did it seem pointless? Not when God had commanded it. And His underlying purpose was not the ritual but the *obedience* it required.

No one who has studied the Bible seriously can question the demand for obedience. *"Obey and live, disobey and die"* is the whole tenor of its thought. *"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day"* (Deut. 11: 26-28).

In other words, "Thou shalt hear" and "thou shalt do." Hearing and obeying are so closely related that the Hebrew language uses the same word to convey both ideas. According to a certain scholar, the Hebrew verb "to hear" "significantly denotes not any passive receiving of words into the mind but the response of a man's whole being." The Israelite needed no philosophical explanation for the doctrine of obedience. For him, hearing the Word of God was the equivalent of obeying it. When the solemn covenant was read in the audience of the people, they responded, *"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient"* (Ex. 24:7).

The very idea of God dealing with His people as with children suggests a special emphasis upon obedience. The discipline of obedience is a prerequisite to any success. A child who refuses to obey parents and teachers never learns as rapidly as one who listens carefully and tries to carry out instructions. A child who refuses to learn the multiplication tables is not likely to become an outstanding mathematician. One who refuses to study vocabulary is not likely to become a great linguist.

Every punishment and every judgment of the Lord was a fruit of disobedience. *"According to the sentence of the law..."*

If we want life and the infinitely greater blessings God has offered us, we must use this life as a preparation, not an end in itself.

*Just how far shall we
take this matter of obedience?
That all depends upon how
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the blessing.*

which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt not decline...to the right hand, nor to the left" (Deut 17:11). "Thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers" (Deut. 6:18). The principle is timeless: "If they obey

and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge" (Job 36:11-12).

This is why obedience is emphasized so strongly in the Scriptures. Israel as a nation could not really know God until they learned to obey Him.

Obedience in the New Testament

Obedience is also emphasized in the New Testament. Jesus summarized "all the law" in these two commands: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12:30-31).

Again and again in His teachings Jesus emphasized the importance of obedience. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). Again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). Jesus made it very clear that love is demonstrated by obedience.

And He Himself demonstrated this fact. As Paul writes, He "bumbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). This passage clearly links humility and obedience. Shall we say that Christ needed to obey but we do not?

Are we willing to take our obedience to that extent? We are ready to give of our time, our strength, our talent, our money. We are ready to study and support our beliefs. But how many of us are ready to be obedient "even unto death"? How many of us are willing to bring into captivity "every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5)?

Faith and Obedience

Obedience is faith in action. We see this in Abraham. Why was Abraham commended as an example of faith? In the words of the angel, it was "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:16-17). We can scarcely imagine the depth of the trial to Abraham when he was told to offer his son as a sacrifice. But the writer of Hebrews describes his victorious faith in these words: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:17-19).

Here are faith and obedience so intermingled that no one can say where one began and the other ends. Abraham's confidence, his assurance, his faith combined in an act of obedience which honored God, and which God honored, to Abraham's eternal credit. And so James wrote of him that "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" (James 2:22).

Do we wonder that Abraham was given the magnificent honorary title of being the "father of the faithful" (Rom. 4:16-17)? But how much faith would he have shown if he had not obeyed? Suppose that Abraham had stayed in Ur, and disregarded the call of the Lord? Would he still be known as the father of the faithful? Or suppose when the call came for him to sacrifice his son he had said "No, God, I can't do that." Would he still have the title of father of the faithful? No wonder James observed that "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:22-24).

Now suppose that we say we believe the Word of God. That Word commands us to do certain things, and we refuse to do them. Of how much value is our faith?

We see obedience in action again in the life of Paul. The faith of Paul was a perturbing, revolutionizing thing. It upset and changed the whole life of the individual and made him into another person altogether. It laid hold on him and brought him

under obedience to Christ. It was a faith that took up its cross and followed along after Jesus with no intention of going back. It was a faith that said good-bye to its old friends as certainly as Elijah when he stepped into the fiery chariot and went away in a whirlwind. It snapped shut a man's heart like a trap; it captured him and made him from that moment forward a captive of his Lord. It took him out of the way of sin and set him on the new, high road to life, with new goals, new directions, and new ambitions.

We need to hear again the doctrine of this perturbing quality of faith. We need to be told that our religion is not something that we can trifle with. Our faith must command our lives and take possession of us. It must be our first thought in the morning, and our meditation at night. It is not a gentle experiment. It is not a when-you-will or as-you-please philosophy. It is a faith with power, and the only one who can truly claim it is he who has enough faith to put himself in a position where he cannot go back. Such a faith is an irrevocable and everlasting commitment, and how-

ever strongly we may be tempted it will always reply, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68).

When we realize the sovereignty, the omniscience, the omnipotence of God, these qualities alone should inspire our obedience. How foolish to think we can resist a power so great—and so good! For where God is sovereign, we are dependent; where He is omniscient, we are ignorant; where He is omnipotent, we are powerless. And where He is infinite, we are bound by limits of time, and space, and circumstance. At no point are we more foolish than in our willful disobedience.

Little wonder that we find ourselves in conflict with the law of God, when we refuse to obey, when we want *our* way, *our* ideas, *our* will, *our* thoughts. And

*When God says "no,"
He doesn't mean "maybe."*

Almighty Creator, Source of all mercies, we approach Thee this morning with hearts overflowing with gratitude. Thou hast brought us safely to the present moment. Thou hast been our comfort, our protector in danger, our stay in trouble, our steady stronghold and support in all the ups and downs of our lives. In a world filled with turmoil and strife, through Thy mercy and goodness we are able to live in peace and serenity. For all, our God, we thank Thee.

We are especially grateful for the gift of Thy Son, He who is our perfect example and coming King. May we be reminded anew of His supreme achievement in holiness, as we realize how many times we have stumbled, and give Him the honor He is due. His obedience to Thee was perfect; ours has, at best, been only partial. But help us to realize that Thy law is inflexible, and if we would receive Thy eternal blessings we must obey it. Thou hast given Thy Son to be our teacher, and when our training is complete we must have reached our Teacher's level.

Father, we thank Thee for protecting us in weakness, and for guiding us into opportunities to help others and to promote Thy cause in our time. Help us to keep our enthusiasm ever increasing, as we see the

great Day drawing nearer and nearer. Help us to be intense in our effort to please Thee, and may the spirit of the Master be *our* spirit, His interests *our* interests, His Father our Father.

We thank Thee for blocking us when we would have chosen the wrong road, and for providing those who have reproved us when we were in the wrong. Help us to be ever more grateful for Thy disciplines. Make us sensitive to the restraints of Thy Divine grace, and keep us ever mindful of Thy law. And when we learn Thy Divine command, may we fly to obey it, knowing that only the obedient will be blest.

Father, give us within our own hearts the peace that passes understanding. Take from us the anxieties which would detract and weaken us; take from us the doubts which have no foundation and which weaken our power to endure. Take from us wrong desires and vain ambitions; and keep our persuasion strong that neither life nor death nor things present nor things to come nor anything else in Thy whole realm shall be able to separate us from Thy love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All this we ask through our Mediator and Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom we would honor and obey. Amen.

*Our obedience is our
attitude, our manner of life,
our example, our decisions,
our words.*

because "every way of a man is right in his own eyes," how natural! Do we wonder why we are frustrated and defeated when we go against God? Even animals can be taught obedience to commands. But we stubbornly take the bit in our own teeth and then complain because of the results of our own disobedience.

Obedience has its rewards, now and for eternity. Disobedience is deadly, as King Saul learned, to his eternal loss. True, he said that he had preserved the best of the

flocks to be used as a sacrifice to God. But was this an acceptable reason for disobedience? And of how much value was the acclaim and honor of the people—when God was displeased?

And so we hear the word of the Lord's prophet, written for us: *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"* (1 Sam. 15:22).

Everyday Obedience

What is this obedience in everyday, practical terms?

First, we must step down off the throne of our heart and permit God to take His rightful place there as Lord. This means submission, and the very idea of submission is contrary to our nature. "I am the master of my fate," we like to feel. "I am the captain of my soul." Not so, says the apostle Paul. *"You belong to the power you choose to obey."* You are either a servant of God unto righteousness, or a servant of sin unto death (Rom. 6:16, Phillips). And when we choose our master, we choose our destiny.

What can we learn from the example of Christ? How did He learn obedience? There is one very revealing statement in the book of Hebrews: *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"* (Heb. 5:8). Jesus learned from the trials and disciplines of life; we can learn from the trials and disciplines of life, especially from those experiences which are contrary and unpleasant.

Here is obedience with blessing. Here is obedience that lifts us above the law of the jungle. God places upon His children special demands. If they would be heirs of salvation, the blessed inheritors of His promise, they must comply with His law. They cannot act by instinct. And they are not free to do as they please. God has given a law, and they must obey it.

Does this mean that the Christian believer is passive and weak? Not at all. In fact, the Christian is the only one who has the right to be a rebel—not a rebel against God, but against evil, against wrong, against worldliness, against every stronghold of sin. Peter summed up the Christian spirit when he said, *"We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29).

In one sense, a Christian is both a confirmed pessimist and an optimist the like of which is not to be found anywhere else on earth. As a pessimist, he sees the plan of God being fulfilled, the prophecies working out according to the Word of God, the depths of sin getting deeper and deeper while iniquity comes in like a flood. There is no opportunity for anything but pessimism, looking at the world picture. Yet the Christian looks at the Word of the Lord and His promise and is radiant with hope. No optimism in the world can equal his joyous uplook. And he *knows*—he does not guess—he *knows* that the next great event in the world scene will be the advent of Jesus Christ and His forerunner Elijah. God has given His Word, and His Word cannot fail.

And so the Christian can be calmly, expectantly optimistic. What if the cross galls for a time? What if the sacrifice seems heavy? What if the world picture is chaotic? What if his own life does not give him the fulfillment he would like? The problem is but for a moment; the joy of victory—if he can attain the image of Christ, if he can win the reward of perfect obedience—will go on forever! He knows absolutely and positively that the great consummation will come. And he wants to be ready!

What Impels Our Obedience?

We will not offer the complete obedience God demands by instinct. Nor will we do it simply for the satisfaction of doing right. There has to be a deeper reason, a compelling purpose in it. We simply do not give up our own way—which is as near

and dear as our breath—without a strong motivation.

As Christians, we have three basic reasons to obey: out of *commitment* (to fulfill our promise); out of *duty*, and out of *love* of God and the reward He has offered.

Once we have promised to serve God, our obedience is no longer an option, but a duty. If we fail, if we come short of what we have promised, we are not worthy of what God has offered. Our obedience is a fulfillment of a requirement, because we have promised, "All these things will we do and be obedient."

The Bible is filled with commands to be obeyed, as well as the basic command to obey. We may turn to any of its authors, and find very definite restrictions which direct our behavior, our speech, and even our thought life. Not an easy task is it to submit to this obedience, or to follow it through a lifetime of service. But what are the alternatives? What other way is there to obtain what God has offered? What other way is there to life? Our questions echo back to us, unanswered. There is no

other way—unless we are content to pursue what we wish, and die as have the multitudes ahead of us. There is no other way to reach beyond ourselves, and our instincts, except through the avenue God has outlined.

Love is a passion within us which can affect all our behavior. Let that love be strong enough, and we will gladly sacrifice anything—even our very life—for the object of our love.

This is where God appeals to our nature. He knows our frame, and our instincts, and has so constructed His law of life that we have what we need to comply with His demands. He has given us deep and compelling reasons to love Him, and out of this love can issue the most perfect obedience.

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have three basic reasons to
obey: out of commitment, out of
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SMASH IT!

How much is obedience worth?

There is a story of a king who was known for his abhorrence of needless waste. One day the king handed a flawless, dazzling, beautiful pearl to one of his wise men. "How much do you think this pearl is worth?" he asked.

"Many trunkfuls of gold, my lord" the wise man replied.

"Smash it," ordered the king.

The wise man was too shocked to do it. "To destroy such a beautiful pearl is unthinkable," he said, and handed it back to the king.

The king turned to the second wise man and asked him the same question.

"One cannot properly place a value on such a beautiful pearl," replied the second wise man. "Far be it from me to measure its worth."

"Smash it," ordered the king.

"To destroy such a beautiful treasure would be an insult to the king," he said, as he handed the pearl back to the king.

The king turned to a third man, a humble cobbler who had once shown the king a great kindness and, as a result, had been asked to move into the palace to live. The king handed him the pearl and asked him the same question.

"This pearl is worth more than all the gold I have ever seen in my entire life," replied the cobbler.

"Smash it," ordered the king.

Without a moment's hesitation, the cobbler took the pearl to where there were two large stones. Carefully he laid the pearl upon the stone, and raising his hammer high, he brought it down with a force that crushed the pearl instantly, reducing it in a single blow to a thimble full of useless dust.

"The cobbler is mad," cried the first wise man in anguish.

"How dare the cobbler to be so ruthless with the king's wealth!" protested the second wise man. "Such a man should be..."

The king held up his hand for silence. "What is worth more," he asked, "a beautiful pearl, or obedience to my command?"

This question, on the lips of an earthly monarch, means little. But what about *our* King? What does He value most? What say you, Saul, in answer to that question? And you, rich young ruler? And what about you and me, who are part of this individualistic age?

The Bible principle still stands: "Blessed are the obedient." "*Blessed are they that do his commandments,*" for to them *only* shall be granted an entrance into the eternal city, and the right to partake of the tree of life forever.

What more can anyone ask?

Obedience may
mean giving up temporal
advantage for eternal
profit.

What impels our love for God?

Three things: what God has done for us, what He is doing for us, and what He has promised to do. And when we think about it, we realize that all of these surpass description. All of them defy our ability to fathom. What God has already done for us in giving us this life and the benefits that accompany it, is far beyond our understanding. We cannot read history without realizing the wonder of our

own place in the world, to say nothing of our universe, or where we fit into the scope of life.

Add to all this what God is doing right now—in giving us the necessities of life—a heart that

beats day and night, whether we wake or sleep;

a bloodstream that keeps carrying the life-giving nutrients to our cells so that they can perform the functions of life; food that our bodies can transform into energy we can use to breathe and work and move. Where can we turn for any of these but to God? For we have no power to make or sustain ourselves.

Add to all this what God has promised to do in the future,—which is the farthest beyond our conception—and how can we not love such a Being! One who is offering us more than eye has seen, more than ear has heard, more than our fondest imagination can conceive. Who is this great One we call God, and what can we ever do to repay the debt we owe Him, or to be worthy of what He has offered us?

When we truly are gripped by the goodness of God, when we fully believe what He has done and is doing and has promised to do for us, we will feel an impulse to obedience that will overpower any of our natural desires. For what can we claim on our own that even minutely compares with what God has for us?

The only thing that stands between us and the love of God are our own sins and failures, our own self-will and senseless unbelief, which is really, under-

neath, only our pride saying: "*Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?*" (Ps. 12:4).

Obedience means

What does obedience mean in everyday terms?

In the Apostles' day it meant suffering for the cause of Christ, being ready to endure persecution for the faith, bearing witness even unto death. For us the price may be less drastic, but it is still "all that a man hath." And what is that?

In simplest terms it is our attitude, our manner of life, our example. It is how we do our work, what we think about, what we talk about, what we read, what we enjoy, and where we go.

Getting even more specific, it may mean giving up something we could lawfully enjoy for the sake of our example to another. It may mean doing a task we do not prefer, without complaining. It may mean taking the job we would not choose, because of spiritual advantage. It may mean spending our time with tasks to which we do not feel well suited, because that is where we are needed. It may mean giving up temporal advantage for eternal profit. It may mean letting go the honors or opportunities of this world which we might otherwise be able to enjoy, to avoid entanglement with the world. It may mean suffering mistreatment, loss or shame rather than deny our faith. It may be so simple a matter as giving up our own opinion or idea.

Let us search our own hearts to find out what is holding us back, what we should be yielding to God in obedience. God is not unrighteous. And He never makes a mistake. He never asks us to do anything unreasonable, or anything that will not make us better for the doing. Why then, are we so slow to obey?

Oh, let us like Jesus keep our minds fixed on the glory ahead. Whatever the price of our obedience, let us assure ourselves that it is worth it, because "blessed are the obedient." Blessed! Yes, eternally blessed! What will it be to eat of the tree of life—to eat and live forever! What will it be to be accepted as a son or daughter of the Lord Almighty! What will it be to be there! □

What About

The Song of Solomon?

Perhaps no book of Scripture has aroused more diversities of opinion than this short poem of 8 chapters. A few facts stand out in history: 1) that the book was held in great veneration by ancient Jewish authorities; 2) that it was regarded as part of the Canon of the Old Testament not only by the Jews but also by early Christian writers, with very few exceptions; and 3) the almost universal belief of both the Jewish and Christian Churches was that there is valuable spiritual truth conveyed in it, thus it must be retained as a genuine portion of the Word of God.

Given these facts, we must deal with the book as part of Holy Scripture and must therefore put it in intelligible relation to the Word of God. We must understand what is the idea of the book, and how that idea is set forth in the form in which it is composed.

The tone of the book is not of a corrupt court but rather, as one commentator describes it, of a "simple purity of a country maiden blooming in the presence of royal magnificence, transforming the atmosphere of worldly pleasure into which she is introduced, rebuking the fallen monarch, and setting forth by way of contrast the superior glory of virtue."

If the book were merely of literary or moral worth, why should it have been made a part of the collection of Jewish literatures? On the other hand, all other books have some distinct and easily recognizable connection with the religious character and the peculiar national position of the Jewish people at the time.

What can we learn from the book? It seems that its text is most meaningful when taken as a typical portrayal of the great love between Christ and His true Church, King Solomon being regarded as a type of Christ, and the bride representing the Church. This does not mean that a point by point study must seek special meaning in every phrase, as would an allegory. But it does give to the text a spiritual significance. By the use of a type, the deepest truths are set forth in the dress of other images,

in this case, words of human affection. The significance is deep, because there is no deeper or dearer relationship than that between God or Christ and His Church, and the Church and God or Christ.

From such a viewpoint, the book has many valuable lessons, even though it seems to be veiled as prophecy or history. And when we think about this subject, what love could be too deep or too rapturous for the bride to lavish upon the bridegroom, or the bride-

groom upon his bride? Even in the time of Christ, our Saviour appealed to the hearts of the people to recognize their relationship to God in terms of marital faithfulness or unfaithfulness. This simile was used frequently by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, to reprove the people's waywardness and lack of love.

A current author, John Phillips, has evaluated the book Song of Solomon carefully, and some of his conclusions may add to our understanding. He comments, "Solomon depicts the tempter, the enemy of our souls, 'using' all the allurements of the world in his efforts to seduce us from our loyalty to Christ." He says that it is evident that "here is a song to stir the soul, to draw out the heart in fresh love for the Lord Jesus, and to alert us to how strong and subtle are the forces which would pull us away from him" (John Phillips, *Exploring the Song of Solomon*, published by Loizeaux Brothers, 1984).

Mr. Phillips says further, "The world is all about us. It is like the sea, lapping against the ship, ever probing for a crack through which it can pour and so submerge the vessel. The answer to this constant pressure of the world upon our souls is Christ! If we keep our hearts singing in His love, our minds filled with thoughts of Him, and our wills enslaved to His, then the world will not get very far.... This is what the Christian life is really all about—the love the Lord Jesus has for us and the love we have for Him. With this love the world simply does not have a chance. All the way through the Song we hear the still small voice of the Spirit of God: 'Do you love the Lord Jesus like that?'" □

*What love could
be too deep or too
rapturous for the bride
(the Church) to lavish
upon the bridegroom
(Christ)?*

How Wilt Thou Do?

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" —Jeremiah 12:5

In Bible times, the Jordan River was a dreaded barrier to travelers. Especially after heavy rains, its steady flow became a raging torrent. A belt of thorny jungle along the riverbed was apt to be half swamp during flood time, and was inhabited by wild animals; it was the haunt of lions.

In His famous challenge to Jeremiah, God used the Jordan waters in a metaphor. *"If you have run with footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you run with horses? And if on the level land, where you have confidence, they have wearied you, then how will you cross the raging Jordan?"* (Jer. 12:5, Lamsa).

Jeremiah had a problem which he had taken to the Lord. It was during the earlier years of his career as a prophet, and he had experienced what were perhaps his first great throes of suffering. Sent by God, he had faithfully preached the Word of the Lord to all that had gathered in the court of the Lord's house. The priests, the false prophets and the people were stirred against him. They scoffed at his warnings and prophecies concerning the temple and Jerusalem. It was incredible to them that the temple which had stood for four hundred years should be destroyed and the capital city become desolate. They were enraged. They took him, and, but for one man—the

son of Shaphan—would have killed him.

Jeremiah had faithfully carried out the Divine purpose and proved his sincerity to God while the men of Anathoth—his own home town—had plotted against him. He had been innocent as a lamb for the slaughter. Now in the narrative he talks to God: *"O Eternal One, Thou knowest me, has proved how true is my heart to thee"* (Jer. 12:1, Moffatt). Jeremiah's question is *"Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?"*

In reply to Jeremiah, God does not coddle him, or sympathize with him. Rather, He challenges him to greater courage and faith for the more trying ordeals ahead. *"If you have run with footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you run with horses? And if on the level land where you have confidence, they have wearied you, then how will you cross the raging Jordan?"*

God wanted Jeremiah to be strong. The persecution that he had just experienced was small indeed compared to the more formidable trials ahead. As for the wicked, God would maintain His cause, and in His own time He would punish them.

When God first called Jeremiah as a prophet, He told him that He

would make him strong like a defended city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall against the whole land. *"They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee"* (1:19).

But God did not make Jeremiah strong against his own will. He said to him, *"Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces..."* (1:17). Nor did the Prophet fail to stand up to the challenge. A prophet as zealous as Jeremiah, and one who loved God as he did, was not satisfied with small or mediocre achievements.

Though Jeremiah was a prophet of the Lord, we should not imagine that he was always in contact with the Holy Spirit of God. He says, *"The word of the Lord came to me"* and *"again the word of the Lord came."* In between these times he had recourse only to reflection and meditation, even as we have; and such times, too, were to be a preparation for greater service—even for a raging Jordan.

Jeremiah's reputation as "the weeping prophet" seems unfair. Certainly he wept; he had plenty to weep about. It is a poor sort of man who cannot weep. Jesus wept. Paul wept. John wept much; Peter wept bitterly. We have no record that Jeremiah did more than

his share of weeping. He was too active for that. We find Jeremiah a truly noble soul, a fine sensitive character, unswerving from principle, courageous, zealous, sympathetic, tactful, very human in the midst of his godlikeness.

His message was very unpopular. His friends became fewer and fewer, and from all that we read in the record, except for his faithful secretary Baruch he stood alone for a long, long time. Could we have done as well?

Jeremiah's lifespan covers one of the most dramatic and catastrophic periods of Hebrew history. He prophesied during the reign of Josiah and through the reign of Zedekiah, a period of about forty years. Great world events occurred during this period. King Josiah was slain in battle by Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt. Babylon conquered Assyria, subjugated Egypt, destroyed Jerusalem and carried the people away captive. Taking the times into consideration, we exclaim, What a Jordan Jeremiah crossed!

Great times produce great characters, and Jeremiah was one of the greatest. We behold him standing like an iron pillar amid the smoke and flames and darkness of Jerusalem's overthrow and destruction. The whole land—kings, princes, priests and people—fought against him, but they did not prevail because the Lord was with him. Strong was Jeremiah's love for his nation, Jerusalem and the temple; we cannot imagine that it was easy to prophesy against them. However, after God called

Jeremiah, he had but one ambition—to speak the Word of the Lord faithfully.

We also are living in momentous times. We are living in the "end time," the closing hours of the Gentile age, when prophecies made centuries and even millenniums in the past are meeting their fulfillment. The coming of the Lord is drawing nearer, when the covenant-makers of the ages shall be judged and all the wicked, incorrigible element shall be cut off. And "*then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt. 13:43). No more shall they suffer scoffs and rejection; they shall be clothed with immortality.

Are we girding ourselves with courage and faith to meet whatever tests may lie ahead for us? Are we strengthening our loins in preparation for crossing Jordan?

Each day we are given opportunity to prove our sincerity to God. If we stumble and fall over the smaller trials, then how will we do when we encounter more trying ordeals—our Jordan?

Apostate Israel did not prevail against Jeremiah, but what of us? We in our day do not fear violent persecution, but are we strong like an iron pillar, a brazen wall, and a defended city against all worldliness and indifference to the true God? Do we ever compromise somewhat in our dress, our speech or manner of life, and apologize for being different?

Apostate Israel went so far as to

worship Baal in the house of the Lord. Even today we may go into the house of the Lord with some ways and desires that keep us from a wholehearted, holy service to God. Like Jeremiah, let us have but one ambition—to do the will of God faithfully.

As a defended city, let us fortify our minds against these our enemies: impatience, selfishness, jealousy, discouragement, all the ways of our lower nature. They will take away our life! We must be alert, spot them in advance, subdue them, never belittle or excuse them. Let us be firm and say, "These low traits shall not prevail against me," lest we fail at the great flood—Jordan.

God will make us strong if we are determined to be strong. Let us answer the challenge to us, and prepare for the raging Jordan: Arise and gird thyself with courage and faith; be not afraid.

If we prove our faithfulness to God through the ordinary trials of the day, then our hearts will be true to God through the greater trials.

Many faithful characters like Jeremiah have gone before us. We cannot reach that happy land except we cross the raging Jordan. Those rolling billows represent the trying ordeals of life that purify and beautify our character in the sight of God.

What an incentive to copy their character, to follow their example of courage and faith, that we may be worthy of meeting and greeting them in that fair and happy land—over Jordan. □

*Are we girding ourselves
with courage and faith to meet whatever tests
may lie ahead for us?*

*King Ahab showed his wicked heart
By causing Israel to depart
From serving God, to turn to Baal,
Whose pledges are of no avail.
Forgetting that Jehovah's arm
Is strong to save from each alarm,
They fell away on every hand,
And would not heed the Lord's command.*

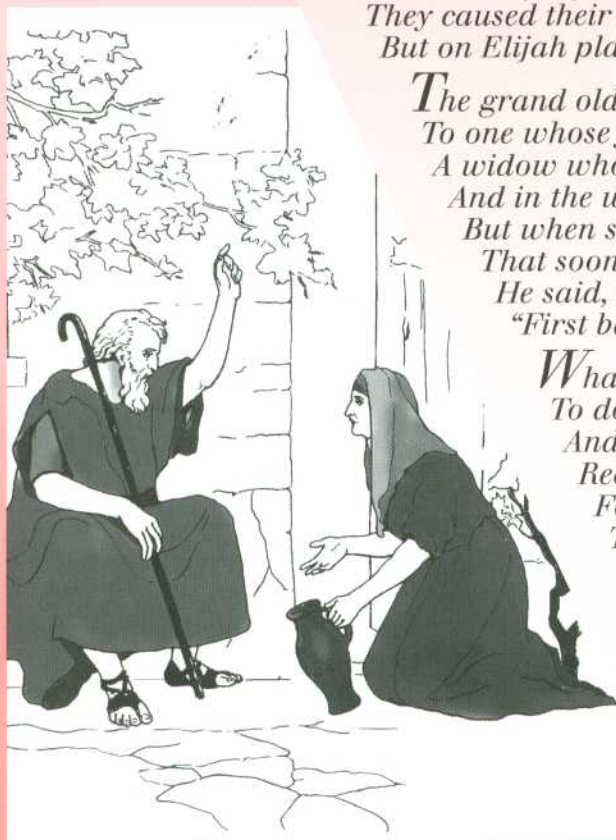
*Elijah then was sent to warn
King Ahab, but was met with scorn.
Abuse was heaped upon his head
By Ahab, when the Prophet said,
"For many months no rain shall fall,
But drougt and famine shall appall,
Until this lesson has been learned—
That God cannot be lightly spurned."*

*The rain had ceased, just as foretold,
And everywhere one could behold
The countryside, consumed, and dry,
With nothing green to meet the eye.
Conditions worsened steadily,
And still the people could not see
They caused their own disgrace and shame,
But on Elijah placed the blame.*

*The grand old Prophet then was sent
To one whose food was nearly spent,
A widow who believed in God,
And in the way of virtue trod.
But when she told of scant supply,
That soon she and her son must die,
He said, in answer to her plea,
"First bake a little cake for me."*

*What great, abiding faith she had,
To do just as the Prophet bade!
And for her faith she, of the Lord,
Received a great and just reward.
For though she did not till the soil,
The barrel of meal and cruse of oil
Did not diminish from the day
Elijah asked that he might stay.*

*Through faith have wonders been performed;
Through faith the forts of sin are stormed;
Oh give me, Lord, a faith like that
Of her who dwelt in Zarephath.
Her faith was something to behold,
A diamond set in purest gold,
Producing works of righteousness,
Assured her God one day would bless.*



A Widow's Faith

*If you can be well without health, you can
be happy without virtue.*

The best way to live well is to work well.
Good work is the daily test and safeguard of
personal health.

Our ideas won't work unless we do.

The future is purchased by the currency of
the present.

Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it.

Sin has many tools, but a lie is a handle
which fits them all.

*The best time to hold on is when you reach
the point where the average man would
quit.*

When we might be swamped by success
God sends the life-boat of trouble.

Courage is fear that has said its prayers.

A Happy Day

*A heart full of thankfulness,
A thimbleful of care,
A soul of simple hopefulness,
An early morning prayer;

A smile to greet the morning;
A kind word as the key
To open the door and meet the day
Whate'er it brings to thee.

A patient trust in Providence,
To sweeten all the way,
All these, combined with thoughtfulness,
Will make a happy day.*

—Selected.

You Will Never Be Sorry...

For thinking before speaking,
for forgiving and forgetting,
for being generous to the poor and
kind to the needy,
for looking before leaping,
for living a square and fair life,
for doing your level best. —Selected.

Triumphant

*Thou shalt take heart again.
No more despairing;
Play thy great part again,
Loving and caring.
Hark, how the gold refrain
Runs through the iron strain,
Splendidly daring!
Thou shalt grow strong again,
Confident, tender—
Battle with wrong again,
Be truth's defender—
Of the immortal train,
Born to attempt, attain,
Never surrender!*

There are one-story intellects, two-story intellects, and three-story intellects with skylights. Fact collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one-story intellects. Two-story men compare, reason, generalize, using the labors of the fact collectors as well as their own. Three-story men idealize, imagine, predict; their best illumination comes from above, through the skylight.

Those who are instructed in the law of God have the opportunity of being three-story characters, for the greatest of illumination comes from above, direct from "The Father of Light."

Criticism and Higher Criticism

The Goal of Bible Criticism

► *Bible criticism should build our faith in the Bible as the veritable Word of God and the only way to eternal salvation.*

What is the goal of Bible criticism? Is it just to satisfy the curiosities and vanities of humankind? Or is it an academic exercise that has no practical underlying purpose?

Bible criticism should be the process recommended by the apostle Paul, when he wrote, "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:15). The result of "*rightly dividing the word*" should build our confidence in and our understanding of the Scriptures. It should also help to answer questions that inevitably arise in the study of Scripture, at the same time showing us more clearly how Scripture applies to our lives.

Underlying all Bible study is one basic purpose: to impress upon our mind the evidence, to show us that the Bible is indeed without error, that it is a trustworthy guide for life and the way of salvation, if only we will apply it to our lives.

Any Bible criticism that does not accomplish the above must be classified as *negative higher criticism*. And negative higher criticism has no place or weight in the mind of any who believe God or are serious about the great plan He has revealed in His Word and the opportunities it offers us as individuals. Why do we say this? Because negative higher criticism is almost always from a purely scientific and human standpoint, and is produced by scholars and stu-

dents who start with the assumption that the Bible is a purely human book without Divine authorship or guidance. Any and all conclusions resulting from such an approach must be worthless because 1) the critics are reasoning from a false premise; and 2) the human critics are placing themselves in a position as judge of God and His written Word, thus saying that human judgment is the highest authority.

In all our efforts to understand the Divine Word or the Divine mind, we must be conscious of our human limitations and our place in the scheme of things. We are under no circumstance able to render a judgment upon God. We are at no time qualified to judge the supernatural; neither are we able to say what God has done, or can do, or to overrule anything that He has said. To reject these limitations is the height of folly. For what are we, but the temporary occupants of a small area of a small planet, existing wholly by God's goodness, dependent upon Him for every breath, every heartbeat, every motion, every thought? Should He so will, He could wipe us out of existence in a moment, simply by withdrawing the oxygen we breathe, or changing our environment, or depriving us of any one of a thousand substances upon which we depend for our very life?

Let us always, in all our study, in all our seeking, approach the Scriptures and their Divine Author with the reverence and the awe which they are due,

lest we find in the end that we have fought against God, and lost all benefit of the hope He set before us.

As we come to Scripture accepting it as a Book authored by God and to be understood as He directs, we find two basic points self-contained: 1) Bible statements about its own composition and authorship; and 2) Bible statements about its own integrity. Let us look briefly at each of these.

Bible Statements About Its Own Composition and Authorship

Negative higher criticism is always seeking to know who wrote what in Scripture. If we take Scripture at face value, we have no problem with such a topic. If the author's name is identified, we accept that as fact. If the author is unidentified, information about who the author might have been is always interesting, but is never a condition of accepting or rejecting the admonitions in the book. In any case, we realize that the anonymous writer was an instrument in the hand of God, and can still depend upon his words.

But many passages of Scripture are self-identifying. Take, for example, the books of the Prophets. The book of Isaiah opens with this statement: *"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Abaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah"* (Isa. 1:1). Here we have the whole setting, including both the author and the time in which he wrote. The same is true of the book of Jeremiah, which opens with this statement: *"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiab, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin"* (Jer. 1:1). Ezekiel opens with a similar statement: *"The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Cbebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him. And I looked, and, behold..."* (Ezek. 1:3-4). The book of Daniel is filled with phrases such as *"I Daniel saw"* or *"I Daniel was grieved"*

or *"I Daniel understood"*—what more do we need to identify the author of the book? The book of Hosea opens with a similar statement *"The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beer, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Abaz, and Hezekiah..."* (Hos. 1:1). And so we might go through all the Prophets.

The Epistles of the apostle Paul are equally well identified as authored by him. The book of Romans begins, *"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God"* (Rom. 1:1). The first letter to the Corinthians opens with, *"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God..."* (I Cor. 1:1). Why should we waste time and effort verifying what has been positively stated as fact? What purpose have we in challenging or questioning what has been clearly stated as fact? Who wrote the book of Ephesians? We have only to turn to the book and read, *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus..."* (Eph. 1:1).

As we study the Bible, we find hundreds and thousands of statements identifying the message as from God, and the Divine authorship behind the whole. Why can we not accept it as written?

Bible Statements About Its Own Integrity

The Bible also contains many statements about its own integrity. For example, we have these words in the book of Proverbs: *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him"* (Prov. 30:5). Or we have this passage from the Psalmist: *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether"* (Ps. 19:7-9). Or we have this word from the Psalmist:

Let us always,
approach the
Scriptures and
their Divine
Author with the
reverence and
the awe which
they are due.

"Thy word is true from the beginning...Thy word is very pure...The word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth" (Ps. 119:160,140; 33:4).

What About Tradition?

One point upon which Bible critics seem to agree is in the challenging of tradition. The validity or accuracy of religious traditions, i.e., of events which are told and re-told from one generation to the next, unsupported by any solid basis, is questionable. Jesus Himself warned about those who depended upon "traditions of men," and set aside the "commandments of God" (Matt. 15:7-9).

The problem with higher criticism is that in rejecting the supernatural guidance of the Bible writers and in judging all Bible narratives by their own limited experience, they conclude that Bible writings must have their source in tradition, that is, events and teachings that were handed down from one generation to the next, and eventually recorded in written form. Reasoning from this basis, they give to all Scripture the value of uncertain tradition—is it any wonder that they do little to establish solid faith in its teachings?

What such critics overlook is the otherwise unexplainable harmony and unity between the Bible authors, unity both in teaching and in the narration of facts; harmony both between authors and in the communications received by one means or another from God. If they would study the Bible as one Divine Book and not as individual writings of human beings over 1500 years of time, they would see the Divine plan unfolded, and the beauty of its teachings, and be impressed with the wisdom of its Divine Author—including His indescribable goodness to the human family in the hope proffered them. They would be impressed with the wisdom and knowledge of the God who could foretell events in advance with the same accuracy and precision that a historian could record them. They would then be able to separate

between human tradition and Divine statements.

The Roman Catholic Church decreed in its early statements that the traditions of the Church were on a par with Scripture. Such a position is wholly without Biblical support.

Our Responsibility

In a study of the Scripture, our duty is not to sift the false from the true, or the errant from the valid; our duty is to accept what Scripture says, and seek to understand it as it was originally written and with the meaning originally intended. Why? Because we are interested not in simply acquiring knowledge, but in serving the God behind Scripture, because of the great plan He has revealed upon its pages and the great hope He has set before us. We are not studying simply to acquire knowledge but to learn how we can have our lives perpetuated, how we can be part of God's longer range purpose. Such an approach gives an entirely different perspective to our Bible study, and places us in a position of yearning, longing, seeking for all that we can learn, anything which will increase the possibilities of our being accepted as an eternal part of the Divine scheme.

Who Has The Last Word?

When it comes to the Bible, each of us must establish in our own minds who or what shall be the highest authority to us. We can trust our own judgment which is instinctive, and limit our horizons to the human mind and its reasonings. Or we can realize that any human judgment is not the ultimate, that there is knowledge above and beyond our ability to conceive, and so open the doors of possibility to the infinite and the Divine.

As long as we limit ourselves to our own reasoning, as long as we think that our judgment is the ultimate, we shall confine ourselves to this life and what it can give us. But if we will acknowledge that human judgment is not the ultimate, that something may seem right and yet be wrong, here is the opening

► *The willingness to recognize a higher authority than ourselves is the result of an educated conscience and a mind humbled by an honest view of life.*

of the door to true faith, to God and all that He has offered us. As long as we position ourselves as the ultimate judges of Scripture and say that *we* are the highest authority in existence, we are doomed to die without God or hope.

The willingness to recognize a higher authority than ourselves, namely, our Creator, is the result of an educated conscience and a mind humbled by an honest look at life, and the world, and all that is around and within us. By acknowledging God, we recognize that our wisdom and our judgment are not infallible; that our minds are at best an object of His creative genius; that we are not the highest level of existence; that we are subject in every respect to His power and His authority; that a mechanism so marvelous as the human body required a higher power to design and create it; that life does not make itself; that we did not make ourselves; therefore we are subject to the power that made us.

What can we possibly gain by asserting that our wisdom is supreme? What benefit can we derive from proudly asserting our great intelligence and accomplishments?

Such thinking may seem irrelevant to Bible criticism, but it is not. For the position that we take is critical. And underlying is our own attitude of mind. Before we can establish a solid foundation for faith, we must determine who has the final authority for us, what we will believe, and what we will reject.

Our Responsibility For Our Faith

In all matters pertaining to our life and future, God has made us individually responsible to learn what He has said, what has been written for our instruction. He has given us minds, and He expects us to use them. God does not automatically put wisdom into our mind. We are responsible to read and understand what He has written for our learning (Eph. 3:4; Rom. 15:4). We are responsible to understand what our Lord taught, and what He commanded us to do. We are responsible to interpret His writings with careful diligence, by

proper study and application, "*rightly dividing the word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:15).

Our Approach to Bible Study

In all fairness to the Bible, *we must deny the right to anyone to contradict what God says He has said.* If we do not place this limitation upon all Bible study and Bible criticism, we are placing ourselves, in effect, above God, which can only result in our eternal ruin.

We open the door to an eternal future only as we open our mind to the wisdom of God; we close that door by closing our minds to what He has written for our learning. For we have no other source of obtaining knowledge from God today, and no other source of extended life than what we find in God.

To benefit from the Bible, we must approach the Bible not to find contradictions but to seek harmony; not to set one passage against another, but to find out what the author intended.

It is our individual responsibility to study the evidence, until we are satisfied that the Bible is indeed what it claims to be, that its teachings are consistent and true.

And once we decide to accept the Bible, let us speak out boldly and vigorously against any effort to make the Scriptures anything less than the inerrant Word of God. If we feel we must accept today's criticisms, then we must give ourselves to a vigorous study of Scripture, to determine which criticisms are true and which are false. For either the Book speaks for itself and is capable of its own defense, or it is not.

Unless we take a stand that the Bible is true, what benefit can we derive from being able to say, "*It is written*"? As John Warwick Montgomery has commented, "We need to become aware that all of life is really crises in a sinful world where the battle between Christ and the powers of evil never ceases for a moment. What is at stake? Your effectiveness in that battle and mine. Let us not tarnish and corrode our only effectual weapon—*'the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'*" □

(To Be Continued Next Issue)

Who are we
to judge the
words or works
of our Creator,
or to say what
He has done
or can do?

JUST BUILD A BETTER YOU

*"Your task—to build a better world,"
God said.
I answered, "How?
The world is such a large, vast place,
So complicated now.
And I so small and useless am,
There's nothing I can do."
But God in all His wisdom said,
"Just build a better YOU."*

OUR FOREMOST
CONCERN MUST
ALWAYS BE
OURSELVES. WHAT
KIND OF EXAMPLE
AM I SETTING
FOR OTHERS?

Do we become discouraged with the corruption, immorality, crime and uncleanness all around us? Do we dwell on the fact that many who profess to be Christians do not live as we believe they should? Are we disheartened because of their lack of zeal for doing right?

Our first and foremost concern must always be ourselves. What kind of example am I setting? Am I living up to my profession to do the task God has set before me?

It may be with us as it was with little Jenny, who came running into the house crying, "Charles hit me! Charles hit me!"

"I hope you didn't hit him back," answered Mother.

"No," came the reply, "I hit him back first."

Like little Jenny, we find it easier to see what others have done as being worse than the wrong we do, and are too eager to condemn them. Jesus has warned us not to worry about the mote in our brother's eye until we have taken the beam from our own. All too often, if we are strictly honest, we will see how we have had a part in bringing about the very thing we dislike in another, and this should cause us to walk with care, and take heed to our ways, that our conduct

may be a help and not a stumbling block.

To build a better self is our first duty to God and to ourselves, and the best way we can improve the world.

We do not live unto ourselves alone. By our conduct we are constantly emitting an influence which may help or hinder a fellow traveler. Wherever we are, we are helping to mold the characters of others. Books are useful only when read. Sermons are influential only when listened to. But the weight of one's character is felt by everyone who comes within its sphere.

The only Bible read by most people is the Bible of Christian life; and the only argument for Christ which cannot be refuted is the argument of a Christlike character.

We know what we expect of others; let us go to work and do likewise ourselves. And let us begin right in our home, where our example usually has the most weight, and where we meet the severest test of our religion. For it is here, within these four walls, where we are best known, that we are most likely to reveal our impatience, our foolishness, our ill will; where we are off guard in our speaking and allow ourselves to be easily distracted from the first things which should concern us.

Yesterday is gone; today is all we possess; tomorrow's opportunity may never come. So let us go to work in earnest today to build a better self by being an example of the believers in word, in conduct, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

The result is sure to be a better *me*. We can do more good by being good than in any other way. □



Family

WORSHIP-TIME

"Mom, look!" Mary, our five-year-old, was excited. I turned in the direction of her pointing finger, and then I saw it—our very first morning glory in glorious bloom. I smiled with satisfaction; my watchful care had paid off at last, and we would be enjoying this small, but beautiful part of God's handiwork for many weeks to come.

I had so enjoyed watching the vines grow, and hadn't spared any effort in bringing the children's attention to them so that they could share my appreciation, not only of the morning glories but of all the growing things around our home—the flowers, the trees, and the plants in the vegetable garden.

We have always been anxious for our children to love and appreciate the beauties and wonders of nature, and with their natural curiosity they haven't needed much encouragement. It's one way they can become acquainted with God. They learn to reverence the mighty Being who creates such beauty and wonder and all the mysteries of nature.

But we don't want to stop there. What we need to teach our children about God goes far beyond the evidence of His works in nature. God wants us to instruct our children in the things of the Bible—its people, their struggles and hopes, and its outline of God's plan for this earth. We are to teach these things to our children, speaking of them when we sit in our homes, when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up (see Deut. 11:18-20).

That is why at our house we have set a time each day for special family study and worship. We read Bible storybooks, read out of various translations of the Bible, recite verses, pray together and sing. But the crowning touch, especially as the children get older, is talking about God and the future. Through this time together the children can learn of their parents' convictions, as they get answers to their questions and help with their special problems.

This time spent in worshipping God together means a lot to us. It has real family binding power. It is certain to have a big effect on the children as they grow up, providing them with a good foundation on which to build their own characters.

Some may feel that the pace of today's living is too rushed and too hectic; how can we find time for

ed keeping a close watch of just exactly how we were spending all the moments of our days. These are some of the things we asked ourselves: How long did I take reading that interesting feature article in the newspaper (that didn't really have to be read at all!)—five minutes? And did I really need to talk to my friend on the telephone for half an hour? Couldn't the necessary topics have been covered in ten minutes? Or what about that long conversation I had in the backyard with my neighbor—was it spiritually upbuilding, or did we speak only of inconsequential things? And was it needful for me to browse around in the department store for twenty minutes "just looking"? Plain and simple, how much time did I spend not to the glory of God?

Do you know what we discovered? If we weed out those things

*We will never regret the time we spend
teaching our children about God.*

family worship? But how can we afford not to *take* the time? Setting aside as little as ten minutes a day will be well worth the effort, especially if we remind the children of the things they learn at other times during the day. A few minutes every day set aside is insurance against our neglecting this vital part of the children's upbringing.

Where do we find the few minutes for family worship? We had trouble at our house, until we start-

ed keeping a close watch of just exactly how we were spending all the moments of our days. These are some of the things we asked ourselves: How long did I take reading that interesting feature article in the newspaper (that didn't really have to be read at all!)—five minutes? And did I really need to talk to my friend on the telephone for half an hour? Couldn't the necessary topics have been covered in ten minutes? Or what about that long conversation I had in the backyard with my neighbor—was it spiritually upbuilding, or did we speak only of inconsequential things? And was it needful for me to browse around in the department store for twenty minutes "just looking"? Plain and simple, how much time did I spend not to the glory of God?

Do you know what we discovered? If we weed out those things of no account, those things we waste so many minutes on during the day, we have more than enough time left over for family worship.

We will never regret the time we spend teaching our children about God. Like the morning glories that bud and blossom under a watchful eye, so will our children benefit from the time we spend teaching them to know, love, believe, and serve God. □

GENESIS: Literal Creation or Allegory?

Q "I have just reviewed Volume 81, No. 5, (1994) of the MEGIDDO MESSAGE, and your article 'Chosen to Serve' was very good. However, the author called the first chapters of Genesis an 'allegory,' and that is incorrect according to my teaching. An allegory is: 'A literary, dramatic, or pictorial device in which characters and events stand for abstract ideas, principles, or forces, so that the literal sense has or suggests a parallel deeper symbolic sense.' It is my understanding that Genesis is not allegorical but rather a true account of the beginning of man. If you have any Biblical references that suggest that Genesis is allegorical, please respond."

A We accept fully the statements in Scripture that God is the Creator of the universe, the world, the earth, and the human race. We have no inclination to regard the explanations of evolutionism, other than an attempt—subtle or open—to remove the need for a belief in God, which they do not accomplish. The Bible states solidly, both inside and outside Genesis, that God is the Creator. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker; Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it..." (Isa. 45:11-12). Again, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein,...and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6). God is the unchallenged Creator.

But our question is the narrative in Genesis 1: Is it an account of the literal creation of man, or is it an allegory? Did God intend Genesis, chapters 1 to 3, to inform us about the beginnings of the earth and the heavens and the first experiences of our greatest grandparents? Did He mean for us to learn from these opening chapters of His book just *when* and *how* and *in what order* the natural creation came about?

Fundamental Christianity would answer in the affirmative. Liberals might suggest that it is a subject too profound to understand. Some might go so far as to claim that the first of Genesis was not inspired; that it

should not be part of the sacred Scriptures.

With opinions so diverse, what are we to believe?

To the first 3 chapters of Genesis, our founder, the Rev. L. T. Nichols, devoted many years of study and preached more than 40 sermons. The conclusions of his exhaustive effort are, briefly stated, that the Bible is in harmony with all true science; that the God of the Bible is the same God who is responsible for the wonders we observe in the world around us, above us, and within us; that God is the unchallenged Creator of all, including man. But the first 3 chapters of Genesis were written to teach, in symbolic language, not the natural creation but a special, *spiritual* creation still in process, a creation spanning 7 days or 7,000 years and culminating with a fully developed and glorified planet Earth filled with happy and immortal inhabitants (see Num. 14:21; II Pet. 3:8).

It is our conviction that the first of Genesis has meaning far deeper and broader when understood as an allegory than when taken as a literal account.

Your definition of an allegory is comprehensive, and when applied to the first of Genesis would seem to yield a picture far more meaningful than could ever be drawn from a literal understanding of the words. An allegory is a combination of metaphors to teach a story or draw a deep spiritual lesson from the various details of the account. Using figurative language, it puts spiritual perceptions into vivid, living pictures, so that we may use our knowledge of the familiar to understand the unfamiliar.

Symbolism is used freely in the literary field to add strength, color and brilliance to composition. It is used also in the Bible, many times for the same purpose. For example, in Psalm 80 we find an allegory: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt...and planted it" (v. 8). The nation of Israel bore no resemblance literally to a vine. But knowing the nature of a vine, we can understand more about the Israelite people. Like a vine, the Israelites were transplanted from one soil (geographic location) to another, where they took root and grew as a nation. This type of language lets us use what we know about "vines" to understand the nation of Israel.

In the 4th chapter of Galatians, the apostle Paul creates an allegory in which he compares the bondwoman

(Agar) and the freewoman (Sarah) to the two covenants, the first from Sinai and the second from Christ. Paul says specifically that this is "*an allegory*" (v. 24), a story he is using to illustrate his point. In this allegory he uses each person to represent a group of persons.

It seems that Adam and Eve in the Genesis account are used in the same manner. There was a literal Adam and a literal Eve, but in the allegory they represent groups of individuals who are informed of the plan of God.

We have no way of knowing directly from Scripture that the first of Genesis is an allegory, but the apostle Paul gave an important rule to govern all studies of inspired writings: "*Comparing spiritual things with spiritual*" (1 Cor. 2:13). In other words, we must be consistent. Applying this rule to the Genesis account of creation, we must be careful not to combine literal applications with spiritual. For example, we cannot have a symbolic Adam and Eve eating literal fruit in a spiritual garden. Nor could we have a literal Adam and Eve eating symbolic fruit in a symbolic garden. All must be understood and applied as teaching deeper truths than would be apparent upon surface reading, if we would properly apply Paul's rule. Otherwise we distort the message intended by the Scriptural author.

Many times in Scripture more than one symbol is used to teach the same principle. For example, we find Adam and Eve used to represent the two classes of believers, faithful and unfaithful, who are called to work in the garden of the Lord. The trees in the garden may also be representative of persons serving God, some bearing good fruit, some evil. We find both the river and the light representing the knowledge of God; both are symbols of God's illuminating, life-imparting knowledge.

Many times one part of Scripture defines or elaborates another. Many symbols in Genesis are explained by the Prophets, or by our Lord, or His

Apostles. Some are defined by one author, some by another; but all are defined within Scripture itself. The Bible best becomes its own expositor. The message through all is the same: God is offering to humankind an opportunity to participate in His higher, long-range plans, by complying with His laws, and be rewarded for what they have done. This message runs through the entire Bible, forming one harmonious whole, combining in one earnest appeal to live the higher life and thereby merit a share in the eternal Kingdom of Christ. The different symbols are simply the Eternal's method in seeking illustrations to impress us with important truths.

For a more detailed study of this subject, refer to our booklet, "God's Spiritual Creation."

Concerning Lot's Daughters

"I know that Lot's wife was guilty of the sin of looking back, while Lot and his two daughters escaped punishment. But to my mind, Lot's two daughters did more evil than Lot's wife did in looking back when escaping from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:30-38). Lot and his daughters were evil minded and sinned greatly, but were not punished. Please comment."

A According to today's standards of morality, Lot's daughters' plan of perpetuating the family name would be strongly condemned, even though moral degeneracy today is widespread. However, there seems to be a great difference between engaging in sexual practices for mere pleasure and fleshly gratification, and for the serious business of procreation.

The purpose of this last portion of Lot's story has been taken to be both positive and negative. On the positive side was the focus of people at that time upon preserving "seed" at any cost. The negative aspects of the story stem from the drunkenness

and incest that played a central role in the plan of the daughters. Says one commentator, "Their conduct was worthy of Sodom, and shows quite as much as their previous betrothal to men of Sodom, that they were deeply imbued with the sinful character of that city." It is possible that a young woman at that time was somewhat limited in her choice of a companion whom she could wed, and companions often bore a certain relationship to each other. The conversation between Boaz, a distant relation to Naomi, mother-in-law to Ruth the Moabitess, and another male relative (Ruth 4), points up the then-existing plan.

Lot's daughters' intended husbands had perished in the overthrow of Sodom. No other plan for motherhood may have been to them as acceptable as the plan they took. And the open fact that Lot was later classified as a "just" man seems to infer that his action was not condemned by God.

The narrative clearly shows these people as survivors of God's judgments at the time and as the benefactors of His mercy. It is possible that there is more to history at this point than we are told. Lot is mentioned as the father of the Moabites and the Ammonites in Deut. 2:9,19, and both groups continued to play an important role in later Biblical history.

Whatever was right or wrong about the conduct of Lot's daughters, the children and their descendants were not under stigma because of it. It is never God's practice to condemn the children for the sins of the parents. In the book of Ruth, Ruth the Moabitess shows great character and godly virtue. During the Babylonian exile, the Moabites and Ammonites provided a safe refuge for Jews who had fled from Judah (Jer. 40:11).

The Moabites were excluded from Israelites' worship, but this exclusion was based on their mistreatment of Israel during the time of the conquest and not on the misconduct of their parents. □



Mysteries of the Monarchs

Did You Know...?

- ✓ ... that butterflies are found throughout the world, on every continent except Antarctica.
- ✓ ... that there are some 20,000 different species of butterflies.
- ✓ ... that butterflies may have a wingspan up to 11 inches.
- ✓ ... that butterflies taste through their feet. Then, if they like it, they drink through an elongated tube much like a drinking straw, which is coiled underneath their head.
- ✓ ... that a newly hatched caterpillar grows very fast – a six-pound human baby that grew at the same rate would weigh eight tons in two weeks.
- ✓ ... that Monarchs navigate by hitchhiking—they hitch rides on winds, storms, and even hurricanes!
- ✓ ... that migrating Monarchs often travel at altitudes of about 7,000 feet.
- ✓ ... that migrating Monarchs have been seen by airline pilots at heights up to 29,000 feet.
- ✓ ... that Monarch butterflies can fly about 650 miles without alighting.
- ✓ ... that with the help of tailwinds and riding air currents, Monarchs have crossed the Pacific, hopping from North America to Hawaii, to New Zealand, the Philippines, and Australia.
- ✓ ... that Monarchs are great migrators—those living west of the Rockies migrate about 1,000 miles southwestward, to the California Coast. Those living east of the Rockies fly over 2,000 miles, to Central Mexico.
- ✓ ... that migrating Monarchs never live long enough to make the same trip twice, yet the butterflies light on the same trees, year after year.
- ✓ ... that as caterpillar or butterfly, the boldly marked monarch needs no camouflage; for unknown reasons, parasites or predators seldom attack it.

That distinctively colored butterfly which you see flitting gracefully from one blossom to another in summer, with reddish brown wings, marked by deep black veins and a black border, is, at close range, only an insect. But even an insect shows the wonderful genius of our great Creator.

Is that saying too much? Just look at a few facts.

First of all, the elaborately colored butterfly you saw was very likely a Monarch. And the Monarch is one of about 20,000 various types of butterflies. The butterflies belong to the larger group known as insects, of which about 2,000,000 species have been identified.

The Monarch has a lot in common with the rest of its kind. Like all flying insects, it has four wings and six legs, and is equipped with a pair of antennae on the front of the head.

Perhaps most distinguishing about the insect family are the totally different stages of life through which they develop: egg, larva, pupa and adult. This ingenious process, known as a complete metamorphosis, is one of the marvels of our Creator's handiwork.

The butterfly's life cycle begins when the female Monarch lays a cluster of eggs on a growing plant. But she does not choose just *any* plant. Mother Monarch "knows" to select the one and only plant which the new baby caterpillars (larvae) will eat: the milkweed (how did the tiny helpless larvae survive before she learned by evolution that the milkweed was the only plant they liked?) Since milkweeds are common in the northeastern part of the United States and in southern Canada, the Monarch is most prolific in these areas.

When do the eggs hatch? Not just any time of year. The time for the young larva to emerge from the egg is carefully controlled to coincide with suitable weather conditions and the growth of the food plant. (Did evolution ever design such a pattern?)

There is yet another point: the tiny butterfly egg lying on a leaf for several days must "breathe." How is this possible, when the leaf of the plant is so often wet with dew and rain? The eggshell has been elaborately supplied with a system of air passages which allow oxygen to be exchanged with the environment whether the egg is wet or dry—did such a wonder just "happen"?

In about four or five days after being laid, the eggs are ready to hatch, and the tiny caterpillar (less than one eighth inch long) begins to eat his way out of the egg. Once free of the egg, he turns and eats the eggshell, for it contains nutrients necessary to his development. (What happenstance of evolution taught him to do this?)

For the whole of his short lifetime (about two weeks), all he does is eat. Caterpillars consume about 20 times their weight in food, feeding on the leaves of the plant on which they were hatched.

Quite understandably, the rapidly growing insect quickly outgrows his tight skin. What does he do? Each time his skin becomes too tight, the caterpillar simply crawls out of the old skin and grows a new, larger one. This happens as many as five or six times while it is preparing for the next stage of its life.

Before shedding its skin for the last time, the caterpillar, somehow "knowing" it is about to change its form, spins tiny silk fibers which secure it firmly to the stem or leaf of the plant. (How did the ugly-looking larva learn by evolution to spin silk?) At this point its latest new skin hardens or crystallizes, and in this chrysalis (the pupa stage) the caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly. The length of time required for the change varies with different species, ranging from two weeks to two months.

When the butterfly is fully grown, it splits its shell and crawls out. Upon emerging, its wings are wet and crumpled, but the butterfly somehow "knows" that it must sit very still with its wings downward for about two hours, while the wings fill with body fluids, unfold and dry. Otherwise the wings would be damaged. (Did the butterfly learn this by the trial-and-error methods of evolution? Isn't it all a marvelous demonstration of our Creator's design?)

Food for the Monarchs

What do butterflies eat? They live on the nectar of flowers, and here again they have a unique design which shows the wonders of our Creator. Bees are slender and can easily crawl inside the blossom to obtain nectar. Butterflies would ruin their large wings if they had to eat like bees do. But they have been given a different means. First, butterflies taste through their feet. If they like the taste, they uncoil a special elongated tube, which they keep right under their head, and sip the nectar. When ready to fly again in search of more nectar, they simply re-coil their drinking straw and take flight. (Can we imagine how butterflies ate during the millions of years they were evolving this mechanism?!)

Scales: Butterfly "Dust"

Did you ever catch a butterfly and notice some fine dust on your hand? That "dust" is the butterfly's scales. Every butterfly is completely sheathed in tiny scales from the tip of its wings even to its legs. Seen under a microscope, the scales look like shingles on a roof, but to the human eye they are so fine they look more like dust.

These scales are not without purpose. They give the butterfly its colors, control its body temperature, and serve as a warning to its enemies. (What did butterflies do before they evolved these all-purpose scales?) The butterfly's chief enemy is the bird, which hunts the caterpillars on the ground and can catch a butterfly on the wing. (Monarch butterflies are relatively safe from most birds, because the birds seem to know that they taste bad!) Some butterflies are somewhat safe because they resemble other bad tasting insects in color and wing-pattern. Others blend with their environment and so are not noticed. The Indian Leaf butterfly is a master of deception—on the wing it is a beautiful purple, but when it alights, it folds its wings and reveals a brown underside that resembles the bark of the tree on which it lands. Shall we say that the butterflies "learned" over millions of years to change their colors and disguise themselves—or shall we give credit to our wonderful Creator!

Masters of Migration

We see even more marvelous evidence of our Creator's work in the Monarch's navigational skills.

Not only do they travel thousands of miles and arrive at the same cities year after year, but they also go to the same trees. And—to add to the wonder—the butterflies that arrive "home" after the winter's flight are not the same butterflies that left the fall before—they are the next generation, produced en route. Monarchs have been tagged, but no single butterfly has been known to complete the entire round trip, although most complete the journey southward.

Here in New York State, Monarchs gather in September to begin the journey southward. Reaching warmer temperatures, they winter, then begin the return trip. During the return journey the Monarchs stop along the

All this by chance??



Monarch egg on milkweed leaf. Dark head of developing larva shows within the pinhead-size shell. A monarch female may lay more than 400 eggs, which hatch in 3 to 12 days. (11x)



Newly hatched caterpillar (11x) devours the transparent eggshell from which it came. Soon it will start nibbling the milkweed leaf, its regular diet.



Monarch caterpillar begins a marvelous metamorphosis. A two inch larva prepares to shed its skin for the fifth time and change into a pupa, or chrysalis. A six-pound human baby that grew at the same rate would weigh eight tons in two weeks.



Starting to unzip The skin splits, beginning at the head, as the pupa squirms and wiggles to tear open the striped jacket. Soon it will withdraw a hooked stem from the tip of the skin and embed it firmly in the silk button. Then the **pupa gyrates** until the old skin sheds. At this point a fall of even an inch would kill or maim the fragile pupa.



Pupa. Sealed against evaporation in a waxy jade envelope, the erstwhile caterpillar awaits transformation into a winged beauty. **Developing wings** show through the transparent case two weeks later. The snugly packaged pupa is about to begin the miracle of rebirth into an imago, the mature insect.



Newborn monarch expands its soft, fleshy wings by pumping a clear green fluid into them from its contracting body.

way, deposit their eggs, and die. The eggs hatch and mature, then the new generation continues the journey northward, arriving at the same place which their parents left the autumn before! (Can we credit this marvel to evolution?)

Eastern Monarchs travel in swarms to Mexico, about 4,000 miles round trip. Scientists tracking them have found large swarms gliding on wind currents at an altitude of about 7,000 feet. Airline pilots have reported seeing Monarchs as high as 29,000 feet. Their trip to Mexico takes them about two months, perhaps less, depending on the weather. But every year they stop to rest on the same trees used by their relatives in previous years. It is estimated that as many as ten million per acre congregate in a certain forest near Mexico City, some trees being literally covered with butterflies.

Western Monarchs, those living west of the Rocky Mountains, migrate about a thousand miles south and west to the Pacific coast of southern California. Like their eastern cousins, they go to the same towns and choose the same trees that have been used by generations before them.

Some Monarchs have even been known to venture across the Pacific Ocean, colonizing in Hawaii and Australia, occasionally reaching Africa and Europe.

Without guide or compass, how does the delicate Monarch do it? How does it find its way over thousands of miles of land, flying high in the air? Scientists can only speculate. We choose to give honor to our Creator—how better can we account for the countless wonders around us! How insulting to the Divine omniscience to credit such a wonder to mere chance! Truly, the power that guides them is Divine! □

Scientific data in this article is from: "Butterflies and Moths," by J. C. Palliter, published in *The Book of Popular Science*, Vol. 3, pages 193-202; *Zoobooks*, Vol. 7 No. 9 "Butterflies," June, 1990; "The Mysteries of the Monarch," by Peter Farb, published in *Marvels and Mysteries of Our Animal World*, published by the Readers Digest Association, Pleasantville, NY, 1964, pages 104-106; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 21, pages 640-650; and Vol. 14, pages 663-699.

Obituary

Reginald R. Fleming

On Saturday, July 2, death claimed another member of our Rochester Congregation, Reginald R. Fleming. Born September 14, 1905 in Brookfield, Vermont, Brother Reginald first learned of the Church at the age of 18, when his brother Clifton bought a set of books from the Megiddo missionaries who were traveling by bicycle and motorcar in the area of their home. He studied the books that winter, and decided that they offered something worth pursuing. Over the next few years he made several visits to the Church in Rochester, and in 1928, at age 23, he relocated to Rochester, coming by motorcycle.

Brother Reginald was an active member of the Progressive Society of the Church. Gifted as an actor, he was given very heavy roles in church dramas under the direction of the Rev. Thatcher, which he performed with ease. He had an exceptional memory,

A Serious Responsibility

It is good for us to remember, always the important and serious side of life. Naturally we are not spiritually minded, for the natural man does not want to know the things of God, in fact, they are foolishness to him in that they are spiritually discerned, so he would not want to know them, anyway. By this we realize what a great privilege it is to be called of God.

The Psalmist says: "...all who do God's commandments are ones who have a good understanding," so, is it not wonderful to know that we need not be a celebrity, or famous in any way to serve God? God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And, as the apostle Paul continues to tell us: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called."

When we think of God's sure and precious promises, nothing whatsoever should be too hard for His chosen ones to do. As clay in the Potter's hands, we must of necessity go through the moulding process as Jesus our perfect Example did. So may we not be stubborn and self-satisfied but willingly yield to His moulding, for He knows what is best for us.

May our prayer be, Dear God, have Thy way, that we may be among the vessels which are valued and dedicated, a thing of use to the Master of the house, that we may be fit for any honourable purpose.

South Wales, England

R. B.

What about Play-back?

Psalm 19:14 is a very thought-provoking verse, "May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing even to you, O Lord my rock and my redeemer" (TLB).

If we should have a tape recorder tied around our neck all day, what would we sound like on playing it back at the end of the day? Would our speech be pleasing to God? Would we have a good positive attitude, upholding the Scriptures in every way? Or would the record show a selfish, worldly spirit?

We have to believe in and live by God's every word. Not only does God have a spiritual tape recorder for our every word but our every thought is recorded. Much prayer and meditation is needed to overcome all evil with good. It takes a lot of hard work on our part, but if we do all we possibly can do, God will help us with the rest.

Georgia

C. P.

which served him well for drama work, as well as for dates and details—he was often consulted as the Church historian.

In 1945, Brother Reginald was married to Ruth Arlene Lane, who was his devoted helpmeet and lifelong faithful companion. In return she received a happy home and a thorough grounding in the principles of the Church. He brought her to the Church in 1968, and since that time they have both been active helpers in the work.

Brother Reginald enjoyed especially the task of assisting in the operations of the sound room in the Church, a work which he gave up only when forced to by physical disability. For the last 11 years he was confined principally to bed, an affliction which he accepted with good grace, saying that the Lord gave the right cross to the right man. During all he was tenderly cared for by his wife, who did everything humanly possible to make his life pleasant and comfortable.

He is survived by his wife, Sister Ruth Fleming, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Tackle the hardest job first each day. Easy ones are sure to get done.

Do not be afraid of criticism—criticize yourself often.

God put work into your life; He expects you to put life into your work.

If you don't believe in cooperation, just observe what happens when one wheel of a wagon comes off.

There are hundreds of languages in the world, but a smile is understood by all of them.

God Is Good...

*Good when He gives,
supremely good,
Nor less when He denies;
For crosses from His sovereign hand
Are blessings in disguise.*



There is no danger of developing eyestrain from looking on the bright side of things.

No trial would seem too great if we could know God's reason for sending it.

When *Prayer* Isn't Enough

(Continued from page 2)

ary to pray; but he will not prevail" (Isa. 16:12, NKJV). Moab was holding to his idols, so his prayer was not heard. If our possessions, our pleasures, our job, our hobby, our friends, our spouse, our family or anything else comes before God in our life, we are an idolater, and our prayers will not be heard. Or if we turn away our ear from listening to God, our prayers will not be heard (Prov. 28:13).

It is vain for us to pray for our associates to be converted, if we do not provide the right kind of example, if they cannot see in us living evidence of our hope in God.

We cannot expect God to bear our prayer if we are not trying to pray according to His will and live according to His will. God knows our state, our need, our weakness, and our need for Him. At the same time, He is looking for the right spirit. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

"Whatever we ask we receive of him," wrote the apostle John, "because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22, NASB). He hears us as we respond to His

speaking, if when He calls we listen. As long as we continue to "regard iniquity" in our hearts, God will not hear us (Ps. 66:18).

We cannot expect to be heard if our motives are wrong. Is our attitude like that of the mother of James and John, who came to Jesus asking that her two sons might sit "at your right hand and the other at your left hand in your kingdom" (Matt. 20:21, NIV)? If Jesus could read our hearts, would He be wanting to say to us, "So you mean that you want the highest place for yourself? You mean you don't want to play 'second fiddle'? For you it has to be top or none?"

If such is our attitude, let us seek God's help for a humble and contrite spirit.

Prayer isn't enough if by it we hope to get ahead of someone else. Prayer is a means whereby we humbly implore God's help in reaching a goal He has set before us.

Two little girls were walking to school when suddenly they realized they were in danger of being late. One said, "Let's stop and pray for God to help us get there on time." "No," said the other as taking her friend's hand, she broke immediately into a run. "Let's run real fast, and pray while we are running."

Let us pray as we run. Then God will hear and help us, according to His promise. □

The King's Business

I have an assignment that I must fulfill,
And nothing shall hinder my progress until
I hear from the lips of my Saviour, "Well done!"
And have the assurance of victory won.
I gladly accept this position of trust,
And think the conditions both proper and just,
In view of the present and future reward—
Exceedingly more than this world can afford.

Called to go forth to a sin-darkened world,
To hold up the Light, with His Banner unfurled,
I am an ambassador serving my King,
And by His direction glad tidings I bring.
Yes, I am commissioned to tell of the Day
When Christ shall return, to forever hold sway,
And spread His dominion all over the earth,
With wisdom dispensing the grand Spirit birth.

My duty is plain, to turn sinners to God,
By word and example extolling His Rod;
So living that others the Christ-life may see
In all of its beauty reflected in me.
The words that I speak must be words that inspire
The hearers with hope, and a fervent desire
To work for a better, a much richer life,
With naught said to foment a ripple of strife.

My work is not in a competitive field,
For few can be found who will bear the great shield
That speaks of His coming; the doubters prevail,
Who cry from the house-tops, "God's prophecies fail!"
Their efforts are focused on blackness and gloom;
With Faith, Hope, and Charity to them unknown,
They live for the moment, then die in despair,
With none to remember, and no one to care.

But I take delight in proclaiming the news
That Jesus will come, and Jerusalem choose
To be earth's metropolis, there holding sway
Supreme in dominion and glory for aye.
Yes, I'm an ambassador serving my King,
This is my business, His praises to sing;
And this is my message, to echo the cry,
"Behold, all ye doubters—the King draweth nigh!"

—L L Snyder